



PARENT GUIDE

LESSON SIXTEEN: WORDS

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OBJECTIVE: To help families follow Jesus in the way they use their words.

FOCUS ON FOLLOWING JESUS

Jesus taught us that what comes out of our mouths matters, and when we follow how he taught us to live, we must pay careful attention to our words, because our words have the power to help or harm others.

([Matthew 15:11](#) “What goes into someone’s mouth does not make them ‘unclean’. It’s what comes out of their mouth that makes them ‘unclean’.”)

GRIP ON THE GOSPEL

One of the ways we can powerfully use our words is to testify about what God has done for us, and how he is changing our families as we follow him.

([Ephesians 4:29](#) “Don’t let any evil talk come out of your mouths. Say only what will help to build others up and meet their needs. Then what you say will help those who listen.”)

WHAT DO I DO?

- Read the [For Parents](#) article. Spend a few minutes thinking and praying.
- Read over the [Discipleship Lesson](#) and decide when you will do it with your family.
- Gather your family, a Bible and any supplies listed on the lesson sheet. Use the script provided to teach a [Discipleship Lesson](#) to your family, adapting as needed.
- Use the 5 mini-lessons as [Daily Bible Time](#) prompts through the week.
- Select one or more [Discipleship Activities](#) to incorporate into your week.



FOR PARENTS

In my house, we have often had to help guide our children to use words in the right ways. We remind them to be careful about their tone of voice, to be careful with their attitude and to (often) control sarcasm. We intervene when they are not speaking politely to one another or they raise their voice. We stop them when they fall into patterns of complaining or speaking poorly of others. But in all this, I know they are not the worst offenders of words in our household – I am. It isn't the words I speak out loud, or the words I use about others. Where I need the most help, and the most discipline, is in the words I use about myself, to myself, inside my head.

I can't do this. I am a failure. I am a failure, again. This is too much for me. Why did I get out of bed today? I can't show my face there. I'm not good enough. I am the worst parent. I'll never fit in. I am unloved.

Some days I let these thoughts stay there on repeat. Words I would never ever let my children get away with.

In our house when I hear negative self-speak or hate or a poor attitude from the kids I will simply say "Would you like to try that again?" and they pause and sometimes roll their eyes a little. They know I'm asking them to change their "I can't do this" to something like "I need more practice at this." "I hate them" gets turned into "I'm struggling to love them like I should right now" and "This is stupid" turns into "I'm feeling frustrated and need some help." We give them a chance to try better words. And without fail, better words create better thoughts and better actions.

But since I'm being honest with you here, I am pretty soft on myself when it comes to changing my own words. ~~I am a kind of a failure.~~ *I'm still learning.* I know I wouldn't let my children or my friends speak like this, and I am learning right now to censor myself and my heart to choose better words.

Because words have power.

Because somehow God has created this world to function in such a way that what we say to ourselves over and over becomes the truth we believe, and the words we speak out loud change our heart and mind and what we do. Knowing this about ourselves opens us up to possibilities in healing. The remedy to our bad words is good ones. The antidote to a lie is the truth. This is why the Psalmist meditates on the word of God and hides it in his heart, rather than allowing the words our own broken hearts come up with on their own to take up residence in our minds. We need to take those thoughts (and words) captive and replace them with something better.

Maybe your struggles with words are of a different kind. Maybe you struggle with not knowing what to say when your kids ask you difficult questions, or when someone is experiencing something beyond what you are comfortable with. You need God's Words. Maybe you have speech habits that involve swearing or unwholesome worldly talk. Those words came from somewhere, and you can choose to let them stay, or replace them with something better, and to find a replacement for the anger or longing to belong to that causes them. Or maybe gossip and slander is just so addictive – you crave the sense of power in knowing something and sharing it with others, or the connection with people you experience when you complain or have a critical spirit. Those longings for connection, power, security or identity are incredibly strong and not easily broken.

No matter what our own struggle is, we must never make the mistake of believing that our words don't matter. That they are just words, after all. There is no room in a biblical worldview for this. It is through speaking and believing that God chooses to regenerate us, it is through words that God has chosen the gospel to be spread, words are how we instruct and disciple our children, how we connect with friends and loved ones, how we encourage and communicate. Every word has significance – it is a lie that what we say is meaningless.



As God is shaping you to be more and more like Jesus through discipleship, his Words remove from us that which doesn't belong and rebuild us. As we take in his words through reading, studying, memorizing and meditating on the Bible we are becoming new.

This week as you look for opportunities to disciple your children and be a family together that follows Jesus, think about the words you use together as a family. Don't let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, pray that God would put a guard over your lips and that he would protect you from lies and slander and malice and rage. Offer yourself entirely to God knowing your mouth was created for him, to praise him and not to be a tool of hate and corruption on the earth.

