

# *Winsome:*

## THE POWER OF WORDS

### GETTING STARTED

“Sticks and stones can break my bones but, words will never hurt me.” These are words many of us have heard in our childhood. But, as we grow, we realize that mean-spirited words can be even more hurtful over a lifetime than broken bones. In another sense, words of encouragement can change the trajectory of one’s life.

Proverbs 12:25 says: “anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.” This world is full of angry and hurtful words. But, as followers of Jesus we are called to use our words differently.

We are in a series where we are trying to consider a new way of being in a world filled with distress. We are trying to become “Good News” people...people who live differently than the way of the world. Winsome is defined as “attractive or appealing in appearance or character.” As Christians we want focus on the way we show up for the world.

### OPENING PRAYER

Father, we come before you now in need of your presence to help us to live in your ways. Grant to each of us the gift of your Spirit, for without it, we can do nothing. Teach us your ways, that we may live a life that aligns with the person of Jesus. We pray this in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### STARTER QUESTION

If you did a survey and asked the average person on the street what part of their body, holds the power of life and death? What do you believe the most common answers would be? (Brain, heart, lungs)

## READ ALOUD

Consider reading the passages twice in different translations.

### PROVERBS 18:21

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

### JAMES 3:5-12 (NIV)

5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe why you think it's so hard to tame (hold) the tongue.
2. Scripture describes the tongue as setting a fire. What are some other words you can use to describe the effects of hurtful speech? (i.e. divorce, broken friendships/relationships, lowered self-esteem)
3. What are some bad fruits that you allow in your life that effect your speech and the way you speak to others? (i.e. news, social media, negative influences)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

4. What are some creative ways you can use your words or acts of kindness to strengthen or affirm someone? (i.e. ask forgiveness when you've hurt others, write an encouraging letter, speak out the good things you see in others)

5. (Question for reflection) What do our words say about the condition of our heart?

## PRAYER MINISTRY TIME

The Bible tells us in our human ability we can never tame our tongues. That can be discouraging and could cause condemnation for those really trying. But, God provided us with the Holy Spirit to help us. With the Spirit of God living in you, using your words for good is possible. As we pray today, spend time thanking God for his love. Spend a few moments remembering that there is no condemnation in those who are in Christ Jesus. Nothing can separate us from him. Now, ask the Holy Spirit to come help you. Pray for people that have hurt you with their words. Now pray for people you have hurt with your words.

## FURTHER REFLECTION & ACTION

A woman once came to John Wesley and said she knew what her talent was and she said, "I think my talent from God is to speak my mind." Wesley replied, "I don't think God would mind if you buried that talent."

Speaking forth everything that comes to mind is unwise, poisonous speech. Before you are tempted to answer or speak in a harsh way, pause and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you.

This week, if you know your words have wounded someone, ask the Holy Spirit to show you and to give you the resolve to ask for forgiveness and make amends.

Ask the Lord to show you one person you can bless this week with an encouraging word.