

© 9: When Your Tongue Does the Talking

Exploring the power of our words

Scripture:

- James 3:3-12—The tongue is small but powerful.
- Proverbs 15:28—Evil hearts say evil words.
- Luke 6:45—Good comes from the heart of the good.
- Ephesians 4:29—Use words for building up others.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW		
Activity	Summary	Pre-Session Prep
Activity 1: Strong Words	Compare the power of fire to the power of words.	You'll need a video or pictures of fire damage, a match, a candle and a Bible.
Activity 2: Take That Back!	Discover the permanence of spoken words.	You'll need tubes of toothpaste, paper plates, and a \$10 bill.
Activity 3: Source of Speech	Look for the source of our words.	You'll need a Bible.

Main Points:

- The tongue is small but powerful.
- We can't take back the damage of our words.
- Our words reveal our heart.

LIFE SLOGAN: "Do it God's way—watch what you say!"

Make it your own

In the space provided below, outline the flow and add any additional ideas to guide you through the process of conducting this family night.

Prayer & Praise Items

In the space provided below, list any items you wish to pray about or give praise for during this family night session.

Journal

In the space provided below, capture a record of any fun or meaningful things which happened during this family night session.



WARM-UP

Open with Prayer: Begin by having a family member pray, asking God to help everyone in the family understand more about Him through this time. After prayer, review your last lesson by asking these questions:

- What do you remember from our last lesson?
- Do you remember the Life Slogan?
- Have your actions changed because of what we learned?

If so, how? Encourage family members to give specific examples of how they've applied past learning.

Share: Today we'll be exploring what it means to control our tongues!

ACTIVITY 1: Strong Words

Point: The tongue is small but powerful.



Supplies: You'll need a video, news magazine or picture book showing the devastation of fire. Check your local library for video or pictures of a forest fire or a fire that destroyed many homes. You'll also need a match, a candle, and a Bible.

Activity: With your family, look at the video or pictures you've gathered. Then light the candle and discuss these questions by its light:

- How did this huge fire we've learned about get started?
- How does one little flame like this one here cause so much damage?
- We've seen how much damage fire can cause. What good things can fire do? (*Forest fires often clear out dead and diseased trees so that new ones have room to grow.*)
- Can you think of any part of our bodies that can do a lot of good, or a lot of evil?



Share: We can use many parts of our bodies for good or bad, but the Bible talks about one part specifically.



Read James 3:3-12 aloud, then discuss:

Age Adjustments

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN, say the rhyme, "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me."

Then ask: IS THIS TRUE? HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN SOMEONE CALLS YOU A NAME OR TEASES YOU?

Explain that even though words are small, they still hurt!

CHILDREN OF ALL AGES may enjoy a trip to a local fire department on the day of this lesson. Call ahead to make appropriate arrangements with the staff. Many fire departments have everyday items such as toasters, telephones or toys which have been destroyed by fire. Examining these can further demonstrate the power of a tiny flame to grow and destroy. After you visit, discuss the same power our words have to grow and destroy.

- What is the body part that can do so much good and so much bad? (*The tongue.*)
- Why do you think our tongues are so powerful? (*The words they create can build up or tear down other people.*)
- How are our tongues like a bit to an animal or a rudder to a ship? (*A bit and a rudder are small things—like the tongue—but when handled properly, they have the power to change the course of a large animal or a ship.*)
- What does it mean to tame your tongue, and why does the Bible say no one can do this? (*We should learn to control our words, but our words spring from our hearts which should be under God's control.*)

Share: Just like fire can be used for good and for bad, our tongues can be used for good and for bad. Let's think of all the bad ways we use our tongues.

This list might include teasing, gossip, swearing, name-calling and telling lies.

Share: Now let's think of good ways we can use our tongues.

This list might include complimenting others, teaching, encouraging, comforting, and sharing about God.



Question:

- When was a time when someone's words made you feel bad?
- When was a time when someone's words made you feel good?

Share: Our words can hurt or help.

ACTIVITY 2: Take That Back!

Point: We can't take back the damage of our words.



Supplies: You'll need a tube of toothpaste for each child, paper plates and a \$10 bill.

Activity: Give each child a tube of toothpaste and a paper plate. Instruct them to empty their tubes of toothpaste onto the plates.

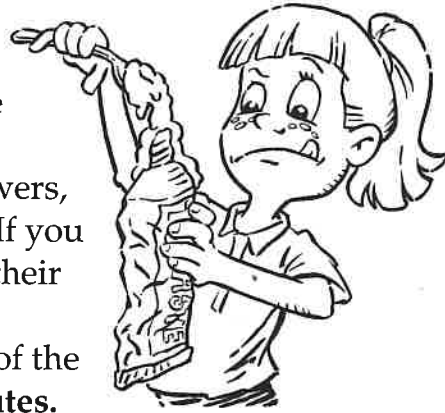
Let kids have fun making swirls, towers, and other designs with the toothpaste. If you like, have a race to see who can empty their tube first.

Then place the \$10 bill in the center of the table and explain: **You have three minutes.**

The first person to put all their toothpaste back into the tube wins the ten dollars. Go!

(Parents, your money is safe. There's no way to get all the toothpaste back into the tube!)

