

# MODULE 2: COMMUNICATION

## SESSION 6: THE POWER OF WORDS

### Key Ideas for This Session:

- The words (language) we use reflect our attitudes, values, and character.
- Thoughtless word choice and inappropriate language can undermine trust and lead to conflict.
- Words can either be tools or weapons; they can hurt or they can heal.
- Habits of using inappropriate or sloppy language can be changed with practice over time.
- Key verse: Proverbs 16:24:  
*Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.*

### If Actions Speak Louder Than Words, Do Words Even Matter?

Words matter a lot if we want our intended message to be understood by others. The words we choose reflect a lot about who we are in terms of our character, our values, and our attitudes. If we choose our words thoughtfully, other people notice.

People who have worked hard to express themselves through good language and the right use of words tend to receive greater respect from others. Poor word choices and sloppy or inappropriate language often lead to conflict and invite misunderstandings.

Harsh words and demeaning language can even lead to physical violence. The language we use can either be a tool or a weapon. Words can either contribute to healthy interpersonal relationships or undermine and destroy them.

It's important to understand that the words we use are often habitual especially when it comes to slang and swearing. Such language habits may feel natural and ingrained, but they can be replaced with time and intentional effort.

Do you use different language when you are with your family than you do when you are with your friends? If yes, why?

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Describe a time when you used words as a weapon to hurt someone else. What was the result?

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Describe a time when you used words to build up someone else. What was the result?

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**ROLE PLAY**

Role play the following tense situation to try to understand the deeper issues at stake. Role play the SHOPPER’S voice with growing hostility; role play the SALES CLERK’S voice with calmness and self-restraint.

**SHOPPER:** Excuse me! I’ve been waiting for help for 20“bleeping” minutes.

**CLERK:** I’m sorry, sir. We are short-handed today. I’m doing my best.

**SHOPPER:** I expect “bleeping” better service from this store. How many of your “lazy” coworkers are taking smoke breaks in the back?!

**CLERK:** Sir, if you will just give me a—

**SHOPPER:** Go tell ‘em their “bleeping” break’s over! No, forget it! Just get the “bleep” over here... NOW!

**CLERK:** Sir, I see that you are frustrated. I’ll do my best to help you in one moment, just as soon as I’m finished with this customer. We appreciate your service.

**SHOPPER:** I’m out of here!

If you were to overhear this conversation, what would you infer about the character of both the shopper and the salesclerk?

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Describe how the salesclerk used his words as tools.

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Proverbs 15:1 says:  
*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a hard word stirs up anger.*

Describe a time when “a gentle answer” from someone deflated your anger.

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Why do you think “a hard word” stirs up anger in people?

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What role does respect play in determining the outcome of a confrontation?

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Do you think being gentle is being weak?

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Proverbs 25:11 says:  
*A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*

What are some practical ways you can apply this verse in your everyday conversations?

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There are many instructional verses in the Bible that illustrate how beautiful words bless others, while harsh words cut down and destroy. Here are a few:

Proverbs 16:24

***Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.***

Proverbs 15:4

***The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.***

Proverbs 12:18

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

Which of the above descriptions are most meaningful to you in your life right now—both for how you want to be treated and how you want to treat others?

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In Isaiah 52:7, we read about God’s delivery of His people from captivity. Later, in the Bible this Scripture is used in reference to the message of hope that the Kingdom of God is at hand for all those who repent and believe. Here is the verse: “*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’*” Why are these words particularly beautiful?

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Break into small groups and discuss the following if there is time, or consider these topics this week:

- *Think about your quality of language and the quality of language you expect from others.*
- *What words could be considered tools? What words might be considered weapons?*
- *What are word and messages that edify, encourage and inspire?*
- *Come up with a list of phrases that a person could use to “turn away wrath.”*
- *James 3:1-9 in the Bible is a famous set of verses describing how words can both bless and curse. Review it carefully and write it out or sketch it out, to better understand.*

