



# The POWER of Words

A Lesson Plan  
Guide for Parents



# The Power of Words Lesson Plan

This original lesson plan is provided to you by Tabitha Philen at MeetPenny.com and is not to be duplicated in any form or fashion. You may use the contents of this lesson plan for free events at church or school, or in the context of personal or family study. None of the contents within this lesson plan should be captured by audio or video without the express written permission of Tabitha Philen who can be contacted at [tabithaphilen@gmail.com](mailto:tabithaphilen@gmail.com).

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>STEP ONE - Understanding the power of the tongue, words</b>	<b>4</b>
Taming the Tongue	4
Why do we say mean things?	5
<b>STEP TWO - The power of words object lesson</b>	<b>7</b>
What does the Bible say about the tongue?	7
What does the Bible say about the power of words?	8
<b>Frequently asked questions when teaching children about the power of the tongue</b>	<b>13</b>
What if this doesn't work for my children?	13
My child says he is "just teasing." How can I teach him that teasing is wrong?	13
What should I do if my child lies?	14
How can I stop my child from interrupting others?	15
If my child uses words to bully, what can I do?	15
<b>Additional Resources</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>About the Author</b>	<b>18</b>

## STEP ONE - Understanding the power of the tongue and words

Words can hurt. Regardless of what childhood rhymes say, some words can leave bruises and scars that last a lifetime.

So what can parents do to teach our children the power of words? How can we help our children understand that words can hurt or heal? And that we have a choice to make: use words that destroy or words that encourage.

### **Taming the Tongue**

I have a hard time controlling my mouth. Taming the tongue has never been a skill I could claim to have mastered. As a matter of fact, I often say that my filter is broken.

But, because the Bible tells us that the tongue holds the power of life and death, I am trying to be better at what I say to or about others.

And not just because God says controlling my tongue is important but because I have children looking at me as a role model.

That's the scariest part!

No matter what lessons we teach, our children will be mouthy and disrespectful with their words if we are.

You know what that means for you and I?

The first step towards teaching our children the power of words is taming the tongue in our own mouths.

## **Why do we say mean things?**

I would love to direct this solely at our children. But, if we are honest, I think children and adults struggle with similar emotions that cause poor word choices.

For most of us, we don't plan to be rude or to say careless words. Mean things seem to roll off our tongue unexpectedly.

In reality, the source of those words can be deeply rooted.

### **We are hurting.**

I think one of the primary reasons for angry words is pain. For example, have you ever heard the saying, "Hurt people hurt people?"

It's true.

When I am hurting (physically, spiritually, or mentally,) I often say things I do not mean.

Children can react to situations and emotions with angry and hurtful words the same way we do as adults.

### **We desire attention.**

Another reason mean words can flow easily from our mouths... we want attention.

I like making people laugh and sometimes - though it hurts to admit - I might say something funny about a person in order to humor those around me.

Gah! It's terrible to make someone else the punchline of a joke.

Children who want to get the attention of a group or want to be recognized will often poke fun at a person. At that moment, they are so focused on being noticed they forget the person has feelings.

**We want to feel better than someone else.**

Now we are getting super honest, but I recognize this might not apply to everyone.

When someone is in the spotlight, a spotlight that we wanted for ourselves, we might say hurtful things about the person receiving the recognition.

Or, maybe a different situation would be that we want to feel better about ourselves so we say something mean about someone else.

## STEP TWO - The power of words object lesson

This object lesson is based on a conversation I had with my own children after a weekend of hearing them say mean, hurtful things to one another.

Supplies:

- Two jar candles with lids
- A lighter or match (to light the candles)
- A toothpick or bamboo skewer

Before you bring the children together for the lesson, remove the lids from each candle and light the candles. Keep the lids close by as one will be needed during the lesson.

### **What does the Bible say about the tongue?**

Ask your children: In what ways does your tongue work?

Allow the children to list different things that the tongue does.

You can expect answers such as “for tasting,” “for helping to make sounds,” and/or “for shaping words.”

Then, ask your children, “What kind of power does the tongue have?”

Younger children might struggle to grasp the meaning of this statement.

