

# Lesson 6

## The Power of the Tongue

### Teacher's One Sheet

BIBLE LESSON: James 3:1-12, Genesis 1:26-27

MEMORY VERSE: "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." Luke 6:27-28

CHALLENGE MEMORY VERSE: From the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. James 3:10

#### CATECHISM:

The Eighth Commandment: Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God so that we do not deceitfully belie, betray, backbite, nor slander our neighbor, but apologize for him, speak well of him, and put the most charitable construction on all that he does.

LESSON OBJECTIVES: The student will:

- understand how our words can hurt or help others.
- know God will help us to use kind and helpful words when speaking with and about others.

**MATERIALS:** Lessons, Bibles, activity sheets

LESSON OVERVIEW: The Eighth Commandment teaches us to choose our words carefully. Jesus taught His disciples to live a life that honors God and is helpful to other people. Jesus said, "Love one another," as He has loved us. (John 13:34, paraphrased).

- POSSIBLE QUESTIONS: 1) What do you think it means to speak well of your neighbor? 2) Do you know what it means to "Put the most charitable (or loving) construction on all that your neighbor does"? Ask students to give examples of this. 3) Who will help us control our tongue? 4) What should we do when we say something that hurts another person?

ACTIVITY 1: Words Like Fire – fill in the blank: (date), (name), fire, flame, tongue, mean, fire, hurt, words/tongue, control, (name).

ACTIVITY 2: Break or Keep – fill in lists from Eighth Commandment and meaning: Break- bear false witness, lie, betray, backbite, slander; Keep- fear and love God, defend, speak well of, put charitable construction. Circle: Speak well of others, Say good things about others, Control my tongue; Cross out: Use mean, angry words, Speak lies about others, Hurt others with my words.

## TEACHER PREPARATION

### Prepare to Teach

- ☐ Pray that God will lead you to be an example of one who trusts God only.
- ☐ Pray that you will wait upon the Lord as He guides you through this Sunday School year.

### Prepare Materials

- ☐ Activity sheets
- ☐ Lessons
- ☐ Have memory verse(s) written on the board
- ☐

### Hymns and Songs

**FILL IN HERE**

### Prayer Preparation

- Talk to God in a child-like way about your personal needs.
- Thank the Lord for each of the children He has placed in your class this year and ask Him to bless these children.
- Spend some time in heart-to-heart conversation with the Lord.

### Bible Background

James 3:1-12, Luke 6:27-28

A wise teacher once asked his students to bring him the best part and the worse part of an ox. Student brought back various parts of the ox, but one student brought only one part—the tongue. According to James, that one small part of the body can speak both good and evil, can both bless and curse (Jam 3:10). Then James says the obvious: “Christian, such a thing should not be.” So why does it happen? Why is the tongue so hard to tame? The tongue speaks from both the fleshly man and the spiritual man and that is part of the battle between the flesh and the spirit.

James gives a special warning to teachers (3:1), which is good. A teacher should certainly know more, or know better, than the student, so as to give proper instruction and guidance. With greater responsibility a teacher will be held to a higher standard and judged more severely.

Jesus severely judged the scribes and Pharisees who saw themselves as teachers of the Law by calling them hypocrites: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves” (Mt 23:15).

That is a stinging rebuke for false teachers. It should be a “wake-up call” for all teachers, whether in Sunday school, Bible classes, or whenever they teach God’s word with the intent of leading a person to saving faith. Some of the greatest harm to students has come from teachers who either interpret scripture according to their own devices (like the Pharisees), or do not teach “the whole counsel of God.” They are offering houses built on sand, and the students are not given the firm foundation on which they must build their lives.

The writer of Hebrews implies a lack of good teaching because the people haven’t grown in the faith: “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the actual words of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food” (Heb 5:12). There are basic teachings that need to be repeated for our own good (Heb

6:1-2), but we are also to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18; also Col 2:6-6).

The meaning to the eighth commandment says that we must not lie against a neighbor, but rather “put the most charitable construction on all that he does.” Doing that requires Godly wisdom and self-control, which is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23). When people hear rumors or lies, they tend to assume the worst and spread them. It is at such times that we have to “bite our tongue,” to hold it from saying what we think. Children and adults do this when they don’t like someone, then make up or exaggerate some minor flaw and spread it. Such actions hurt the person and separates friends (which is often the intent). It happens in families, school, workplaces and even in congregations.

When hearing lies about a neighbor, we are to “put the most charitable construction on all that he does.” At the very least that means checking out why such things are said. Often the truth will come out and with that comes understanding, and maybe we won’t be so quick to judge. If we have lied to or about someone there is only one right thing to do, and that is humble ourselves and ask forgiveness. Then we can honestly pray “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtor” (Matt 6:12). [trespasses?] Also “Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Eph 4:32).

God asks us to honor and respect Him as our Creator and Redeemer and Sanctifier. To respect ourselves and others is to respect and honor God.

The tongue cannot be gamed by man, it is “full of deadly poison” (Jam 3:8). The tongue, like all flesh, must be crucified with Christ so that it will speak words of grace. “Do not lie to one another, since you stripped off the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created it” (Colossians 3:9-10).

