

WEEK ONE

FIRE STARTER

LORD, I pray that this week my conversation about my tongue will mark my life forever. Grant me a spirit of deep revelation to see myself as clearly as Isaiah saw himself when he beheld Your holiness. Let Your Presence fall so heavily that I will behold my true self and desire restoration. And then Lord, come. Touch me with the fire of Your holiness and the soothing tenderness of Your forgiveness as I repent and yield this mouth to You. I want it to be a resting ground for Your praises. I don't want to allow complaints and criticisms to take up space that should be occupied with You. Starting today, lead me on the path to holiness.

Speak Lord, I'm listening.

In Jesus' name, **AMEN.**

“Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.” Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, “Behold this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.” **Isaiah 6:5-7**



DAY ONE

FIRE STARTER



No one can tame the tongue ... With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? James 3:8-11

Bedtime had arrived. Jackson and Jerry Jr. snuggled up to me as I held them close before laying them down for the night. I cuddled them tightly, taking in the sweet, intoxicating aroma that all mothers seem to inhale from their children. I ran my fingers over the soft skin at the nape of their necks and the bottoms of their smooth feet while watching each engaging in his individual bedtime habits. My two-year-old lifted his shirt to rub his rounded belly, and my four-year-old raised his right hand to his mouth and poked his thumb inside. Both boys nestled into my side and prepared to wind down for the night. Seizing the opportunity to pray over them, I began to speak to the Lord loudly enough for them to hear my prayers on their behalf. After praying, I quoted several Scripture verses as affirmations, claiming their promises for my sons.

“You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and strength.”

“God is for you, so who can be against you?”

“I know that God is causing all things to work together for your good.”

“You are blessed when you go in and come out; when you are in the city and in the country.”

“The joy of the Lord will always be your strength.”

“The Lord has a plan for you that includes a hope and a bright future.”

And finally ...

“You will bless the Lord at all times, and His praise shall continually be in your mouth.”

My boys had heard these verses before (I’m serious about speaking Scripture over them as much as I possibly can), but today the message of that last one seemed to seep deeply

into my four-year-old's soul. I heard the steady thumb-sucking sound halt abruptly as he lifted his head off of my chest and looked at me quizzically. "Mom," he said, "His praises can't fit in my mouth. My thumb is in there right now!" I laughed but then grew quiet as the significance of this young one's statement stung me deep within.

The praises of God cannot fit in a mouth that is already filled with other things.

I'm a complainer. I was born one, or maybe having struggled with it for so long, I just thought I came from the womb that way. The flame of my critical nature was furiously fanned until it burned uncontrollably and began to leave a smoky path of destruction everywhere I went and with every person I met.

Like others with the same problem, I lived in denial, unaware of this personality trait until a loved one, clothes still scorched by the heat of my mouth, sat me down and told me the truth. Proof of my misguided comments remained. The smell of fresh smoke lingered in the air and I could see the burn marks my heated comments had left behind on her tender heart. My loved one was kind yet honest. The conversation left me stunned—shocked by the self-revelation to which I had been so blinded but better after being made aware of it.

The Holy Spirit came with His strong conviction, uncovering this fleshly part of me yet sending soothing grace to cool the embers of my critical nature. "The tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the very course of life" (Jas. 3:5-6, ESV). I looked around at the life I had and saw small fires raging all around me. In most cases, I knew I'd started them.

In the days and weeks that followed, I began to feel a twinge of conviction every time a complaint or unnecessarily offered critical comment escaped my lips. Soon, I'd feel the conviction *before* I spoke the comment. The smoldering coals of criticism would sit on the tip of my tongue longing to make their escape. Then I had to decide whether to light the match and let the fire burn or submit to the soothing, cool living water of God's grace to me as I extended it to someone else. In those moments, what I knew for sure was that both things couldn't be accomplished at the same time. I had to choose to indulge one option or the other: to submit to the fleshly complaints of my tongue or to allow my mouth to be a resting ground for the praises of God. It had to be one or the other, and I was the one who had to make the choice.

“Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water?” James asks (3:11, NLT). The answer is a resounding “No!” Both cannot come out of the same spigot. If we want our homes, workplaces, and friendships to be filled with the sound of God’s praises coming from our mouths, then we must cleanse our palates of anything that would squeeze out its position of prominence. We must decide to guide our tongues, submitted to the Holy Spirit, as instruments to be used by God for His purposes, today and every day.

THIS WEEK, HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH GOD.

