

BELOVED
BE LOVED
BE L♥VE

Growing Further Discussion Guide

Be Love

Part 3: Loving With My Words

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We all fail in many areas, but especially with our words.

Yet if we're able to bridle the words we say we are powerful enough to control ourselves in every way, and that means our character is mature and fully developed.

James 3:2 (TPT)

This subject of “words” is one of the most important aspects of learning to love like Jesus, because our words are crucial for communication in all our relationships. What is in our hearts comes out through our communication. The Bible uses analogies to explain why words are important:

- My words direct where I go. (like a boat's rudder)
- My words can destroy what I have. (like a fire that easily gets out of control)
- My words display who I really am. (like a running spring in which pure or poisonous water pours out)

We need words to express our love, but we can never fully control our tongues on our own. Consistent life-changing communication can't happen without God's help. Fortunately, Jesus wants to help us with this aspect of our lives. In this discussion, we will consider what the Bible tells us about the kinds of loving communication that can make a significant, positive difference in our relationships.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

OVERVIEW: LOVING WITH MY WORDS

Read James 3:2. What similarities do we all have according to this verse?

- Why is God's strength important in our quest to love others with our words?
- What daily challenges cause the most difficulty for us as we try to use loving words throughout the day?

The Truth about Words

How is the importance of words described in Matthew 12:34?

- If people changed their words to be kind but their hearts didn't change, what might happen?
- How do we fill our hearts and minds with thoughts that will help us speak loving words?

According to Mark 7:15, what is more important than what we eat or drink?

- 1 Share about a time you let your words fly without a care about who they hurt?
- 2 Since God can help us control our tongues, what would be the best ways to ask Him for help?

Fellowship—We connect with others in God's family to get support and grow in our love for God. Showing love to others in God's family with our words is so important. Describe a person who showed you God's love with loving words and made a difference in your life. How can you support someone this week with words that are loving and truthful.

WHAT KINDS OF COMMUNICATION CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS?

1. LOVE PEOPLE WITH HONEST WORDS.

How are we to speak the truth, according to Ephesians 4:15?

- How can speaking the truth without love hurt?
- How do I speak the truth in love but put the person's feelings first?
- It is often easier to be nice than to be honest. What is honesty like without niceness? What is niceness like without honesty?

According to Proverbs 27:5, what is better than unexpressed love?

- Why do people feel safer holding a grudge than addressing their concerns honestly?
- Is it possible to rebuke people openly without hurting their feelings? If so, how?

What does 1 Corinthians 13:6 say about love and truth?

- What is the difference between hearing a difficult truth from a person who loves you versus hearing the same thing from a casual acquaintance?
- How can people find joy in the truth even though they initially may not want to hear the truth?
- Why is it sometimes hard to tell the truth to someone you love?

Mission—Truth may be overrated, but never love. Sharing the truth about Jesus' love with people can be the greatest act of love for their souls. And what greater truth can bring more freedom than knowing someone loved us so much that he died for our sins so we could have an eternal life of love? It may be easier to be nice to people than to tell them about the greatest truth of love that has eternal rewards. Not everyone may be ready to hear or believe the truth of the gospel, so pray about someone who needs to know God loves him or her unconditionally and reach out to that person this week.

2. LOVE PEOPLE WITH CAREFUL WORDS.

What does Ephesians 4:26–27 tell us to avoid when we are angry, and what command does God give us?

- What are some examples of expressing anger without sinning?
- Can you choose to be angry or is it always out of your control?
- Why is it important not to go to bed angry? What are some possible consequences of going to bed angry?
- What are some ways we can calm our anger and think differently before we speak?

Read Proverbs 16:28. What warning are we given about gossip?

- What are some examples of what motivates us to gossip?
- Why would God put such importance on avoiding gossip and include it in His list of the most serious sins?
- When encountering a situation or conversation that could potentially turn to gossip, what are some ways we could prevent it or change the direction of the conversation?

What advice does Proverbs 21:23 give us in order to avoid a lot of grief when it comes to our words?

- What are some of the benefits of holding your tongue?
- Are there any examples where *not* speaking could also cause harm?
- What are some excuses we use for speaking angry or hurtful words to someone, and what action could we take to break this habit?

Discipleship—We are challenged to mature in our character and spiritual growth by following Christ’s examples of love. It is crucial to understand that our emotions and choice of words can have a serious impact on our lives and the lives of others. Are you able to accept that we all communicate differently? Are you able to ask God for help in dealing with anger and in choosing your words honestly and carefully? How can we change what is in our hearts, and change any motivation of anger that we may have to a motivation of love?

3. LOVE PEOPLE WITH BUILDING WORDS.

What does Ephesians 4:29 say is the only thing that should come out of our mouths?

- What does it mean to build someone up with words?
- What are the benefits of building up others according to their needs?
- What are examples of “unwholesome” words other than swear words?

Ministry—We have many opportunities to minister to other believers with whom we interact frequently by simply making a conscious effort to choose words that will build them up according to their needs. Think about a brother or sister in Christ who may be in need of encouragement now. When you next interact with them, slow down your responses by taking a little extra time to T.H.I.N.K. whether what you say will be **T**ruthful, **H**elpful, **I**nspirational, **N**ecessary, or **K**ind. Then wait and see if that person is edified through your interaction.

Take a moment to review any assignments/challenges made during the personal application and commitment section of your previous meeting. Seeing God at work in the lives of those who commit to him is essential for growth.

PERSONAL APPLICATION AND COMMITMENT:

We all struggle with the consequences of the bad choices we make about what we say and don't say each day. We know we need to act differently. Our goal should be to let our words constantly reflect God's love for us as we love all the people with whom we come into contact. To make this lesson very practical and achievable:

1. Choose one of the following five kinds of loving communication to focus on during the coming week.
2. Tell the others in your group why you made the choice you did.
 - **Kind Words** — transform worry to joy
 - **Gentle Words** — break through anger
 - **Pleasant Words** — encourage learning
 - **Honest Words** — make us feel loved
 - **Wise Words** — heal broken hearts

This kind of change comes slowly, but we know we can count on change if we trust God. Close with a prayer in which you tell God you are trusting Him for His help and counting on His assistance to change the way you love through your use of words.

Growing Further Discussion Guide Leader Notes

Goals for this Week's Study

- Give a few examples of silly arguments that started as a result of words that were not chosen carefully.
- As you discuss the sections about Honest Words, Careful Words, and Building Words, spend enough time to ensure that everyone in the group sees and understands examples of each of these kinds of communication.
- Close by asking God to make each of you more loving with your words and by placing your trust in Him to help you achieve that goal.

Preparing to Lead Your Group

✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.

✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60–90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God's five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.

At **GRACE** we use our name for the 5 purposes:

Glorify God

Relate to everyone

Act like Jesus

Care for other

Express God's love

✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn't. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

Using This Growing Further Discussion Guide

- ⇒ This Growing Further Discussion is only a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. For most groups there are too many questions to answer in one session together. After considering the needs of your group you may choose one of the following options:
 - One section of questions;
 - One or two questions from each section
- ⇒ Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, add Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.

- ⇒ The questions relating to the five purposes are helpful to develop balance and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can bring your group to an awareness of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- ⇒ Personal application is key to everyone's growth and should be included in every discussion. When asked how he or she intends to apply a certain principle a group member may say, "I need to spend more time in the Bible and in prayer." It is important for you to help group members make applications that are more specific and commit to a specific plan of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 30 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- ⇒ As the leader your goal is to help bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their need for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.