

MODULE

Class title: Backbiting

Aim of lesson: To highlight the kinds and consequences of backbiting and to treat it from a personal to collective level incessantly.

Category: *Tazkiyah*

Class Format: Power Point Presentation, narration & discussion

(Greeting to students) *AssalamalaikumwaRahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*

(Taooz) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanirRajeem*

(Tasmiyah) *BismillahirRahmanirRaheem*

(Du'a) *Rabbishrahlisadriwayassirliamriwahluluqdatummillisaniyafqahuqawli*(Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

Slide 1:

BACKBITING is a habit which we have become so prone to that if it is referred to as a fatal spiritual ailment (disease), it would be surprising to most but the fact is that Islam is a religion of peace and vices such as lies, suspicion, backbiting, slander and gossiping are totally alien to this religion that we profess to love and follow.

Slide 2, 3 and 4:

As the Prophet (pbuh) informed us, backbiting is;

“to say something about your brother that he would dislike.” Someone asked him: *“But what if what I say is true?”* The Messenger of Allah said: *“If what you say about him is true, you are backbiting, but if it is not true then you have slandered him.”*[Muslim]

Mocking people in their presence while THEY are unaware, by making negative facial expressions or by hand gestures, THIS is also a form of BACKBITING.

Slide 5, 6 and 7:

Have you ever wondered why we human beings --yes, even we Muslims -- like to gossip so much? Why is it that we enjoy talking about others behind their backs – (and come on, let's admit it, we do)

When I say this, I'm talking about the whole family of actions like gossip, slander, backbiting, whisper, criticize and so on and behave like ‘cannibals’.

Before we discuss the causes, let's see why such a vicious term as “cannibalism” is used for people who fall victim to this habit?

“Cannibals”, as you are probably aware, are meat eating animals. If you read the word BACK BITING backwards, it is BITING (someone’s) BACK by saying something about him/her, true / untrue which that person would dislike. The next time we backbite, it would be effective in curtailing this habit that we imagine ourselves pulling a piece off his back and chewing on it!!! Now you are pulling faces....but this is literally what Allah (swt) tells us in Qur’an.

“And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it (so hate backbiting)” (Al Hujurat: 12)

Slide 8 and 9:

Let’s discuss some causes that lead to backbiting and pray that knowledge may lead to cure of this disgusting habit Insha’ Allah.

Slide 10:

One reason is to feel superior by degrading the other person in the eyes of his/her acquaintances .E.g. You come back from a family gathering and you can’t help noticing that your cousin who always bags better grades than you has put on a few ‘kilos’ so you mention this change in an all too casual way to your other cousin/ sibling;

“Did you see how Maha was devouring biryani as if it is the last time she is eating it!! If she continues at this pace, she will be our new little hippo of the family; no malice intended, I only have her best interest at heart.”

By highlighting a flaw in someone, this person emphasized on her own sleekness and thus added a notch of self security in her not- too- secure- self.

Slide 11:

Another cause of backbiting is often to alleviate hatred and enmity. When we feel that a person has wronged us in some way, we tend to spread rumors about that person and mention something about him that would be displeasing to him. In this way we tend to seek gratification from his anger. On the other hand, our *deen* being a comprehensive and practical way of life, teaches us to forgive and forget. Why? Because by being vengeful you get nothing except perhaps momentary gratification and you have deprived yourself of the infinite Mercy that Allah (swt) promises to His patient Believers.

He says;

If you pardon (them) and overlook, and forgive (their faults), then verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Surah Taghaban ayat 14)

How many of us can claim that we are perfect angels who have never done any wrong to anyone and thus won't depend on Allah's (swt) forgiveness on the Day of Resurrection? If we feel that we shall be in need of His Mercy, then difficult though it is we should try not to stoop to lowly means of gratification and exalt ourselves to a standard where we forgive and overlook the mistake of others with the hope that Allah (swt) will do the same to us Insha'Allah.

Slide 12:

Another reason is jest and play. A simple desire to make others laugh and some people actually make a living out of it by mimicking others appearances, voice and habits in a comic way. Such people may seem hilarious and great fun to hang around with but if they ponder over the gravity of their actions that how they have put their *akhirah* at stake, it wouldn't be a laughing matter no more...

Slide 13:

As humans we are forever competing with each other in worldly matters. How to look lovelier, live loftier and literally be better than others in every sense of the world. This provokes a feeling of envy and creates hatred and jealousy which makes people malign others publicly. The only halal reason to be envious of others is when someone is nurturing his *emaan* and consuming his life in the way of *deen*.