What does my mouth contain most frequently: God’s praises or judgment and criticism? Is He pleased with what He hears me say to others? to myself? What “fires” has my mouth made that I need to go back and put out?

JAMES 3:8-11

⁸No one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not be this way. ¹¹Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?

RESTLESS is the Greek *akataschetos*, meaning
“unsettled, undisciplined, unable to be restrained.” ¹

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

PULL OUT

POSE

PLAN AND PIN

GROUP DISCUSSION

- *Can you think of a time when you were on the receiving end of an evil tongue? How did it feel?*
- *Discuss what the uses of poison reveal about the danger of an undisciplined tongue. How does it feel to know you have used your tongue as an instrument of poison?*



DAY TWO

THE POWER OF WORDS IN OUR PERSONAL LIVES



Your words reveal the truth about your character

JAMES 1:19,26, AMP

¹⁹Let every man be quick to hear [a ready listener], slow to speak, slow to take offense and to get angry.

²⁶If anyone thinks himself to be religious (piously observant of the external duties of his faith) and does not bridle his tongue but deludes his own heart, this person's religious service is worthless (futile, barren).

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

PULL OUT

POSE

PLAN AND PIN

Jesus to the Pharisees

MATTHEW 12:34-36, AMP

³⁴Your offspring of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil (wicked)? For out of the fullness (the overflow, the superabundance) of the heart the mouth speaks.

³⁵The good man from his inner good treasure flings forth good things, and the evil man out of his inner evil storehouse flings forth evil things.

³⁶But I tell you, on the day of judgment men will have to give account for every idle (inoperative, nonworking) word they speak.

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

PULL OUT

POSE

PLAN AND PIN

The words of a wise man's mouth win him favor, but the lips of a fool consume him. **Ecclesiastes 10:12, ESV**

Your words have influence in your life

1 SAMUEL 30:1-6

¹Then it happened when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev and on Ziklag, and had overthrown Ziklag and burned it with fire; ²and they took captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great, without killing anyone, and carried them off and went their way. ³When David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive. ⁴Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep. ⁵Now David's two wives had been taken captive, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. ⁶Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

GROUP DISCUSSION

- *What do your words reveal about what is hidden in your heart?*
- *What kinds of things are you allowing to influence your heart and thought life?*



David speaking to himself in times of deep despair:
“Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed
within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him.” **Psalm 42:5**

PULL OUT

POSE

PLAN AND PIN

What are some specific things I am despairing about right now? Am I depending on others to encourage me or am I taking personal responsibility to strengthen myself in the Lord? What words can I choose to use to begin to speak “life” into this situation?

More Conversation Starters

Psalm 15:1-5; 37:30; 120:2-3; 139:1-4; Proverbs 21:23; 26:28; Philippians 2:14-16.

DAY THREE

THE POWER OF WORDS IN OUR FAMILY



Your words and your children

DEUTERONOMY 6:6-8

⁶These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

⁷You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

PULL OUT

POSE

PLAN AND PIN

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit. **Proverbs 18:21**

Wisdom is having something to say ... and not saying it. —Author Unknown

Your words and your spouse

1 PETER 3:1-2, ESV

¹Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ²when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

PULL OUT

POSE

PLAN AND PIN

How difficult is it for me to *not say* anything? What current marital situation am I facing in which *not speaking* will have greater influence than any words I could say?

EPHESIANS 5:33

Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

PULL OUT

POSE

PLAN AND PIN

Do I use a language of honor (terms and tone of respect) when addressing my spouse?

GROUP DISCUSSION

- *Sometimes it seems we speak more harshly to our spouses and children than we would to anyone else we know. Why? Do you recognize this in your life?*
- *Discuss some specific words you can use that will edify your husbands.*



JAMES 3:8-11

⁸No one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not be this way. ¹¹Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

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PLAN AND PIN

Does my mouth hold blessings or cursing regarding my husband? When he is around?
When he is not around?

More Conversation Starters

Proverbs 12:25; 16:24; 19:13; 21:19; 31:26-28; Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:3-4.

DAY FOUR

THE POWER OF WORDS IN OUR FRIENDSHIPS



Our words should provide encouragement and solace

Said of Job, whom God called “righteous”

JOB 4:3-4, ESV

*³Behold, you have instructed many,
and you have strengthened the weak hands.*

*⁴Your words have upheld him who was stumbling,
and you have made firm the feeble knees.*

**For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friends;
so that he does not forsake the fear of the Almighty. [Job 6:14](#)**

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

PULL OUT

POSE

PLAN AND PIN

Job's plea to his friends during his darkest hour

JOB 16:2-5, HCSB

²*I have heard many things like these.*

You are all miserable comforters.

