

# Hurtful Words

Quarter 10 | Lesson 11 | Life Skills

1. **Connecting:** Play a game to understand the power of words.
2. **Teaching:** Learn what the Bible says about words that hurt (Proverbs 12:18; 16:28; Romans 1:29–30; Ephesians 5:4).
3. **Responding:** Choose how to respond to hurtful words.

## SUPPLIES

- Bibles
- Optional Supplies:*
  - Memory Verse Poster
  - Pencils
  - Student Pages

## Teacher Devotion

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*A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart,  
and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart.  
For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*

Luke 6:45

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Careless and destructive words can be painful. In fact, the wounds caused by words often last longer than physical injury. Words spoken years ago can continue to replay in our minds, shaping the way we see ourselves and others. These hurts are often expressed in our own words as we speak out of the pain that is in our hearts.

Have you been wounded by someone's words? Do these words still affect your decisions, your view of yourself, even your view of God? Give these hurts to God. Ask Him to help you to forgive those who have wounded you with their words. Ask Him to fill your heart with good things that bring joy and peace—and listen for how those things are reflected in your words.

## Lesson Time

### 1. Connecting: Play a game to understand the power of words.

As teens arrive, greet them by name and ask them to share stories of giving or receiving helpful advice. Allow a few teens to share their stories with the rest of the class. If possible, share a story of your own as well.

**Teacher Tip:** During this lesson, teens will learn about verbal abuse and its harmful effects. Though the wounds of verbal abuse are not visible, they can be just as painful as physical abuse and may even be more long-lasting. Some of your students may have been verbally abused by family members or trusted adults. Be sensitive to their emotions as you address this difficult topic. Pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare their hearts to forgive and heal—and to prepare yours to encourage and affirm them.

When you are ready to begin class, divide the students into groups of 3–4 for a game.

**We have been talking about the power of words. Let's play a game to remind us how important words are!**

Have each group choose 1 teen to start. This teen will act out an activity that fits the category you give. The rest of the group will guess what that teen is acting out.

**The team member you selected will act out an activity. He cannot use words or make any sounds at all. He can use facial expressions and motions. The rest of your team will guess what he is acting out. The first team to guess correctly wins the round. Then each team will select another member to act in the next round.**

Choose ideas from this list or use your own ideas:

- Something you do at home
- Something you do in the morning
- Something you do before bedtime
- Something you do with your friends
- Something you do at church or school

Allow the students to do a few rounds of the game, using a different category for each round. Then congratulate the team that has had the most winning rounds.

**Now I will ask you a couple of questions. You cannot use words to answer. Instead, you will hold up fingers to show your answer. One finger will mean very easy, and 10 fingers will mean very difficult. You can choose any number of fingers you want to represent how easy or difficult you think it was.**

- **On a scale of 1–10, how difficult was it to do this game without words? (1 is very easy; 10 is very difficult.)**
- **On a scale of 1–10, how difficult do you think this game would have been if you had been able to speak?**

**Now let's change the game. This time, the person will use only words to describe the activity. The person acting cannot say the actual activity, but he can use words to describe it.**

Have the teams choose someone to describe the first activity. Then share an idea from this list or use your own ideas.

- Something you do that involves food
- Something you do that makes you tired
- Something that is hard for you to do
- Something that makes you laugh
- Something you do when you are angry

After the game, gather the class for discussion.

- Which was easier: playing the game with words or playing it without words? Why?
- How would your life be different if you could not communicate using words?

It is hard to imagine life without words! Words are powerful. The words we choose can have a powerful effect on others, and they can affect how others think of us. We can use words to help others. But sometimes we also hurt others with our words. Today we are going to talk about words that hurt and how we should respond to them.

## 2. Teaching: Learn what the Bible says about words that hurt (Proverbs 12:18; 16:28; Romans 1:29–30; Ephesians 5:4).

Negative and hurtful words are very powerful. Did you know that it takes 5 positive comments or interactions to begin to heal the painful emotions created by 1 negative comment? Because our negative words are so powerful, we need to carefully consider what we say and how we say it.

- What are some other ways we can hurt ourselves and others with words?

Allow 2–3 students to share their answers.

