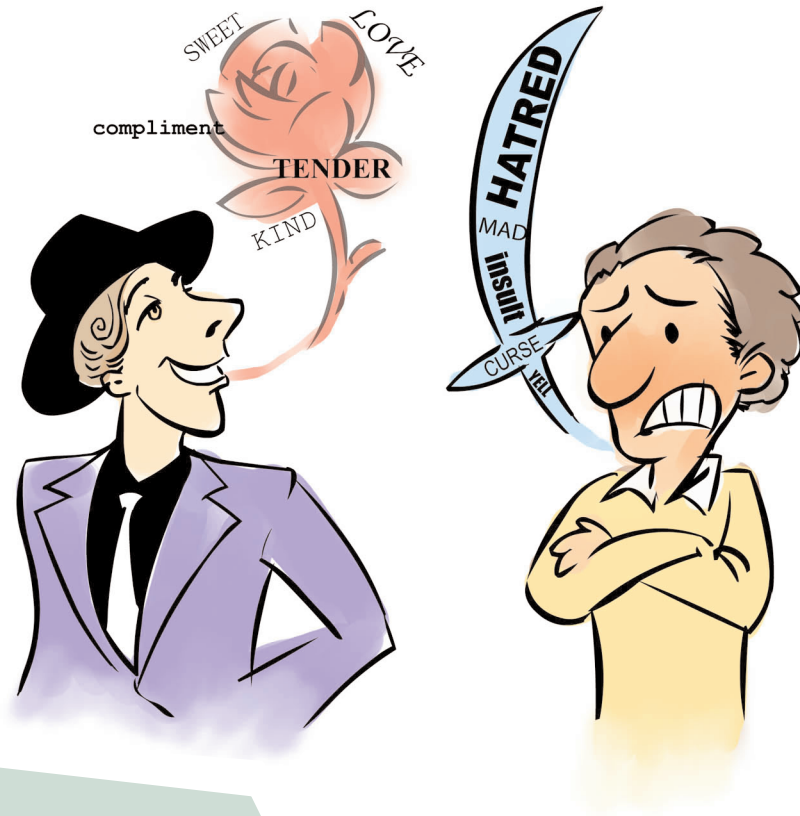


O ur Words



Getting Started

Words are powerful. A compliment makes us feel wonderful, and an insult can hurt for years. Since words are so powerful, it is wise to use them carefully. But unfortunately, not many people do. We've all spoken without thinking, and might have hurt someone without meaning to. Even worse is when we try to hurt people with our words. How can we learn to tame our tongues?

Improving Your Vocabulary

insult (n) - something said to hurt someone

tame (v) - to bring under control

flame (n) - fire

course of existence (n phr) - path of life

uncontrollable (adj) - unable to control

justice (n) - fair and honest judgment

wound (v) - to hurt

Reading God's Word

James 3:5-12

Just think how large a forest can be set on fire by a tiny flame! **6** And the tongue is like a fire. It is a world of wrong, occupying its place in our bodies and spreading evil through our whole being. It sets on fire the entire course of our existence with the fire that comes to it from hell itself. **7** We humans are able to tame and have tamed all other creatures - wild animals and birds, reptiles and fish. **8** But no one has ever been able to tame the tongue. It is evil and uncontrollable, full of deadly poison. **9** We use it to give thanks to our Lord and Father and also to curse other people, who are created in the likeness of God. **10** Words of thanksgiving and cursing pour out from the same mouth. My friends, this should not happen! **11** No spring of water pours out sweet water and bitter water from the same opening. **12** A fig tree, my friends, cannot bear olives; a grapevine cannot bear figs, nor can a salty spring produce sweet water.

Proverbs 12:17-19

When you tell the truth, justice is done, but lies lead to injustice. Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can heal. A lie has a short life, but truth lives on forever.

Ephesians 4:15

Instead by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head.

For further study, see Psalm 19:14; 141:3 and
Proverbs 12:25; 13:3 and 15:29.

Taking a Closer Look

1. How is the tongue “like a fire”? (James 3:6)

2. How have someone’s words made a big difference in your life? How do your words affect your relationships?

3. What good things do we use our tongues for? What bad things? (James 3:9-10)

4. Think about James 3:11-12. What do the spring of water and fig tree represent? How does this apply to our lives?

5. How are we all created? (James 3:9) Knowing this, how should we treat others?

6. Proverbs 12:17 tells us, “lies lead to injustice.” Have you seen this in your own life?

7. What does it mean to “speak the truth in a spirit of love”? How can we do this with our friends?

Taking Action

1. Make an effort to say more kind things more often. Try to say at least one encouraging thing to each of your family members and friends this week!
2. If you have hurt someone with your words in the past, remember that “wisely spoken words can heal.” (Proverbs 12:18) What can you say to this person to try to heal your relationship with them?

Memory Verse: Proverbs 18:21

What you say can preserve life or destroy it; so you must accept the consequences of your words.

Review the Vocabulary

Discuss your answers with a classmate.

1. What is something that is **uncontrollable**?
2. What is something that cannot be **tamed**?
3. Have you ever **insulted** someone without meaning to?
4. What are some things that can **wound** our bodies? What can **wound** our hearts and minds?
4. How should we fight for **justice** in this world?



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