

Use Your Words: Connecting with People

Preview

God created us to have connections with other people and with Him. We can connect with Him through our words in prayer, and we can connect others to Him by speaking into their lives with inspiring words of kindness. Proverbs 18:21 (NIV) says, “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

Praise

We should be intentional in encouraging other people. When we use our words to connect with those around us, we are connecting them with grace. Solicit feedback here: Share a time when someone helped you with their words. What about a time someone gave you a compliment and it made your day?

Parable

Have you recently seen a public figure who blurted out something he or she later regretted? What happened after they said it? Do you think this person would change what they said after they saw the impact it had? Get four large tubes of toothpaste and four paper plates. Ask for four volunteers. Give the volunteers sixty seconds to squeeze as much toothpaste out of the tubes onto the plates as possible. Once the sixty seconds are up, instruct the volunteers to get as much toothpaste back into the tubes as they can in sixty seconds. After the final sixty seconds are up, explain how the toothpaste is like our words. They're very easy to let out, but much more difficult—even impossible—to take back. As we relate to each other as the body of Christ, we must intentionally speak in ways that give God glory.

Present

Read Proverbs 18:21 again.
God cast Lucifer out of Heaven with words.

God separated the darkness and created life with words. Joseph and Mary were comforted with words; they would be the earthly parents of the Savior.

Jesus healed sicknesses, performed miracles, and forgave sins with words.

Jesus' disciples evangelized a good portion of the planet with words.

Words—both good and bad—have power. Words are the delivery method for a message to be received:

“Your baby is healthy and looks beautiful.”

“I'm afraid we're going to need to let you go.”

“It looks like the cancer has spread.”

“I would like to offer you this promotion.”

Read James 3:1–8. These verses urge us to consider the power of the tongue—we shouldn't be quick to dominate all conversations.

A horse's powerful body is directed by a small bit in its mouth.

Ships are driven by strong winds but are controlled by a tiny rudder.

Massive wildfires are usually started by a very small spark. James even goes on to say that “no man can tame the tongue” (James 3:8, NKJV).

At the end of the day, our words should connect people with grace. “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6, NIV).

a) When people are in need, connect them with grace. When people are upset, connect them with grace. When people are hurting, connect them with grace.

b) In a world full of bad news, we can be the light in someone's world to encourage and offer hope in Jesus.

c) We can bring a smile to someone's face who is weighed down by the cares of life. How? By connecting that person with grace.

Grace can be defined as “unmerited favor.” When we're connecting with people in our church, our words should reflect the grace we've been given. “But they don't deserve it”—neither did we! “But they didn't speak kindly to me”—we're still called to connect them with grace.

Matthew 12:34 says the things that come out of a person's

mouth come from the heart. So to speak with grace, you need grace in your heart. A person who says mean things has a mean heart; a person who says negative things has a negative heart, and vice versa.

Practice

Depending on how much time you have, either read through each of these verses or just give a quick overview:

1. Get wisdom points just by staying silent.
 - a) Read Proverbs 17:28.
 - b) Depending on the situation, it may be best to simply stay silent instead of saying the first thing that comes to mind.
2. Say your words aloud and ask yourself if they're gentle.
 - c) Read Proverbs 15:1.
 - d) If you're struggling with how to respond to someone, ask a friend to listen to what you want to say and give you honest feedback.
3. Pray that your words would be acceptable to God.
 - e) Read Psalm 19:14.
 - f) Frequently ask this convicting question: "Are these words acceptable to You, God?"
4. Pray that God would guard your mouth.
 - g) Read Psalm 141:3.
 - h) If you're needing God to give you wisdom with your words, ask Him to help you.
5. Listen before answering.
 - i) Read Proverbs 18:13.
 - j) Ever speak with someone and you can tell they're itching to answer before you're even done speaking? It's frustrating and does not connect others with grace. How much better it is to listen gracefully.
6. Speak gracefully in Jesus' name.
 - k) Read Colossians 3:17.
 - l) It's hard to yell at someone in Jesus' name. It's difficult to say unkind things to someone in Jesus' name. To speak on behalf of the name of Jesus, we need grace in our hearts.

Pray

Lord, help me to consider the power of my words and stay silent when I should. When I do speak, let me be gentle and full of wisdom. I want my words to reflect who You are, so

help my speech to be acceptable to You. Help me to guard my tongue whenever I'm angry, upset, or frustrated. Help me to be quick to listen and speak gracefully.

Plus

Challenge for this week:

1. Send text messages to others in your P7 Club (or anyone in the school) letting them know you're praying for them, you believe in them, and so on (anything to encourage them and connect them with grace).
2. Write handwritten notes to others letting them know you support them and you see what God is doing in their lives.