And remember the way you speak about yourself and others shows what your heart is like. Ask God today to help you proclaim truth alone because that is what our mouths were created for.

Consider these Questions:

- What is your biggest struggle with words? Where does it come from?
- How has God helped you with your word-struggles in the past? What helped you?
- What do you do in your house to help your children pick better words?
- What one thing will you try this week to help model the power of words for your children?



DISCIPLESHIP LESSON

Instructions:

- Read or teach the text using your own words
- *Text in italics is a note to the adult leading*
- This icon  indicates a question you should ask
- This icon  tells you there is a Bible verse to read
- **Text inside a grey box is a tip or idea for you!**
- Text inside this box is a short activity or task

The lesson should take about **45 minutes** to complete.

Supplies Needed:

- **Bible**
- Supplies needed for optional opening activity

WORD WORK

Gather your family for the family Discipleship Lesson. Select one of the following introduction activities, and briefly connect it to the lesson as outlined below.



A beginning activity like this is optional, but will make the time together more memorable and fun! It will require time to set up and process the activity.

<p>Make a Marshmallow Launcher <i>(Look online for instructions on making this DIY toy with toilet rolls, balloons and a bit of tape.)</i> Practice launching marshmallows at targets, at balloons, through a hoop or open window. Who can go furthest? Who can go longest?</p>	<p><i>Marshmallows are little but we can launch them really far! Our words are like marshmallows – by themselves they can't do very much, but launched, they can hit targets or knock things over! We need to learn to use our words carefully.</i></p>
<p>Use a Remote-Controlled Toy/Drone If you have access to a remote-controlled toy or drone, practice maneuvering it along a specific course. Why is it difficult? Who is good at this, and how much practice have they had?</p>	<p><i>Remote controlled toys are difficult to steer and take a lot of practice to use. The words that come out of our mouths can sometimes be like this. We need to learn to make our words go where we want them to, our words have a job to do!</i></p>
<p>Indoor "Snowball" Fight Collect a dozen empty boxes (diaper boxes or moving boxes are great). Divide family into two teams, and roll up two dozen socks. Allow teams to make a 'fort' and throw 'snowballs' at the other side. At the end of 3 minutes, count which side has the most snowballs – they lose. Extra points for knocking over forts!</p>	<p><i>Bad words from people can knock us down, but good words build us up! We have the power to choose what kind of words come out of our mouths. We don't want bad words of other people anywhere around us, so we shouldn't use bad words to talk about other people either!</i></p>



Today we're going to talk about WORDS.

Words are incredible! Think about this – right now someone could tell you something that would make you feel super happy, or amazing! Something that comes out of another person's mouth can affect your emotions – maybe for days! That's a lot of power.

Words can also give a lot of information about someone. For instance – where they are from!



Do you know any words that are used in other countries that aren't as common in Canada?

In England, children call cookies "Bickies". Did you know that? And in Australia the word people use for afternoon is "Arvo".



What is an 'accent'? Can you imitate any accents?

(Give everyone an opportunity to try. Maybe compare a Canadian accent with others you are familiar with, or from your family heritage.)

An accent can give us clues as to where a person is from, and some things about them. Your family might have particular words they use that would set them apart from another family, and maybe you know families who speak a little differently from you.



I have an interesting question – do Christians have an accent?

What would someone who follows Jesus SOUND like?

What words would they use? What words would they not use?

It's kind of an interesting question to ask – what would people know about you by your words? Lately, we've been talking about what it means to follow Jesus and what it means to be disciples. What we've learned together is that following Jesus means giving up doing things OUR way, and doing them JESUS' way instead!



For kids who think accents are fun, check out this short video where a vocal coach teaches 12 different accents in 3.5 minutes!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ouDcXRU-rs>



Remind children that there are Jesus followers in every country and just about every language all over the world! Discuss – from what we know about Jesus and what following Jesus means, how would being a Christian change the words that come out of our mouths?



Why do we do this? Try hard to live the way Jesus wanted us to? Is it because it will make him love us more? No! Is it because being good makes us better than other people? No! We know that we sin, and that sin separates us from God. So we ask God to forgive us and know that Jesus took the punishment we deserved so our sins would be paid for. Then we say with our mouths that Jesus is our leader and we want to follow him, and believe that what Jesus said and did was true. That makes us Christians. Not going to church, not just being good, not making sure we never use bad words.

When we're Christians, we obey all that Jesus taught because we LOVE Jesus, and belong to him. Since we've chosen to be on HIS team, we do things HIS way. We believe in what this team is all about and what it is trying to do. We follow God because he loves us, he saved us, he helps us, he knows us, he has given us his Word, the Bible, to help us. We trust that God's way is the best way. We recognize that doing things our own way is usually selfish, sinful and not obedient or worshipful to God. And God deserves our obedience and our worship!

