

ENCOURAGE
ONE AN  OTHER

Goal:
Lift each other up!

Scripture Verses:
James 3:1-18; 5:16

Choose Your Opening

Option 1: Like a Fire

(For this activity, provide a large sheet of newsprint, markers, matches, and a Bible. Find a safe place outside for a burn can or fire pit in which you can burn the newsprint.)

Take kids outside, near the fire pit. If possible, form a circle around the newsprint. Have someone read aloud James 3:3-6. Have kids shout words or phrases that can "burn like fire" when used against others. These could be any names that are "put downs" or meant to hurt. List these words or phrases on the newsprint.

Ask:

- *How can these words influence your life when they are used about you?
- *What happens to your friendships when you use these kinds of words in times of anger or haste?
- *How can this be compared to a forest fire? Explain

Hold the newsprint by one corner over the metal container.

Say: Words can burn, even when they're said as a joke. They can cause irreparable damage in a matter of seconds.

Have someone light the bottom corner of the newsprint with a match.

When the fire is burning well, but before it endangers your hands or clothing, lower it into the burn area.

Then Ask:

- *Can we put this paper back together to remove the words from it?
- *How is this like or unlike words spoken in anger to family or friends?

Explain

Say: Today we're going to look at ways to use our tongues to encourage and bring peace rather than to hurt and anger.

Option 2: Big Damage

(For this activity, fill two clear pitchers with water. You'll also need a box of cornstarch; a packet of sweetened, dry, fruit-flavored drink mix; one large spoon; and small cups)

Hold up one pitcher of water, and **Ask**: Who is willing to take a drink? When kids raise their hands, drop a spoonful of cornstarch into the water, and stir it up. **Ask** again. Repeat this process with the other pitcher but, instead of cornstarch, drop the fruit-flavored drink mix into this pitcher and stir.

Then **Ask**:

*What difference did what I added make in your desire to drink the water from the first pitcher? From the second?

*How is this like or unlike words you "drop" at times when you are talking to people?

Say: Cornstarch isn't a bad thing, but it made the water unpleasant to drink. The fruit-flavored drink mix made the water in the second pitcher seem more drinkable. It sure made it colorful!

The Bible tells us about a very little thing that can be used for good or can cause a lot of damage. Today we're going to be looking at how important it is to control it. I'm talking about your tongue.

THE BIBLE EXPERIENCE

Big Difference

(For this activity, you'll need a sheet of paper, a pencil, and a craft stick for each person. Have a Bible and a large basin of water ready)

Have each person make a paper boat from a sheet of paper using the diagram in the margin. Have kids write their names on their boats and open the bottom of the boats slightly so they will stand up. Give each child a chance to float their boats and blow them across the water in the basin.

Now give each person a craft stick. Have kids make rudders by inserting their sticks into the bottom of their boats along the angle of the triangle in the middle so the stick protrudes about an inch from the bottom of the boat. Have kids test their boats again by blowing them across the water. Then set the boats aside to dry, and

Ask:

*What was it like when you tried to blow your boat across the water the first time? The second time?

*What made the difference?

Read aloud James 3:3-5. Ask:

*How is your tongue like the rudder you put on your boat?

*How does your tongue affect what you do?

*How does your tongue help you? Hurt you?

*How does your tongue sometimes hurt other people?





Damage Control

(For this activity, you'll need Bibles, pencils, and paper)

Have each child imagine they are a group. **Say:** Your group is an immigration inspection committee. The tongue has just applied for permanent entry into your country. You must decide if it is too great a risk to allow the tongue into your country. First read aloud James 3:3-10. Make a list of damaging things the tongue does. Include in your list damaging things mentioned in the passage and things you know from personal experience. Then decide whether the tongue should be admitted to your country.

Give the kids about 5 minutes to complete their lists and make their decisions, then have them report to the class.

Ask:

- *Without mentioning names, how has someone's tongue hurt you?
- *How have you hurt others with your tongue?
- *What kinds of things should we avoid saying with our tongues?

Then **Say:** Read James 3:8-10 again. Review your list of damaging things, and decide how we could make a conscious effort to change the way we use our tongues. See how many of these damaging things your group can turn into encouraging ideas. (give about 5 mins)

Say: Tongues are more powerful than most of us realize! They can do terrible damage, but with God's grace and our own conscious efforts, we can use our tongues to encourage and help others.

Choose Your Closing

Option 1: The Good Side

(For this activity, provide a Bible, a chalkboard/whiteboard and chalk/marker or newsprint and a marker, and a box or several bars of Bit-O-Honey candy)

Say: Another part of James tells us about things we can do to use our tongues in a positive way. (Read aloud James 5:16.)

Ask:

*What good uses for the tongue does this passage suggest?

*What are some words you can say to encourage others?

List kids' suggestions on the board or newsprint. Hand each child several pieces of Bit-O-Honey candy, then **Say:** Choose one of the good words and use it to encourage someone else. As you give encouragement, sweet words from the tongue, to someone else, give that person a piece of candy.

Give kids a couple of minutes to encourage one another, then close in prayer for one another.

Option 2: Tongue Stoppers

(For this activity, you'll need the boats from the "Big Difference" activity and pencils)

Have kids retrieve the boats they made earlier. Give each person a pencil.

Say: We all have a tendency to use words in hurtful ways. We listed some of those ways earlier. On the inside of your boat, write a note asking God to help you deal with one way you've been using words to hurt rather than to encourage or heal.

After some quiet time to think about what they've written, have them share what they wrote. Then have them suggest specific ways his or her partner can use what he or she has written to encourage others. Encourage each child to follow through with their commitments. Tell each child to keep their boats as a reminder that their tongues are like the rudder that guides a big ship with big consequences!

Close in prayer, thanking God for helping us to control our tongues and to give encouragement.