After giving a little time for discussion, say:

“The Bible actually tells us about the power of the tongue.”

Read Proverbs 18:21 from the Bible:

*“The tongue has the power of life and death,  
and those who love it will eat its fruit.”*

[Proverbs 18:21 New International Version](#)

Emphasize that the Bible says the tongue has the power of life and death.

Say to your children: “That means the words you speak can bring life or death to the person who hears them.”

## **What does the Bible say about the power of words?**

Ask the children to describe “words of death.”

Allow them to mention specific words that might hurt or to talk about situations and examples they have personally experienced or witnessed.

Then, ask the children to describe “words of life.”

Ask if they can remember a situation when someone said something nice to them. Ask them to describe how those kind words made them feel.

Say: “The Bible tells us about words of life.”

Then read Ephesians 4:29:

© Tabitha Philen of MeetPenny.com

May contain affiliate links.

*“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”*

[Ephesians 4:29 English Standard Version](#)

According to this verse, words of life have three purposes:

1. Good for building up a person - making people feel better about themselves and teaching other how God feels about them
2. Fits the occasion - actively listening to the other person when they speak instead of thinking of what we will say next or changing the subject
3. Gives grace to all who hear - speaking carefully because our words impact everyone who who can hear us whether we are speaking to them or not

Draw attention to the candles.

Explain that the flame represents the thoughts and feelings inside a person. The lids represent words of death.

Place the lid over a candle and ask the children to explain what happened.

Say: “Our words have the power to heal or to kill.”

Read Proverbs 12:18 NIV:

*“The words of the reckless pierce like swords,  
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”*

## [Proverbs 12:18 New International Version](#)

Ask your children: “What would happen if someone was pierced with a real sword?”

Remind the children that our words are so powerful they can kill the hope, love, joy, and peace inside another person.

Say: “But our words can also bring healing.”

Remove the lid from the candle and use the toothpick to transfer light from the lit candle to the larked candle.

Say: “But our words and how we use them can also bring light into someone’s life.”

Emphasize that what you say to someone in an angry moment matters.

Read Proverbs 15:1:

“A soft answer turns away wrath,  
But a harsh word stirs up anger.”

[Proverbs 15:1 New King James Version](#)

Ask: “So how can we control our tongues? Let’s see what the Bible says.”

Next, read James 1:19:

“So then, my beloved brethren,  
let every man be swift to hear,

slow to speak, slow to wrath;"  
[James 1:19 New King James Version](#)

Ask the children to explain what these three pieces of the verse mean:

- Swift to hear (or listen)
- Slow to speak
- Slow to wrath (or to become angry)

With my children, I explained each piece of the passage this way:

- Swift to hear (or listen) - I am actively listening. I am leaning into the person and paying attention.
- Slow to speak - I am not interrupting. I am not thinking about what I will say next. I am listening so I can choose my words wisely.
- Slow to wrath (or to become angry) - I am not going to let my emotions control me and make me speak without thinking.

You can use this opportunity to talk to your children about recognizing what their body does when they are becoming angry.

Maybe they tighten their fists or lock their jaw. Perhaps their forehead wrinkles up.

When they can feel their body tense, this is the moment they need to stop and relax.

Teach your children to breathe deeply (in through the nose and out through the mouth) and slowly. Guide them through relaxing their hands and face.

Finally, role-play a situation with the children.

Mention a time you remember (without using their names) when the children were fighting.

Ask the children to plan how they would respond in that situation using what they know about words of life and death and how the Bible says we should control our tongues.

After working together to come up with a plan for reactions in the future, pray together and ask God to help your children choose their word more carefully.

## Frequently asked questions when teaching children about the power of the tongue

As you have worked through this object lesson, you might still have some questions.

### **What if this doesn't work for my children?**

My children struggled at first too. Remember that we are all creatures of habit. Our first instinct is to respond the way we always have.

Be patient with the children and remind them about the lesson. Practice relaxation and breathing techniques together. Discuss the plan you created and how you can improve so the plan works better.

Consistency is the key to making new habits.

Also, reward your children when you hear or see them reacting in a positive way. If you hear them using words of life, tell them, "I heard what you said and that was a great way to use words of life. Good job!"