Slide 14:

A lot of people, due to ignorance and lack of religious knowledge, don't realize that they have done away with quite a load of their painstakingly collected good deeds in the one hour or so chit chat with friends/ family. Their tongues find themselves on auto mode of backbiting in presence of anyone who would listen and their minds fail to register it as venom-full banter..

"Behold, you received it on your tongues, and said out of your mouths, things of which you had no knowledge; and you thought it to be a light matter, while it was most serious in the sight of Allah (swt)." (24: 15)

Slide 15-16:

When hanging out with a group of people/ peers, it is deemed necessary to know who went where, why and with whom??? Whether the information is a fact or fabrication holds no significance as long as its juicy and keeps everybodys eyes and ears on you. One needs to understand that popularity is transient. If today they can talk about someone behind their back, tomorrow they will do that to you. The following verses of *Qur'an* shed light on seriousness of this matter taken so lightly by most.

Slide 17-18:

Let's discuss some misconceptions about backbiting and how to respond to them. While dressing up for any social event; make intention/*niyyah* that you wouldn't take part in any conversation that involves *gheebah*. When you will go somewhere with this intention then insha'Allah you will find yourself strengthened to deal with the situation in a positive way

Slide 19:

A lot of people justify backbiting by saying that "I am not backbiting, I am just saying it." What they are telling themselves is that they are not doing something as bad as backbiting, they are just saying, you know '*aisay hi baat kar rahi hon*' (just saying)

Slide 20:

Human beings have a natural desire to warn others....When we see something wrong with someone else;

1. We personally identify those characteristics as a problem,
2. Make a decision to be careful about it which is fine but then we don't stop here
3. We naturally want to notify others about it as well.

E.g You go to a social event and notice that a certain someone that you know who is not particularly of your list of favorites, is dressed in an attire you wouldn't be caught dead in so you make it a point that you would be extra careful (even though you already are rather obsessive in that particular domain) about how you dress. This is probably fine to an extent but the problem arises when you don't keep your thoughts about the other person to yourself and go on to make an advertisement about her in your 'select' group of friends.

"Seriously someone should tell her that *shalloos* (shalwars) and *chutiya* (braids) are sooo stone age now. I would tell her but I am afraid she would mind".

Slide 21:

Some people justify backbiting by thinking (that) if they inform the person later (that) they were talking about them behind their back, it makes the act okay but telling someone you backbit about them after the act **SHOULD** be a part of the process of repenting and making up for the sin and not as a brazen confrontation.

Slide 22:

This *hadith* gives a horrifying picture of the torment suffered in the grave by a habitual backbiter.

“...being punished in the grave with copper nails repeatedly scratching your face and chest off”
(Sunan abi Dawood)

The Prophet (pbuh) during his journey of *Mair'aj* saw some people who had nails of copper and were tearing apart their faces and chests with these nails. The Prophet asked Angel Jibrael about them who replies that they were being punished because they used to eat people's flesh in their lives by backbiting and defaming others.

Slide 23:

What's worse is (that) when some people claim (that) they “don't care” about backbiting and they (can or will say) what they said about someone to their face. It just shows two things;

- Such a person is just a jerk.
- It isn't bad enough that he is backbiting but he acts “brave” by claiming he can tell the person on his face too

Slide 24:

This excuse is (by far) the most common response we find Muslims making when they are warned about backbiting. They think that backbiting is only when you mention bad things about people that aren't true. Is that really the case? We have now learnt this from the *hadith* in the beginning of this presentation.

(Review slide 3 and 4)

Slide 25-26:

The latest networking menace gives easy access to ways and means of *gheebah*. Without logging on to ones Facebook account and updating status, posting pics (especially if you have gone to a cool spot or went vacationing) adding comments, ‘tweeting’ on ‘Twitter’ etc etc, life seems meaningless..We need to be ultra careful that we don't make gossiping and backbiting our pastime. Indeed time is passing us; we are not making good use of it.

Do you have these misconceptions about backbiting? If so, work on yourself first and eventually, you can work on correcting others (with humility & *hikmah*), as well.

Slide 27:

This guarantee is awesome in two ways;

- Not only (does it) make not backbiting easier because of the amazing goal attached to it,
- But it comforts us that our religion does understand the challenge in it.