**Listen to what the Bible tells us about hurtful words.**

Have a student read Proverbs 12:18 aloud from the Bible. If that is not possible, the verse is printed here for you. If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

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*The words of the reckless pierce like swords,  
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*  
Proverbs 12:18

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- What does this verse teach us about the power of hurtful words?

Hurtful words can be painful. They can damage people and relationships. They can have lasting effects. There are many ways we hurt ourselves and others with words. Let's talk about a few of them.

One hurtful way to use words is gossip. "Gossip" means sharing personal information about another person. Gossip is usually negative and untruthful information that will hurt the reputation or feelings of someone else. This information is usually shared with the intent of embarrassing or hurting the other person. It is usually done to make the person sharing the gossip seem more interesting or influential.

Let's read what the Bible says about gossip.

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*A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.*  
Proverbs 16:28

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- How do you think gossip might spread strife and separate friends?

Allow 2–3 students to share their ideas.

Many of us gossiped at some time, and often we do not think it is very bad. We may even think it is not really a sin at all. But listen to what the Bible tells us about gossip.

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*They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.*

Romans 1:29–31

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- **Why do you think gossip is included in this verse with sins such as murder and hating God?**

These verses tell us that all sin, including gossip, is the same to God. Any time you share personal and private information about someone else with others, it could be considered gossip. When we gossip about others or participate in conversations that include gossip, it can be hurtful to the person we are gossiping about and to us.

Even if your intention is not to hurt the person you are gossiping about, gossip breaks trust. When someone shares personal or private information with you, you are responsible to keep that information private. Breaking trust damages relationships.

**Teacher Tip:** Make sure the students understand that when a person's safety or well-being are at risk, it is important to share that information with a trusted adult. Asking for help for someone in need is not gossip.

- **What can you do when you are tempted to gossip about someone?**

Allow 3–4 teens to share their ideas.

When you are tempted to share personal information about someone else, think about how you would feel if you were in that person's place. Would you want the information shared? How would you feel about the person who shared your private information? If you think it might hurt the other person, you should not share the information.

- **What can you do when you hear someone else gossiping?**

Allow 3–4 teens to share their ideas.

When you hear something that sounds like gossip, think about these questions. Is it true? Is it kind? Is necessary? If you can answer each of these questions with yes, then the information is probably not gossip. But if even 1 of your answers is I am not sure or no, the information is probably gossip.

- **What kinds of information might be true, kind, and necessary to share?**

Allow 3–4 students to share their answers. Some examples might include sharing information that is helpful to the other person or that would correct misinformation shared by others.

When you hear someone gossiping, politely tell that person that you do not wish to hear the information. It may help to change the topic of the conversation or to say something positive about the person who is being gossiped about. If possible, politely excuse yourself from the conversation and walk away. Do not share the information you heard with anyone else. Remember to pray for the person who was gossiped about and the person who did the gossiping.

Another hurtful way to use words is profanity. “Profanity” means blasphemous, obscene, crude, or foul words or expletives. Profanity can hurt others, even when it is not directed at them. Listen to what the Bible says about using profanity. You may remember this verse, as we have read it before.

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*Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking,  
which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*  
Ephesians 5:4

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- **What does this verse teach us about profanity?**

Allow 3–4 students to share their thoughts.

- **What do you think it means that profanity is “out of place?”**

Allow 3–4 students to share their thoughts.

- **Why is that important?**

Allow 3–4 students to share their thoughts.

Many people choose to use profanity because they think it will make others think more highly of them. But profanity is not intelligent or mature. Profanity is offensive, shows a lack of respect, and dishonours God. It conveys that you do not care enough about the people around you to treat them with honour. And when you use profanity, you may make others think it is okay to use it.

- **What other ways can profanity hurt you and others?**

Allow 3–4 students to share their thoughts.

The most harmful way words are used to hurt others is verbal abuse. Verbal abuse is using words with the intention of harming or belittling another person. Verbal abuse can include any of the following:

Calling another person names or insulting him

Making belittling comments, such as “You are worthless” or “You are a mistake”

Making hurtful, negative comparisons to others, such as “He is so much smarter than you are”

Yelling or swearing at another person

Threatening to harm or abandon another person

Blaming another person for life circumstances or mistakes, such as “My life would be so much better without you”

**Teacher Tip:** Physically or verbally abusing people or animals in front of someone is also abusive to the person who sees or hears the abuse. Help the students to understand that abuse of any kind is unacceptable. If you have students in your class who have experienced abuse or witnessed the abuse of others, try to get help for them from a church leader or trusted person in the community.

