

# The Anatomy of Gossip

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by Matt Donnelly

*Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Romans 14:19 (NIV)*

Galen (c. 130-200 A.D.) was an ancient Greek physician who cast a long shadow over the late Roman Empire and the Middle Ages. For well over a thousand years, Galen's descriptions of the inner workings of the human body were upheld as authoritative by European and Islamic scholars.

There was a problem, however: Galen had never once dissected a human body! Because dissection of humans was forbidden in his day, Galen's descriptions of the internal workings of human beings were based almost exclusively on his dissections of pigs. It wasn't until the sixteenth century that the work of Vesalius exposed Galen's unwarranted anatomical leap from pigs to humans and gave birth to the modern science of human anatomy.

Before we come down too hard on Galen, though, we should look at ourselves for a moment. If we do, we'll see that we also can make unwarranted leaps based on insufficient or false information. Just think back, for example, to a time when you heard some information about a certain person second— or third—hand, passed it on to others, and then later found out that the information was dead wrong.

Gossip's main purpose is to spread misery. It's certainly not to build people up or minister to them in the name of Jesus. A gossip's wake is littered by damaged families and broken relationships: "*A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends*" (**Proverbs 16:28**).

As Christians, we're called to put the brakes on the spread of gossip. And not only gossip about people we know, but also gossip about those we don't know. Like others, I've been guilty of spinning pretty little stories about certain political figures, even though I had no proof that what I was saying even resembled the truth. I foolishly thought that spreading gossip would make me more popular.

How about you? Are you modeling God's standard of truthfulness and honesty? Are you known as someone who confronts gossip? Or do you pass it on with a few added details of your own?

If you have a weakness in this area, bring it before the Lord and ask trustworthy members of your church to help hold you accountable. As you move beyond gossiping about others, you'll find more time to show them the unconditional love of Jesus. And you might just make a few new friends in the process.

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