## Learn the New Words

*It is okay to explain the new words in the beginning or as you encounter them.*

**charitable construction:** charitable contains the word charity, which means love. Charitable means loving. Construction is another way of say “a possible explanation”. A charitable construction would be the best possible reason you can think of for what someone has done.

## BEGINNING YOUR CLASS HOUR

### Welcome and Opening Prayer

Greet the children as they arrive.

Open the class with prayer, praying for each child by name, if you like.

**SHARING:** Ask the students to think of a time that someone said something that made them feel good or happy.

### Read the Memory Verse

Remember the appendix of ways to teach memorization of the verse. Read it clearly, “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do

good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. *Luke 6:27-28*” Be sure to read it together aloud. Remind the children you’ll repeat the verse again at the end.

### Review the Recent Lessons

Remember we have been learning about the Eighth Commandment. The last 2 lessons have focused on the words we say. See if the students can remember something from the last 2 lessons as this will wrap up the focus on the Eighth Commandment.

## TEACHING TODAY'S BIBLE LESSON

### Introduce the Lesson

You can probably think of a time when someone's words made you bad. The words *we* say can help other people or hurt them. Lies hurt people, but even true words can be unkind. We want God to help us use kind and helpful words whenever we talk with or about others.

### Read the Lesson

Teacher read the opening paragraph.

**SAY:** Jesus taught His followers to live a life that honors God and helps other people.

**ASK:** What do you think it means to speak well of your neighbor? **SAY:** We can always say good and true things, and not tell stories about someone that could hurt their feelings or made them look bad. **ASK:** Do you know what it means to "Put the most charitable (or loving) construction on all that your neighbor does"? **SAY:** Putting the most charitable construction on your neighbor's behavior is to think of or imagine the best explanation for what he is doing. Maybe he is helping someone or doing something God wants him to do.

Read the second paragraph of the lesson (or ask a volunteer to read it).

Help the students find Genesis 1:26-27. Read these verses.

God wants us to use kind and respectful words when we talk with other people and when we talk about them too because God created us in His likeness. Even though we know this is how God wants us to use our word, sometimes we don't. Sometimes we use mean and angry words to hurt other people. Remember how you felt when someone else's word made you feel bad.

Read the third paragraph. **SAY:** Just like an out-of-control fire can burn down a forest, our out-of-control words can cause great damage. None of us can control our words without God's help.

Read the last paragraph. **SAY:** Telling lies or hurting people with our words is sin. This breaks the Eighth Commandment. God promises that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). If you ask God to forgive you, He will. God will make us strong and help us (Isaiah 41:10).

### Repeat the Memory Verses

# APPLYING THE BIBLE LESSON

## Do the Activities Together

The activity worksheets for this section are printed in the student books.

### Words Like Fire

#### Activity 1

Write a letter by filling in the blanks to tell what you are learning.

**Activity 1**  
**WORDS LIKE FIRE**

Write a letter to a friend or family member about what you are learning.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (today's date)

Dear (insert name) \_\_\_\_\_,

Have you ever seen a blazing forest \_\_\_\_\_ fire \_\_\_\_\_? Do you think it sounds scary? I do. Today we learned that even the smallest \_\_\_\_\_ flame \_\_\_\_\_ can turn into a blazing fire and burn down a forest. Once the fire starts, it can spread quickly, destroying everything in its path.

Did you know that the \_\_\_\_\_ tongue \_\_\_\_\_ can be like a forest fire? When we say \_\_\_\_\_ mean \_\_\_\_\_ or false words about someone, they can spread quickly like a \_\_\_\_\_ fire \_\_\_\_\_.

Our words may \_\_\_\_\_ hurt \_\_\_\_\_ others deeply. Just like it is hard to control a fire, it is hard to control our \_\_\_\_\_ words/tongue \_\_\_\_\_.

I do not want to be like a forest fire! I am asking God to help me \_\_\_\_\_ control \_\_\_\_\_ my tongue and speak well of others. God promises to help me. He will help you too if you ask Him.

Love,  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(insert student's name)

### Break or Keep

#### Activity 2

Write action words in each column from the Eighth Commandment and its meaning that break or keep God's commands. Circle words at the bottom that keep God's commands, X ways that don't.

**Activity 2**  
**BREAK OR KEEP?**

Some words break the Eighth Commandment. Some words keep the Eighth Commandment. Write action words from the Eighth Commandment and meaning in the correct columns below.

Break God's Commandment	Keep God's Commandment
_____	_____
bear false witness	fear and love God
deceitfully lie about	defend him
betray	speak well of him
backbite	put the most charitable construction
slander	_____

Draw an X across ways we break the Eighth Commandment. Circle words that show how we keep God's commandment.

Speak well of others (circled)  
Use mean, nasty words (crossed out)  
Speak lies about others (crossed out)  
Hurt others with my words (crossed out)  
Say good things about others (circled)  
Control my tongue (circled)

# CLOSING YOUR CLASS HOUR

## Closing Prayer

Ask about prayer requests. Allow students to pray if they choose. Allow time for silent prayer. Encourage students to bow their heads and close their eyes.

Pray for God to help us use our words in a way that pleases Him and hurts no one.