But when it comes to our mouths and the words that come out of us, we don't always sound like Jesus' followers should.



What are some things that Jesus wouldn't want us to use our mouths for?

Right, lying, saying not nice things about others, calling people names, using put-downs or even swear words are words we use to hurt.

Jesus taught his followers that it isn't habits like keeping religious rules that are a good test of whether someone follows God or not – listen to the words that they speak!



For younger children, skip the verse in Matthew and just read James 3:8-9 and explain how something small can make a big difference.

For older children, have one child read the passage, or take turns reading around the family.



Matthew 15:11



James 3:2-10



There is a lot in that passage of the Bible, isn't there? The Bible teaches us that our tongue is how we steer our whole self. Even though our mouth is a small part of us, it is very powerful. It is like a wild animal that has to be tamed! We have to work hard at making our mouth say the things we want it to, and not the things we don't want it to!

Just like money and time and everything else – God gave us the ability to speak for a reason! Why did God make our mouths?



Colossians 1:16

All things were created by him and for him. Our emotions, and bodies, every part of us was made to praise God. But sometimes we do the opposite. We say that something God made is bad – like calling another person a bad name. We don't have the right to hate anything that God loves – and guess what? Even the people who don't love and follow God? God loves them and longs for them to be saved. God made them in HIS image.

That's why there are so many warnings in the Bible about how to speak – our mouths were made for a purpose, but also because words have a lot of power.

God's Words have always been more powerful than we can even imagine. By just saying a word, he created the entire world! Imagine that! He just had to say "elephant" and there was an elephant! Or "stars" and they all appeared! Jesus just had to say "SHH" and a huge storm just STOPPED.

Our words can't create worlds, but they can change the world. That's how God designed it. Here is some of what the book of Proverbs in the Bible says about our words:



- Nice words can stop anger, but mean ones can cause it (**Proverbs 15:1**)
- Mean words can stop people from being our friend and ruin jobs and relationships (**Proverbs 11:17**)
- Nice words can make people feel better, but lies can make people feel sad and broken (**Proverbs 15:4, 16:24**)
- A person who lies or uses mean words against someone else is using a weapon just like a sword (**Proverbs 25:18**)
- Using words carefully can get us out of trouble, and keep us out of trouble (**Proverbs 21:21**)



For younger children, summarize what the verses say, as indicated here.

For older children, have them look up some of the verses to see for themselves what is written.



The way we use our words will change how we live our life. Every single little word matters! It shows people who we are, what we love, and it even has the power to change our emotions and the emotions and feelings and thoughts of others! And if you thought that was really amazing, that's not all!

Here's what Jesus told his followers: *"Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved..."*

Mark 16:15-16



What was Jesus asking people to do here? What does the word 'proclaim' mean? *(That's right, to speak out loud to people. To use our words the way God intended, to praise Him and speak truth.)*



What has to happen before someone believes in Jesus and follows him? *(Someone has to use words to TELL them the gospel!)*



Give everyone in your family an opportunity to say JESUS IS LORD! Or some other statement of belief! Let them say it loudly!!

God lets us help HIM in HIS amazing mission to fix everything that's wrong in the world, and we get to help by using words. We can share the amazing truth of the gospel with others. We get to share God's Words using our mouths, and those words God uses to change people's life and soul forever. Maybe your life has been changed forever because someone told you the gospel. Or maybe you would like to stand up today and say with your mouth that you want to follow Jesus! That is something awesome you can do with your mouth.



How else can we use our words to help in God's big mission for the world? How can we use words to help and not hurt one another?

Close by praying together that God would help your family to use words wisely to help and not hurt.



DAILY BIBLE TIME

Take a few minutes each day this week to spend some time together reading from God’s Word and discussing it together. Questions and verses are provided for you below. NIRV is a good Bible version for young children.

