

## SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

### Trending: Words / Week 1

#### BEFORE GROUP

##### BOTTOM LINE

Pay attention to the power of your words.

##### SCRIPTURE

*In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself (James 3:5-6 NLT).*

*Take control of what I say, O Lord, and guard my lips (Psalm 141:3 NLT).*

##### GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students recognize the power of their words and to develop the habit of thinking about the impact of what they say.

##### THINK ABOUT THIS

This conversation is about words, the way we use them, and the impact they can have on others. Think about everything from hate speech, cuss words, racial slurs, dirty jokes, name calling, and more. Of course, this can be tricky because what's a "bad" word to one kid may be fine to another. That's why the goal isn't to identify "bad" words, but to help students think beyond just the words themselves. You're taking them from concrete to abstract thinking when it comes to the words they say, text, type, post, and even think. We want them to see that there's impact beyond the words themselves. The goal is to build a little self-awareness and control when it comes to their words, as well as help them exercise empathy toward others who might be on the receiving end of their words.

*This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.*

#### DURING GROUP

##### DISCUSS THIS

1. Without naming names, share about a time someone used their words to encourage you.
2. Without naming names, share about a time someone used their words in a way that hurt you.
3. On a scale of 1-10, how often do you think about the words you use?
4. How often do you think about *why* you use the words you use?
5. Why do you think it matters if our words hurt other people?
6. How does it feel when you realize that your words have hurt someone else?
7. What's one thing we can do when our words have hurt someone else?

##### DO THIS (EXPERIENCE) 1

Ask students to think about situations they've been in recently where they've used their words for good or bad. For each scenario, have them respond with a "thumbs up" if they used their words to build someone up and a "thumbs down" if they used their words to tear someone down.

"Did you use your words to build someone up or tear someone down in the . . ."

- Last ten text messages you sent?
- Social media posts you made this week?
- Most recent responses you made to social media posts?
- Conversation in the car on the way to youth group?
- Last phone conversation you had?
- Most recent conversation you had in the cafeteria?
- Most recent conversation on the school bus?
- Last video you shared on a social channel?
- Last time you spoke to a close relative?
- Last time you talked to your sibling?
- Last time you talked ABOUT someone else?
- Most recent conversation you had with someone you don't get along with?
- Most recent conversation you had with someone who has different beliefs than you?

##### DISCUSS THIS

8. What's one thing that might help you be more aware of your words?
9. How might a middle schooler be different if everybody thought about the words they used?

##### DO THIS (EXPERIENCE) 2

As a reminder of the truth that was discussed today (and because middle schoolers will love it!), give out a fake tongue for students to take home!