### **My child says he is "just teasing." How can I teach him that teasing is wrong?**

I have children who want to be funny and tease in order to get a laugh. That never ends well. Someone always gets hurt. So, I teach empathy, trying to see a situation and feel the emotions of the other person.

When I have a child who is teasing another, I encourage a conversation between the teaser and the child being teased. It can be awkward and uncomfortable but powerful when the teaser realizes how the other person feels.

Another option would be to cultivate compassion by having a child serve others. We have even gone so far as to drive through a different neighborhood so my children understand how different their lifestyle is from others. I tell them, "Every person is different and every person hurts in some hidden way. We have to be careful not to be the trigger that makes a person hate himself or others.

## **What should I do if my child lies?**

Personally, lying is the one thing I will not tolerate. In order to avoid the children feeling the need to lie, I encourage open and honest conversations. I guard my reactions to what they tell me so they feel safe. I tell them, "There is nothing you can say to me or tell me that will ever make me stop loving you."

However, when lies sneak out in conversation, I am quick to correct the child by confronting them with the truth. The punishment is determined by the lie.

Was it a lie that would benefit them in some way? Like they would get to go somewhere or do something? Then they cannot go.

Did the lie come from something related to academics? They lose their electronics and have to spend that time reading or studying.

Did they lie about doing their chores? Then they get extras.

## **How can I stop my child from interrupting others?**

Interrupting others is a big problem in my household too.

When my children were younger, I tried to train them to listen when others were speaking by having the person talking hold an object. When they were done speaking, they would hand the object to another person and that person could speak. I would ask the children to hand the object back and forth but to only speak when holding it.

As older children, I pull the empathy lesson out again. I might ask, "How does it feel to be interrupted?"

If I am the one being interrupted, I will just stop talking and stare at the person who started talking over me. I might say something like, "I'm sorry. I was speaking."

## **If my child uses words to bully, what can I do?**

This is the toughest situation ever. It is very painful to be bullied or to have a child who is bullied. But to find out your child is the aggressor...

Teaching your child to NOT be a bully is hard because there has to be a source deep down inside that is causing the aggression. I personally recommend seeking professional help, someone other than you who can talk to your child about their feelings and get to the source of the behavior.

In addition to counseling, try spending more time one on one with your child doing things they enjoy. When you see them doing something well, give praise.

Teaching basic manners (like holding a door open for others or saying “please” and “thank you”) can help a child overcome a bullying instinct too. Using manners is a first step towards transferring a child’s attention from themselves to serving others.

And, if I find my child bullying another, I punish them where it hurts the most. I take whatever it is that they love (i.e. gaming electronics, art supplies, cell phone, etc.) I want them to have plenty of time to serve others and to think about how to change their behavior.

## Additional Resources

- [A Kid's Guide to the Power of Words by Tony Evans](#) at Amazon
- [The Power in Words: An Empowering Guide to Speaking With Purpose by Meaghan Axel](#) at Amazon
- [52 Essential Conversation Cards: Social Emotional Learning Activities for Kids, Teens, & Family, Building Social Skills, Positive Attitude & Behaviors](#) at Amazon

### Teasing

- [The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Teasing by Stan Berenstain](#) at Amazon
- [When Your Child Teases Other Kids](#) at Family Education

### Bullying

- [What Is Empathy?: A Bullying Storybook for Kids by Amanda Morin](#) at Amazon
- [What God's Word Says about Bullying: The Bible Promise Book for Kids by Janice Thompson](#) at Amazon
- [My Child Is a Bully: What Should I Do?](#) at Child Mind Institute

### Interrupting

- [My Mouth Is A Volcano by Julia Cook](#) at Amazon
- [Simple Steps To Help Your Child Stop Interrupting](#) at Positive Parenting Connections
- [What It Really Means When Your Child Interrupts You](#) at Child of the Redwoods Podcast

## About the Author

Tabitha Philen is married and mom to five children (ages 18 and under.) She has worked voluntarily and vocationally with children (ages birth through high school) in Christian ministry for over 30 years. Her education includes a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science in Religion as well as studies in Christian Childhood Education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Tabitha currently resides in Mobile, Alabama.