

Leader's Guide

Strengthening the Family: *Words That Build Up*

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The goal of this conversation is to help us recognize how our words are a reflection of our hearts, to help us identify the heart issues that influence the way we communicate, and to encourage one another to respond to others with the same grace and forgiveness we ourselves have received from Christ.

Question 1

What is the one point that stood out to you most from this week's message from Clarke?

Teaching Point

Although we're all in the same room, each person might hear something different in a sermon like this. That's the beauty of how the Holy Spirit works.

Follow-Up Prompts

- Why do you think that particular point you mentioned caught your attention the way it did?
- Was there a statement, illustration, or Scripture that stayed with you?
- Did anything challenge the way you normally think or communicate?
- Was there anything you found encouraging or convicting?

Additional Scriptures

- James 1:22-25 Don't just listen to the Word; put it into practice.
- Hebrews 4:12 God's Word exposes the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

Question 2

Read Ephesians 4:29-32, and then think about your conversations over the past week. Can you think of a situation where it was hard to speak words of life that would build up the other person?

Teaching Point

Paul doesn't simply tell believers to stop speaking hurtful words, he calls us to replace them with words that strengthen, encourage, and extend grace. The point here isn't to be fake, but to genuinely speak in a way that reflects Christ. We all struggle at times, which is why these conversations are so important.

Follow-Up Prompts

- What made that conversation difficult that you mentioned?
- What were you feeling at that moment?
- Looking back, is there anything that you could have said differently?
- Have you ever experienced someone speaking life into you at exactly the right moment? If yes, what impact did it have?

Additional Scriptures

- Proverbs 15:1 - A gentle answer turns away wrath.
- Proverbs 18:21 - Life and death are in the power of the tongue.
- Colossians 4:6 - Let your conversation always be full of grace.

Question 3

Read Matthew 12:33-37. Unfortunately our words reveal what's in our hearts. What heart issue (bitterness, pride, impatience, fear, the need to be right, etc.) do you see showing up in your life that needs to be dealt with?

Teaching Point

Jesus teaches that our mouths don't create the problem, they just reveal it. Change doesn't happen by simply trying to control our speech. Change happens when we allow God to completely transform our hearts.

Follow-Up Prompts

- When does this heart issue usually surface?
- What tends to trigger it?

- How has it affected your closest relationships?
- What truth from God's Word speaks directly to that struggle?

Additional Scriptures

- Psalm 139:23-24 - Search me, O God, and know my heart.
- Ezekiel 36:26 - God gives us a new heart.
- James 3:2-12 - The tongue reveals what is within.

Question 4

Reflect a bit on the high price that Jesus paid on the cross to purchase our forgiveness. How should that affect how we respond to someone who has hurt, frustrated, or disappointed us? Forgiveness might seem impossible, but Jesus' words are pretty clear in Matthew 6:14-15 on what He expects of us.

Teaching Point

Forgiveness is one of the clearest demonstrations of the gospel. We don't forgive because people deserve it, we forgive because Christ forgave us. Forgiveness doesn't minimize wrongs, or make everything "go away" but it releases our right to seek revenge and entrusts justice to God. Forgiveness is necessary but it can also be a process at times.

Follow-Up Prompts

- Why do you think forgiveness is so difficult?
- What's the difference between forgiving someone and pretending nothing happened?
- How does remembering God's forgiveness change your perspective?
- Is there someone God may be prompting you to forgive or extend grace toward?

Additional Scriptures

- Colossians 3:13 - Forgive as the Lord forgave you.
- Romans 12:17-21 - Overcome evil with good.
- Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving.

Question 5

This week, if you find yourself in a difficult conversation, try practicing the steps Clarke talked about by pausing and asking these three questions:

- **Is what I'm about to say helpful?**
- **Is it what this person needs right now?**
- **Will it build them up?**

Teaching Point

Spiritual growth doesn't just happen accidentally, it happens by us being intentional. The goal this week isn't perfection but to develop a new rhythm. A simple pause can often create enough space for the Holy Spirit to redirect our words before they leave our mouths.

Follow-Up Prompts

- Who is one person you'll likely have an opportunity to practice this with this week?
- Which of the three questions will be the hardest for you to remember?
- What could remind you to pause before responding?

Additional Scriptures

- James 1:19-20 - Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.
- Psalm 141:3 - "Set a guard over my mouth, Lord."