



## Communication: The Power of Words

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### P<sub>review</sub>

The words we use matter. What we say can build people up or tear them down. We must choose to build people up.

Icebreaker: Have students sit in a circle. Explain they are on a weird planet where sound does not travel, so they cannot talk. The pull of gravity will only allow them to stand for ten seconds; however, exactly four people must be standing at all times. They must communicate non-verbally to make this happen.

### P<sub>raise</sub>

Ask a student to share a word of praise that describes God. Moving around the room, have each student share a word. Once a word is shared, it cannot be repeated.

### P<sub>arable</sub>

*Ask the students:* By a show of hands, does anyone remember the first time someone made fun of you? Without sharing what was said, how did it make you feel?

*Ask the students:* By a show of hands, does anyone remember the first time someone complimented you? Without sharing what was said, how did it make you feel?

Which was easier to think of: the first time someone hurt you, or the first time someone complimented you?

### P<sub>resent</sub>

Have you ever heard the old saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me"? That's a lie! Words can hurt! We can very quickly think to a time when we were hurt by something someone said. Those words leave a lasting impression on us. They can shape who we are or even how much we value ourselves as a person. I've read stories of athletes who based all of their success on the fact that someone told them they couldn't



succeed, and they were driven to prove that person wrong. On the other hand, I've read countless stories of students who have taken their lives because of something derogatory someone said.

At the same time, words can also build you up. That's why you praise small children when they accomplish even the smallest feat, like tying their own shoes. That positive reinforcement affirms their value. Studies show that students who were poor performers turned the corner when placed with nurturing teachers that encouraged and reaffirmed them.

You may think, "That's silly! Why would anyone allow something someone says to affect him/her like that!" It's not silly, though. It's actually biblical. **Proverbs 18:21 (NKJV)** tells us that "death and life are in the power of the tongue."

## **P** practice

For this activity, you will need tape and a paper doll (you can draw a simple one and cut it out).

Hand the paper doll to the first student. Ask the student to share something hurtful that was said to him/her. This may be difficult for the student, but gently insist the student share something. After sharing, the student should tear a piece of paper off of the doll, then pass it on. This continues until the last student is reached.

After the last student does this, that student should share something that was said to him/her that made the student feel good. The student then attempts to tape the torn piece back where it came from. This continues in reverse order until every student has shared.

At the end, you should have a rather mangled paper doll. Continue with the lesson:

You see, our words have a permanent effect. No amount of good words or affirmation removed the scars of the negative things that happened to this doll. It is the same way with us. Those scars stay with us! This is why it is so important to speak kindly to people. We demonstrate the love of Christ not just with our actions, but also with our words. Every conversation is a chance to shine His light.

## **P** ray



Some of us in here have scars from things people have said that have hurt us. This paper doll couldn't be put back together. The scars are there forever unless we allow God to heal them. He's the only One who can mend a broken heart.

Not only that, but some of us have done this to other people with our words, maybe even people in this room.

Let's pray God will mend our broken hearts, and that He'll help us to reflect Him with our words and actions.

**P**lus

Think of three people at your school who either have said hurtful things to you, or you have said hurtful things to them. Between now and next time we meet, be intentional about building them up. Find things to compliment them about, and be friendly. Be prepared to share the next time we meet about how that affected your relationship with that person.