Verbal abuse causes deep emotional wounds that can last for a long time. People who have been verbally abused often feel afraid, ashamed, angry, or worthless. This affects the way they feel about themselves, and it also damages their relationships with others. If you or someone you know is being verbally abused, talk with a trusted adult about it.

Sometimes a person does not realize he is being abused, especially if he has experienced it for a long time. He may think that it is normal for family members to talk to each other in unkind or

dishonouring ways. He may even have been told it is his fault. But verbal abuse is never the fault of the person being abused

**Teacher Tip:** Teens who have experienced verbal abuse may feel uncomfortable hearing or talking about it. If a teen is visibly uncomfortable or becomes angry or defensive, try to speak with her privately after class. Offer encouragement, pray with her, and seek help for her from a trusted person.

If a person has been verbally abused, she may think it is okay to talk to others in the same way. She may begin to use angry and belittling words with others. Listen to the verse we read at the beginning of the lesson.

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*The words of the reckless pierce like swords,  
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*  
Proverbs 12:18

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- **What does this verse tell us about verbal abuse?**

Allow 2–3 students to share their thoughts. Then guide them to understand that verbal abuse is violence through words and that it pierces like a sword, causing great pain.

**Verbal abuse is never okay. If you have been verbally abused, you can ask God to help you to heal and forgive. But even if you have been hurt by others, you are responsible to choose your words carefully—choosing words that bring healing instead of causing wounds.**

### **3. Responding: Choose how to respond to hurtful words.**

Divide the students into groups of 3–4. Read the situations aloud and have the students discuss them with their groups. Then invite 2–3 groups to share their ideas with the class.

**Situation 1: You hear from a close friend that a younger boy on your street is being verbally abused by his father. What should you do?**

**Situation 2: An older teen in your neighbourhood yells profanities at you every time you see him. When you are with your friends, he makes rude comments about you. Sometimes your friends laugh at his comments. What should you do?**

**Situation 3: Your group of friends begins to gossip about a new girl in the community. They say she often lies about where she has been, and they think she is meeting with an older man. What should you do?**

*Optional:* If you are using the Student Pages, the teens can do this activity on their pages.

**Many times when we hurt others with our words, we do not intend to. Sometimes we are just not being careful about what we say or how we say it. The Bible teaches us to choose our words carefully.**

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*The tongue has the power of life and death,  
and those who love it will eat its fruit.*  
Proverbs 18:21

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- **What does this verse tell us about our words?**
- **Answer quietly to yourself: Do you think your words are words of life or death? Think about how your words have affected you and others.**
- **Answer quietly to yourself: How have you been affected by the words of death that others have said?**

When people hurt us with their words, the wounds can be painful and long-lasting. And when we are careless or hurtful with our words, we can damage our reputations and our relationships, and we can cause great harm to others. So we should always choose our words carefully. God can help us to heal from the hurt caused by others. He can help us to use life-giving words to help and encourage others instead of hurting them.

How have you used words to hurt others? And how can you use your words to help others instead of hurting them? Think of 1 practical step you can take to make your words life-giving instead of hurtful. If you would like to ask for God's help, you can do that now. He can help you with any situation, even if it is difficult.

**Teacher Tip:** Having a trusted person to talk with can help in the healing process. If possible, be available to talk with any students who need encouragement and prayer.

Pause for the students to think and pray. Then close with this blessing based on Luke 6:45:

**Blessing: May God, whose Word brings life, empower you to guard your mouth so that your words bring life, not death. May His healing wash away the pain caused by the hurtful words of others.**

**Family Connection:** Encourage the students to ask their family members, "Do you think words can hurt? Why or why not?" They can share about verbal abuse and encourage their family members to forgive those who have hurt them with their words.

Lead the teens in singing this quarter's song, if possible. "A Thousand Hallelujahs" by Brooke Ligertwood: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DeS49pSXDts>