1	<p><u>Colossians 4:6</u></p>	<p>Have a Potato Chip Taste Test! Put out a brand of unsalted, plain chips and several flavours (including a mystery or new flavour your family hasn’t tried). Can you guess what you are eating? What flavour do you WISH was a real potato chip flavour? (You can try this with salted/seasoned popcorn vs. unsalted and unbuttered.)</p> <p>What does it mean that our words should be full of grace? Grace is something good that people don’t deserve – what would it mean to speak with grace?</p> <p>When is there a time it would be hard to have words full of grace?</p> <p>Why are ‘salty words’ words people want to hear? What is good about salt?</p> <p>What does salt do?</p> <p>How does how we respond to a situation change the outcome?</p> <p>How could the way we respond to people help them know the gospel and what it means to follow Jesus?</p>
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2	<p><u>1 Thessalonians 5:11</u></p>	<p>Take a bit of time to share good words with one another in your family. Write each person’s name on a different paper plate or piece of coloured paper. Have family members think of kind words about them, or their great attributes. Be honest, but specific – try to go beyond ‘nice’. ☺</p> <p>Or brainstorm ways to encourage others outside your home. Write compliments on the Facebook walls of 25 people, write and mail surprise encouragement cards to people.</p> <p>Who can you bless today?</p> <p>What does it mean to encourage someone? (Does it have anything to do with courage?)</p> <p>What nice thing do you wish someone would say about you?</p> <p>What is the nicest compliment you’ve ever been given? Who would you like to give a compliment to?</p> <p>Why would God want us to encourage one another – especially other Christians?</p>
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3	<p><u>Ephesians 4:29</u> <u>Ephesians 5:4</u> <u>Psalms 141:3</u></p>	<p>What is the proof of what our heart is like?</p> <p>Our words. When a car breaks down and can’t move any longer, we don’t just send it through the carwash or give it a new coat of paint. We need to fix it from the inside. When our words are unkind, what needs fixing – our mouth or our heart?</p> <p>When we say something bad, would it help to just wash our mouth out with soap? What comes out of a shampoo bottle? (Shampoo) How about a ketchup bottle? (Ketchup!) If we belong to God, and we have His Holy Spirit inside us, what comes out of us should sound like Jesus.</p> <p>God knows our hearts need to be fixed – he promised us that when we become Jesus-followers, he will give us new hearts (Ezekiel 36:36). When we have new hearts, we want what God wants, and hate what God hates – sin.</p> <p>If we are having trouble with our mouth, what can we pray for God to do for us?</p> <p>How can we change what is in our heart?</p>
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4	<u>Psalm 101:7</u>	<p>Optional – play a quick game of two truths and a lie. Everyone should think of things they have done that day or that week and tell everyone two true things and one lie. (<i>I ate oatmeal for breakfast, I am wearing mismatched socks, I got a text from my best friend.</i>)</p> <p>Are you good at spotting when someone is lying? Do you think parents are good at spotting when a kid is lying? Is there ever a time when it's okay to tell a lie? When we lie, are we usually trying to protect ourselves or serve God? What happens to our relationships when we lie? If we lie, what is our motivation? What should we do in our family if we are caught in a lie? Would we be good parents if we let you continue to lie without showing you that there are consequences? <i>Often when we lie it is because of pride or selfishness – we think we deserve something and, therefore, we need to trick others to get it, or we are ashamed of something and need to cover it up, or because we don't want to experience the consequences and think we are above them. Our lying tells us we are self-focused instead of Jesus focused or other focused.</i></p> <p>How can we remember to speak truth with our lips? What verses could we memorize together?</p>
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5	<u>Luke 6:35</u> <u>James 1:27</u> <u>Galatians 6:10</u>	<p><i>To raise children who use their mouths for what God intended, we must practice doing the right thing, not just warning against the wrong. Make a list of ways you can use your mouths the way God intended and go do some!</i></p> <p>Can you challenge your family to encourage 10 different people in one day? Can you encourage Christian workers, Church staff, community helpers, neighbours, those facing poverty or struggles, missionaries, the elderly or ill? Could you deliver balloons or flowers or homemade cards? Think carefully of the words you can say that will help people and not hurt them!</p> <p>Alternatively, our words can also be used to stand up for the poor, or injustices done.</p> <p>How could your family help raise awareness of a cause that God has called you to help with? How can you champion that cause with your voices and actions?</p>
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DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Use any of the following activities to extend the learning and disciple your child in everyday life.

- **Pray Together:** Pray that God would help your family to use their words to help and not hurt others.
- **Memorize:** Ephesians 4:29 together as a family. Talk about this verse in daily life.
- **Missions:** Pray for missionaries, prayers are used by God to change us and change the world! Prayers are words that are powerful. Consider sending encouragement to missionaries – local and far away!
- **Daily Life:**
 - Do a science experiment: Bring to the table 3 jars or glasses with different clear liquids inside. One should be vinegar, one water and one hydrogen peroxide. All three will look the same from the outside. On sticky notes, write the names of the three substances. Ask kids to – without tasting them – try and figure out which is which. Maybe they know a few science tricks to help? Suggest some experiments. Vinegar will cause baking soda to fizz. Hydrogen Peroxide mixed with equal parts dish soap in a large glass will create a giant mound of foam when a few drops of iodine are added – water won't cause any reaction. We sometimes need to create a test to be sure of something, we need to see an effect as proof. How can we test if someone is trustworthy? What do our words show about what is in our heart?
 - Great for car trips – check out “Pants on Fire” Podcast by Best Robot Ever. It is a funny family game-show style podcast where a kid must figure out which of two adults is the expert, and which is lying on a topic. Teaches critical thinking, inquiry and evaluation of evidence. Talk about lying, and what it does to our reputation and relationships.