

Bible Lesson: Words Matter

By Rachel L. Galarneau

Opening Game Option:

Ask students to fill in the blanks to these popular quotes.

“To be, or (not to be). That is the question.”—*Macbeth*, Shakespeare

“Ask not what your country can do for you, but (what you can do for your country).”—John F. Kennedy

“Luke, I am (your father).”—Darth Vader, *The Empire Strikes Back*

“An apple a day keeps (the doctor away).”—Benjamin Franklin

“Slow and steady (wins the race).”—“The Tortoise and the Hare,” *Aesop’s Fables*

“Eeny, meeny, miney, moe... (Catch a tiger by its toe).”—*Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes*

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, (but have everlasting life).”—John 3:16, The Holy Bible

“If you have a complete set of salad bowls and they all say Cool Whip on the side, you might be (a redneck).”—Jeff Foxworthy

“With great power comes great (responsibility).”—Voltaire (or Spiderman, *whatever*)

“All is fair in love (and war).”—Anonymous Proverb

“(Elementary), my dear Watson.”—*Sherlock Holmes*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

“(Bond), James (Bond).”—James Bond

“There’s no place like (home).”—Dorothy Gale, *Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum

“Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone (in the light).”—Hellen Keller

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are (Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness).”—The Declaration of Independence

“Off with her (head)!”—Henry III

“Let me show you how it’s done, (Loser!)”—Babe Ruth

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, (but words will never hurt me).”—Anonymous Proverb

Discussion Questions:

Do you think the final quote is true—that words never hurt us?

Why or why not?

As in our game, we have a tendency to remember what someone has said to us. Why?

What makes our words so important?

How do our words affect others?

Are there words we shouldn't say?

Why or why not?

What makes a word good or bad?

Object Lesson:

Take a tube of toothpaste, a spoon and a paper plate. Ask for a volunteer. Ask the volunteer to squirt some of the toothpaste onto the paper plate. He can do however much or however little he wants. He can use the whole tube if his heart desires (whatever he feels is a good amount). When he is done, ask the student to put the toothpaste back into the tube.

When done with this exercise, explain this is how words work. Once a thing is spoken, it cannot be taken back. Sometimes the words we use take years to apologize for and/or overcome. If one spreads gossip, trust is broken. Trust is hard to regain. If one cusses another person out, a relationship can be lost because one person is offended and hurt by the other. (Feel free to share examples, and let your students share their own experiences of being hurt by someone else's words.)

Bible Time:

Let's look at the Bible to see what God has to say about how we use our words.

Colossians 3:8

Why are such forms of speech bad? (They hurt others, and they hurt/lower our own character.)

Ephesians 4:29

What should we ask ourselves before we speak? (Is it going to lift up another person, or is it going to tear down another person?)

James 3:2

Do you agree with this statement? Why would keeping your tongue in check be a mark of virtue? (If one is able to control his or her words, he or she will have no reason for regret.)

Philippians 4:8

What type of things should we say? (Good things.)

Real Life Example:

There once was a man who became a great leader because he learned the value of words. His name? Abraham Lincoln. When Lincoln was a young man, he liked to write insulting letters that criticized people, including politician John Shields. As a result, Shields challenged Lincoln to a duel to the death. Opposed to dueling, Lincoln could find no way out and still save honor. However, on the appointed day, Shields was convinced to give up the fight. This was a close call—one that Lincoln never forgot. From that day on, he rarely said anything disparaging and strived not to abuse other people with words. Even after Gen. Meade failed to end the war by listening to Lincoln's orders to conquer the surrounded southern army at the Potomac, Lincoln merely wrote a letter. Meade never saw the ridicule written in the letter because Lincoln never mailed it; it was found in Lincoln's desk after his death.

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