

DID YOU HEAR? [gossip — Proverbs 11, 17, 20]

THIS WEEK

Some young people have a lot of secrets. And for some, nothing is as fun as leaking a juicy tidbit from somebody's life. Gossip is a national pastime in their culture. Adults, young people, and the media seem to revel in gossip. Although sometimes interesting, it can destroy reputations and tear apart friendships. This TalkSheet will help your group discover that only some things need to be shared with others, and that keeping a confidence will strengthen friendships and build trust between people.

OPENER

There's no better example of gossip than the media tabloid. You may want to purchase a couple of these at any grocery store or drug store and select a few short articles to read to your group. Ask your students to vote on which stories they think are true and which they think are false. What makes a story believable? Why or why not? And why do people buy into these stories and false lies about others?

Discuss what sells those tabloids. You may want to rewrite one of the stories using the names of some of the young people in your group, then talk about what it would feel like to have these kind of stories written about people.

For Internet tabloid sites (so you don't have to be seen buying one!), check out [Tabloids.com](http://4tabloids.com) (<http://4tabloids.4anything.com>), the National Enquirer (www.nationalenquirer.com), or Star Magazine (www.starmagazine.com).

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Who would your kids most likely to trust with a secret and why? Why is this person trustworthy and how well do you think the person would be able to hold the information in confidence?
2. How did your kids feel when this situation happened to them? Have a few willing students share what happened to them and how the situation affected the friendship (no names, please!). Has this situation changed the way your kids handle the secrets of others?
3. Go over which secrets a real friend should absolutely not keep (suicide threats or sexual abuse, for example). Be prepared for a lot of disagreement on some of these issues. Point out the potential harm that comes from not telling someone else if a friend is keeping a harmful secret.
4. Have a few willing students share their phrases (being trustworthy, betraying a confidence, promoting love, and so on). Talk to your students about the impact that breaking a confidence has

on friendships, trust, and their integrity as Christians. You may want to summarize each verse as a group and write each one on a poster board or whiteboard.

THE CLOSE

Point out to your students that people human beings are strange creatures—people love the tidbits of scandal and the lure of knowing something that others would rather keep private. It causes people to be focused on anything but the essentials of being honest, truthful, and real with others—and with God. Encourage your kids to keep a careful ear open for what they hear and to become discerning listeners as well. They can choose what to believe and what not to believe. And they carry the responsibility of what to remember and pass on to others. How would they want others to handle their deepest secrets?

MORE

- You may have some kids in your group who are holding some secrets that are eating them inside—possibly an abusive parent, failing grades, the lure of drugs or sex, or more. These are real issues that need real attention. Pay close attention to your kids during this discussion and let the group know how crucial it is to talk with a trusted adult. For more information check out www.YouthSpecialties.com for more links to sites on issues in teen's lives including rape, abuse, pregnancy, suicide and more. Or see TalkSheets *Soul Pollution* (53), *The Perfect Parent* (31), and *Is God Keeping Score?* (19) for more links and discussion items.
- God isn't a fool. He knows what is going on in the lives of your kids and their friends. You may want to talk about these psalms more in depth. How do your kids feel knowing that God knows their secrets—before they even tell him? Challenge them to get real with God and bring their fears and concerns to him. He's their greatest, most trusted friend—whether they know it or not.