After the three minutes put the money back in your pocket, throw away the tubes, toothpaste and paper plates and wash any hands that need it.



Discuss:

- Which was harder, squeezing the toothpaste out, or putting it back in? Why?
- How is this like words coming out of our mouths? (*Once those words are spoken, we can't "unspeak" them; we can't take them back.*)
- When have you wished you could take back words you'd already said? What happened when you couldn't?

Age Adjustments

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN, go outside and blow soap bubbles for fun. Then ask the children to bring the popped bubbles back to you. Of course they can't, as the soap has evaporated into the air. Explain that our words are the same. Once we've said them they're gone. We can't collect them and put them back into our mouths.

Share: When we use our words to hurt others, we can apologize, but we can never take back what we said. It's hard to forget when someone has said a mean thing.

ACTIVITY 3: Source of Speech

Point: Our words reveal our heart.

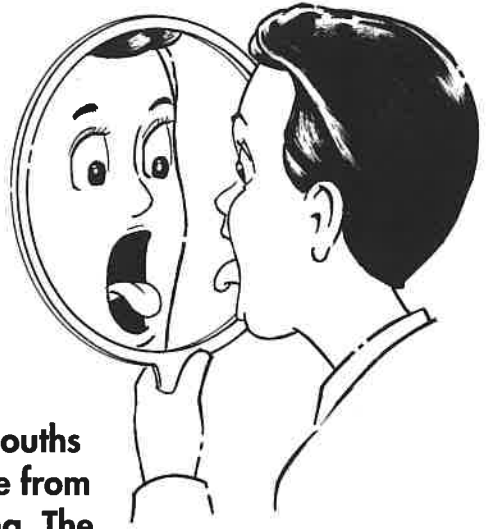


Supplies: You'll need a Bible and a small mirror.

Activity: Take turns looking at each others' tongues and using the mirror so each person can look at his or her own tongue.

Question:

- Can you see where the good or bad words come from when you look at your tongue or your throat? (*No, we can't see the source of the words.*)
- Where do words come from? (*Our minds and hearts expressing our thoughts and feelings.*)



Share: Even though our throats and mouths form the words, the words really come from our minds. We say what we're thinking. The Bible explains this more.



Read Proverbs 15:28 and Luke 6:45 aloud and discuss:

- What do these verses mean? (*Evil thoughts result in evil words, but good thoughts create good words.*)
- What can you tell about a person by the way he or she talks? (*You can learn about the heart from the words spoken.*)
- Have you ever avoided becoming friends with a person because of the way that person talked? Explain.
- Imagine that a blind person came to have dinner with us. By only listening to our words, what would that person be able to tell about us? Are we a rude family? An encouraging family? A fighting family? A loving family?

Share: Our words are a true reflection of what's in our hearts and minds. Since our minds control our tongues, we've got to learn to think before we speak! Another verse from the Bible tells us how God wants us to use our tongues.



Read Ephesians 4:29 together and ask:

- What kinds of words help others? (*Words of praise and comfort, offers of help.*)
- What kinds of words build up others? (*Words like "thank you" and "you're special."*)
- What kinds of words benefit those who hear them? (*Words that instruct and guide.*)
- How can we get more of these kinds of words into use

here at our home? (Let everyone share ideas and examine the ideas below.)

Activity continued: As a family, think of a way to be sure each person is encouraged with good words at least once a day for the next week. You might invent a game where each person gets a penny or nickel each time they encourage another family member. Or take time each evening at dinner to go around the table and build up family members. Or you might draw pictures of each other using words to describe how wonderful each family member is. Be creative and have fun finding a way to use your words for good!



WRAP-UP

Gather everyone in a circle and have family members take turns answering this question: What's one thing you've learned today?

Next tell kids you've got a new "Life Slogan" you'd like to share with them.

Life Slogan: Today's Life Slogan is this, "Do it God's way—watch what you say!" Have family members repeat the slogan two or three times to help them learn it. Then encourage them to practice saying it during the week so they can talk about it at your next family night session.



Close in Prayer: Allow time for each family member to share prayer concerns and answers to prayer. Then close your time together with prayer for each concern. Thank God for listening to and caring about us.

Remember to record your prayer requests so you can refer to them in the future as you see God answering them!

Additional Resources:

The Tattletale Tongue by Barbara Davoll (ages 4-8)
Night Light Tales by Andy Holmes (ages 4-8)

Age Adjustments

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN, go into the kitchen or bathroom and turn on the faucet. See how clean the water is. **Ask: DOES MUD EVER COME OUT INSTEAD OF WATER?**

Explain that if dirty water ever came out of the faucet we'd know something was wrong in the well or water system. In the same way, if dirty or mean words come out of our mouths we know something is wrong in our hearts. Discuss how we can keep the words coming out of our mouths clean like the water coming from our pipes.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN, consider researching what it means to verbally abuse someone. See if you can find legal cases where people were punished for verbal abuse, or where it was a factor in a legal matter. You could also examine cases of libel and see what ramifications there are for lying about another person. Discuss how seriously people take the words others say about them. How does what we hear about ourselves change how we think about ourselves? Why don't we want others to hear bad things about us? What can we do to be sure we don't hurt others? How does having Jesus in our lives help us keep our hearts and minds clean?