Notice how the Prophet (*saw*) asked for ‘whoever guarantees control’, showing that he knows it’s natural to lose control but at the same time, he is encouraging us to take that control and work towards Paradise. The two things that require exercising control over are ‘guarding of our private part’ (*haya*) and tongue that entails what we say, when we say and how we say it.

Slide 28- 29:

However, there are exceptions to this rule and there are some conditions in which backbiting is permissible.

It is allowed to mention something negative of a marriage candidate in order to help the person who is planning to get married to form an opinion. It actually becomes our religious duty if asked about an individual to reveal any relevant information about him/her. In such case, shortcomings may be mentioned with the sole intention of advising him.

Slide 30:

A public figure who may be running as a candidate for a position is just like a marriage candidate. Hence it is allowed to disclose any information about him which may reflect negatively on his eligibility to serve. It is obligatory to mention this to the one in authority so as to remove him and replace him with someone more befitting.

Slide 31:

It is allowed to warn people against (tyrants and rebellious) people who are role models of impiety and they rebelled against Allah (swt). The Qur’an narrates to us the stories of (Pharaoh), *Nimrod*, *Haamaan* and *Qarun*, and so on so it is not considered sinful to speak negatively about personalities like *Abu Lahab* and *Abu Jahl*.

Slide 32:

It is said, “*An immoral person has no honor to protect*”.

Since he has already stained his honor by openly flaunting against the laws of Allah (swt) so it is permissible to mention what he does publicly e.g consuming alcohol, taking the property of others, taking taxes not legislated and other issues of falsehood.

Slide 33:

If a person has been wronged in some way then complaining to concerned authorities to redress the wrong is not back biting; it is infact seeking justice provided that the matter is brought to the appropriate authorities and not discussed with all and sundry just for the sake of talking. E.g one can complain to the authorities about an abusive husband, guardian, leader and so on.

Slide 34:

In order to seek a ruling on a conflicting matter; it is advisable to ask for guidance from a *mufti/aalim* so that the matter is resolved amicably.

Slide 35-36:

It is not uncommon to see people indulging in the ‘flesh eating’ habit around us so what should we do when we see it happening??

In such a case we should say something praiseworthy about that person and defend his/ her honor and Allah (swt) will reward us. It does not imply that we should lie and say things that aren’t true. What it means is that we should try to highlight what good we know of in that person for surely none of us is ALL bad or ALL good.

Slide 37:

Usually when we talk about someone, it is mostly information from weak or unreliable sources so we start with phrases like;

“I ‘m not sure but...” or “I have heard from so and so who heard from so and so that...”

When someone starts like that, it is smarter to put a full stop to their ‘fleshy party’ by asking them to be sure of the truthfulness in that piece of information before passing it on to others. At the very least you can make sure that YOU don’t forward any news that is ‘*sunai sunai*’..

Slide 38:

Often the subject of conversation has no immediate or far concern with you and listening to the details of how awesome or awful she looked at the wedding makes no difference to you. In that case especially, take no part or interest. Your lack of interest will automatically cease the person from adding more juicy details.

Slide 39:

People who indulge in gossiping and backbiting care little about the subject of their conversation. It could be their teachers one day, friends next and even parents are not left alone. Such is the venom that spreads when a backbiter puts his/her mind to it. Let’s be honest, after it is all over, we feel a nagging guilt sometimes; that little voice in our head that (warningly asks,)

“What if someone did this to you behind your back?”

Or “What did you really achieve other than a little sympathy?”

Mostly we backbite not because we seek a solution but to just 'get it off our chest' or we become partners in crime by being 'the shoulder to cry on'... This has momentary benefits but costs us heavy in terms of our *Akhirah*. What is the guarantee that you won't be their juicy subject as soon as you turn your back??? So put yourself in the shoes of the current subject and stop the tirade.

Slide 40:

Sometimes when it is elders who are discussing others in a bad way, youngsters out of respect, cannot and shouldn't blatantly label their discussion as inappropriate. In such cases it is best to use *hikmah* and change the topic in a subtle and clever way. E.g you could say 'Oh mom I totally forgot to tell you that I got an 'A' in the assignment you helped me with!!' (provided that it's true) Which mom wouldn't stop in midsentence at hearing this rare piece of good news???

