

The Talebearer

Written by Frank Garner

Leviticus 19:16 says, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people..." This commandment is clear and concise. It was codified early in the written law to God's people. The term is not found in the New Testament, but synonymous terms are there; gossip, busybodies, etc. From the verse above, the prohibition is strong. "Thou shalt not." That means not just a little tale, not secrets, not innuendo. Don't be a bearer of tales. That is what God told His people.

Talebearers carry tales. They go up and down to collect and deliver them. Adam Clarke describes this person as one who spreads malicious stories or gossip. The word is akin to "a trader or peddler, the person who travels about dealing in scandal and calamity, getting secrets of every person and family and retailing them wherever he goes."

We can see this person, huddled aside with others telling, "sharing" tales and getting information for his bag of wares to sell to the next customer equally interested in the latest tidbit of scurrilous information. Satan has made it very easy to do. We have Facebook and Twitter, e-mail and texting. Certainly, not everyone is like this. Most are not. But sadly, we know of those who are. And, we are warned to not be among them "going up and down as a talebearer among the people."

The talebearer's words are malicious and mean. Proverbs 18:8 tells us, "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the inner most parts of the belly." Wounds hurt. Intended or not, wounds hurt. That is what the words of the talebearer are to the subject of the tale. Wounds to the inner most parts are deadly. They can "kill" one's heart and spirit. These words can kill friendships, families, and congregations.

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Yet talebearers delight in sharing such words. They seek to gather them and then spread them along as quickly as possible. All the while, the talebearers seem unaware or unconcerned about the potential for great hurt and harm. It is even more devastating when they know the impact of their words yet carry them anyway. Remember, Clarke describes them as traders and peddlers of gossip. They want to trade their gossip for your gossip or sell their gossip to you, or buy your gossip to carry on down the road to another customer.

"A talebearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Proverb 11:13). We are to be discreet. We will not tell everything we know. Talebearers delight in revealing secrets and juicy details, spreading gossip. It does not matter whether it be confirmed or rumor. A faithful brother or sister will not do so. A faithful brother or sister will not tell tales about someone that will cause harm and hurt.

Proverb 26:19 says, "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips." The smooth confidential flatterer may have another motive. If a

distant

brother or sister is a bit too familiar, maybe there is a reason. If I came into your company in a smooth and silky fashion and started asking pointed questions or revealing secret things, you should be very wary of me. Don't meddle with me. Don't be drawn into my trap. I may be a tale-bearer, but you are not obligated to join me. Don't listen to it. Don't acknowledge it. Don't pass it on.

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In the very next verse we are told, "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." Don't fuel the fire by spreading it along. Don't spread the tale by repeating it.

I firmly believe that the vast majority of our brothers and sisters are very discreet, peaceful, and loving people. However, there are some talebearers around. Sadly, their influence is broad, and the hurt is long lasting. We need to be especially careful in this age of hyper-communication that we do not become a part of it. There are things that need to be shared and told among Christians and congregations. There are proper ways to do that. Tale bearing is not the proper way. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people...."