³*Is there no end to your empty words?*

What provokes you that you continue testifying?

⁴*If you were in my place I could also talk like you.*

*I could string words together against you
and shake my head at you, but I wouldn't.*

⁵*I would encourage you with my mouth,*

and the consolation from my lips would bring relief.

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

PULL OUT

POSE

PLAN AND PIN

Am I a trustworthy confidant for my friends? Am I a safe haven of encouragement and support?

Our words should build up and spur on to spiritual maturity

EPHESIANS 4:29-32, AMP

²⁹Let no foul or polluted language, nor evil word nor unwholesome or worthless talk [ever] come out of your mouth, but only such [speech] as is good and beneficial to the spiritual progress of others, as is fitting to the need and the occasion, that it may be a blessing and give grace (God's favor) to those who hear it. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God [do not offend or vex or sadden Him], by Whom you were sealed (marked, branded as God's own, secured) for the day of redemption (of final deliverance through Christ from evil and the consequences of sin). ³¹Let all bitterness and indignation and wrath (passion, rage, bad temper) and resentment (anger, animosity) and quarreling (brawling, clamor, contention) and slander (evil-speaking, abusive or blasphemous language) be banished from you, with all malice (spite, ill will or baseness of any kind). ³²And become useful and helpful and kind to one another, tender-hearted (compassionate, understanding, loving-hearted), forgiving one another [readily and freely], as God in Christ forgave you.

Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man's counsel is sweet to his friend. **Proverbs 27:9**

GROUP DISCUSSION

- Ask an honest friend to answer these questions about you: Am I a positive and encouraging friend? Do you feel comfortable coming to me for advice?
- How can we consciously use our words to encourage friends?



PORE AND PARAPHRASE

PULL OUT

POSE

PLAN AND PIN

Are my friendships only filled with superficial conversation or are they filled with purposeful attempts to bless, forgive, give grace, and express kindness, understanding, and forgiveness? How can I direct a conversation today toward spiritual things?

More Conversation Starters

Psalm 50:19-21; Proverbs 15:2-4; Jeremiah 9:7-9; 2 Timothy 2:16.23; James 5:9,13-15; 1 Peter 3:8-12; 4:9.

DAY FIVE

THE POWER OF WORDS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD



PSALM 103:1-6, AMP

¹Bless (affectionately, gratefully praise) the Lord, O my soul; and all that is [deepest] within me, bless His holy name!

²Bless (affectionately, gratefully praise) the Lord, O my soul, and forget not [one of] all His benefits—

³Who forgives [every one of] all your iniquities, Who heals [each one of] all your diseases,

⁴Who redeems your life from the pit and corruption, Who beautifies, dignifies, and crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercy;

⁵Who satisfies your mouth [your necessity and desire at your personal age and situation] with good so that your youth, renewed, is like the eagle's [strong, overcoming, soaring]!

⁶The Lord executes righteousness and justice [not for me only, but] for all who are oppressed.

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

PULL OUT

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Do I purposefully turn my attention to the things the Lord has done for me and engage in concentrated times of affectionate, grateful praise to Him? How can I remind myself of His benefits throughout the day and take time to bless Him for them?

HEBREWS 13:15-16

¹⁵Through Him [Jesus] then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. ¹⁶And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

PULL OUT

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PLAN AND PIN

What circumstance am I facing right now in which it is the most difficult for me to offer God praise? Stop now and find something in that situation to make the sacrifice of praise.

The Lord speaking of His chosen people

ISAIAH 29:13-14, HCSB

¹³*The Lord said:*

*Because these people approach Me with their mouths
to honor Me with lip-service—
yet their hearts are far from Me,
and their worship consists of man-made rules
learned by rote—*

¹⁴*therefore I will again confound these people
with wonder after wonder.*

*The wisdom of their wise men will vanish,
and the understanding of the perceptive will be hidden.*

PORE AND PARAPHRASE

PULL OUT

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More Conversation Starters

Psalms 12:3-4; 34:1-3; 71:24; 119:171-172; 145:1-2; Isaiah 50:4-5; Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Summarize your conversation with God this week. In what specific ways have you been challenged to yield your tongue to the Lord's control? What steps can you take immediately to obey? What has been the most meaningful day of conversation you have had this week? Why? What verse has stirred the deepest conversation?

GROUP DISCUSSION

- *How can speaking praise to God even when we don't feel especially praiseful change our hearts?*
- *What is the power in speaking God's Word out loud?*