Slide 41:

If you are at a place where you have previously been part of a 'fleshy meal' and you are worried that the same is going to happen again, then As soon as you arrive, tell your close ones that this will be a vegetarian's chitchat (meaning no juicy backbiting, slandering or suspicion). All others who are interested in consuming meat should wait for the table to be laid out for dinner or lunch. If your companions co-operate Alhamdulillah but if they persistently keep on slaughtering everyone left, right and centre, try to cut your visit short or move to another table and make dua to Allah (swt) for guidance.

Slide 42:

If you can't do any of the above, then at least you should have a nagging conscience and must resolve to do better than that next time because feeling bad about something and not doing anything indicates the lowest level of *emaan*.

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) said:

"If one of you sees something wrong, let him change it with his hand; if he cannot, then with his tongue; if he cannot, then with his heart and this is the weakest faith."

Slide 43:

Islam is a logical and practical religion and does not leave us dwindling in our efforts to increase our state of *emaan*. For every spiritual disease, there are some practical solutions that have been taught to us through sunnah and the learned scholars. Sometimes we feel we have been dragged into it and really want to avoid situations where gossip takes place, and though we really want to do it, we don't know how to get out of the conversation let alone put a stop to it. Here are some tips to help you out Insha'Allah:

Slide 44:

Remind yourself that it exposes you to the displeasure of Allah, The Exalted. Imagine that the person you are backbiting about is not absent but present around you. Then measure your tone and words in such a way that it does not offend the person you are talking about. Also one should lessen the habit of discussing people too much and focus on something creative or more productive or remain silent. According to a popular quote;

“Small minds discuss people, great minds discuss ideas”

Slide 45:

What makes you prone to backbiting? When someone wrongs you? When you feel envious of a person? When others' negative traits, irritating habits rub you the wrong way? There has to be a trigger which sets you going so once you figure that out perhaps that would help you curb the desire to backbite.

Slide 46:

Bring the image of yourself, eating a carcass in your mind. This graphic detail tells the terrible nature of this crime, so much so that none of us can even imagine ourselves doing it. Visualizing this can be an effective mental exercise that will prevent future slips.

You could also try to view yourself as the cannibal (slide 7). This should put an immediate stop to a 'fleshy party'.

Slide 47:

Normally the root cause of backbiting is enmity, jealousy or the feeling of being defamed by the other in some way so try to prevent these negative thoughts and focus on the good that the other person ever did to you instead of his flaws. In other words identify these negative thoughts and deliberately replace them with positive thoughts, such as making 70 excuses for the person who has ticked you off. You will soon become smart at curbing the urge to backbite.

Slide 48:

Easier said than done, yes, but its possible! Harboring and carrying grudges in our hearts for years never harm those who wronged us (not one bit,) but yes it does harm us by poisoning our souls, and clouding our minds so forgive and forget.

Slide 49:

Make a mental or written list of people in your life with whom you have the highest risk of either engaging in backbiting or listening to it. Every family and workplace has a few such people. IS it

when you meet your friends that you indulge or is your sister your soul mate in this habit??
Identify and then warn them about this destructive habit and try to rectify their behavior too.
Build up the confidence to stop *gheebah* by pointing it out as soon as it starts

Slide 50:

Some people, by default, have a chronically negative thought pattern. They are like those parasites who thrive and survive on gossiping and they can see nothing good coming their way. Such is their negativity which they transfer onto others. If you fail to read the “Beware of Me” sign on them and do not maintain a reasonable distance, you are bound to have a crash course on “How to wipe out your good deeds within minutes”

Slide 51-52:

They say ‘an idle mind is the devil’s workshop’ and it is true. Devil promotes nothing but negativity. Those who have a lot of time and little to do eventually become bored and feel inclined to pick up the phone ‘just to talk’. This opens the door to let *gheebah* stroll in. Such people always tend to believe the worst of others and tend to give little or no credit to them. On the other hand, people who live their life purposefully find themselves so occupied that there is no time to get involved in vain talk/negativity so other than studies, get involved in a social welfare programme or any voluntary work which will productively engage you.

Slide 53:

As humans, we interact with a variety of people day in and day out and it is not possible to be in perfect sync with each and every individual. There are bound to be people who would inevitably step on your wrong foot and if we can develop the habit of forgiving, forgetting and moving on, this will make others feel very, very secure around you. This is easier said than done but practice makes perfect!!!

Slide 54:

Next time you are about to hop on the *gheebah* train, THINK!!

(Du’a for end of a gathering) *SubhanaRabbikaRabbulIzzati ‘ammayasifunwasalamun
‘alalmursaleen, walhamdulillahiRabbil ‘alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *AssalamalaikumwarahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*