



**Courteous  
communication**



Learn the knock-knock joke about interrupting and discover why “garbage talk” stinks. Check out these ideas and more for memorable lessons that help kids speak respectfully – even to siblings!

The activities in this lesson are designed to help kids:

- respond with kindness and gentleness
- show greater sensitivity to the feelings of others
- focus on encouraging others
- listen without interrupting.

In addition, this lesson helps address sarcasm, gossiping, bossiness, bragging, teasing, yelling and inattentiveness.

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## Parents’ prayer

As parents, we need to be positive role models for our kids. If you feel that courteous communication is an area of personal weakness, know that many parents struggle in this area. Use this sample prayer to ask God to help you, as well as your children, take this lesson to heart.

Alternatively, build your own prayer using some of the verses suggested under “Scripture-guided prayer for parents.”

### Sample prayer

Lord of All, Elihu heard Your voice in nature, and this is how he described it:

“Listen! Listen to the roar of His voice, to the rumbling that comes from His mouth. He unleashes His lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the earth. After that comes the sound of His roar; He thunders with His majestic voice. When His voice resounds, He holds nothing back. God’s voice thunders in marvelous ways; He does great things beyond our understanding” (Job 37:2-5).

In contrast, Elijah heard You speak in a gentle whisper, rather than in the wind, the earthquake or the fire (1 Kings 19:11-13). Father God, thank you that all of Your communication is based on Your great love for us.

Thank you for Your Son Jesus, whose sacrifice made it possible for me to have direct communication with You. It is a life-changing privilege to know, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14).

Thank you for the gift of Your Holy Spirit, who allows me to commune with You intimately (Romans 8:26-27).

Luke 4:22 says, “All spoke well of Him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from His lips.” They were talking about You, Jesus. What an example for us to follow! Lord, sometimes I hear my children speaking with impatience, sarcasm, unkindness or \_\_\_\_\_. They sound so much like me, and it is an embarrassing indication of my

own sinful nature. I would rather be Christ-like so that when my children imitate me, they are also a reflection of You and Your character.

You tell us in Your Word that out of the overflow of my heart my mouth speaks (Luke 6:45). Please fill me with Your mercy so I speak with kindness and gentleness, in a way that encourages rather than discourages. In all aspects of my communication, verbal and non-verbal, I would like to reflect a Christ-like attitude (Philippians 2:3). Jesus, my desire is to see people as You do. When I communicate with others, I want them to see Your love for them in me.

I bring my children to You. When \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are feeling upset, self-centered, or \_\_\_\_\_, rather than venting these negative feelings through hurtful language and actions, I pray that they will have a desire to go to You. Proverbs 13:3 says that *“He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly comes to ruin.”* I pray that Your Holy Spirit will help \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to guard their lips. At times when they are tempted to use their tongues to speak unkind words, please give them the strength of character to bless those who curse them (Luke 6:28). I pray that their hearts will be full of Your love and grace so that they can respond in all situations with gentleness, kindness and respect.

*“Before a word is on my tongue, You know it completely, O Lord”* (Psalm 139:4). In the name of Jesus Christ, I ask You to protect our family from Satan, who seeks to tempt us to use our tongues for harm instead of good (James 3:6). My prayer for our family is that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing in Your sight O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer (Psalm 19:14). Thank you, God, for the victory You have given us through Your Son, Jesus Christ. We want to live with Your power in us so that You can receive glory and honour through the way we interact with others. Amen.

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## **Scripture-guided prayer for parents**

*Read and pray through one or more of the selected Scriptures under each heading. Focus on listening to God and allowing His Spirit to direct you as you pray.*

### **Character focus**

Begin by letting God know how much you appreciate His sovereignty and desire to hear His voice.  
Job 38:1-2,34-36 | Job 42:1-6 | Mark 1:21-24 | John 14:23-27 | John 15:12-15

### **Heart search**

Acknowledge when and how you demonstrate a lack of courtesy personally.  
Psalm 34:11-13 | Proverbs 10:19 | Matthew 12:35-37 | James 1:19-20 | James 3:7-12

### **Gratitude**

Thank God for ways you have seen courtesy exhibited in your family.

### **Family requests**

Ask God to make you and your family courteous and Christ-like in your communication.  
Psalm 19:14 | Psalm 141:3 | Luke 4:22 | 1 Corinthians 13:1,4-7 | 1 Thessalonians 5:11

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## **Kids talk with God**

*Resolving to learn how to speak graciously is an act of love and obedience to God, but it's not easy. Use these sample prayers to help your children ask for God's help.*

*Alternatively, use the verses listed under “Scripture-guided prayer for children” to help your kids formulate an original prayer.*

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### **Sample prayers**

Dear God, please help me to guard my lips (Proverbs 13:3). Amen.

Dear God, please help me to have a wise tongue that heals instead of a reckless tongue that hurts others (Proverbs 12:18). Amen.

Dear God, I am very angry right now. Please help me to get a right attitude before I open my mouth. Amen.

Dear God, I want to hear Your voice. Help me to learn to listen. Amen.

Dear God, I have sinned in the way I \_\_\_\_\_ (spoke unkindly etc.). Please forgive me and send Your Holy Spirit to set a guard over my mouth and to keep watch over the door of my lips (Psalm 141:3). Amen.

Dear God, please watch over the door of my mouth so I don't say things to discourage others. Instead, help me to think of things I can say to build others up (Psalm 141:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:11).

### **Scripture-guided prayer for children**

*Read through one of the selected Scriptures under each heading and help your children pray based on the verse that you read. Encourage them to listen to God and allow His Spirit to guide them as they pray.*

#### **Character focus**

Begin by letting God know how much you appreciate Him and desire to hear His voice.

Job 40:9 | Luke 4:22 | John 14:23,25-26

#### **Heart search**

Acknowledge when and how you are not courteous.

Proverbs 13:3 | Proverbs 15:1 | James 1:19

#### **Gratitude**

Thank God for ways you have seen courtesy exhibited in your family.

#### **Personal requests**

Ask God to make you, your siblings and parents, courteous and Christ-like in your communication.

Psalm 19:14 | Psalm 141:3 | 1 Thessalonians 5:11

### **Speak a blessing**

*Compliments are a wonderful motivator! Try using these statements to draw attention to your children's progress – you'll keep them determined to make it a habit to speak respectfully.*

- What kind words those are, \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_, when you speak that way, it shows others that you respect them.

- \_\_\_\_\_, when you speak that way, it encourages me/others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ speaks courteously.
- You have blessed your friend by speaking that way, \_\_\_\_\_.
- You were wise to wait until you had calmed down before you spoke, \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Memory verses**

*Choose one verse and practice it regularly while your family is focusing on learning to speak courteously.*

Psalm 19:14 “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

Psalm 34:12-13 “Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.”

Psalm 139:4 “Before a word is on my tongue, you know it completely, O Lord.”

Psalm 141:3 “Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.”

Proverbs 10:19 “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.”

Proverbs 10:20 “The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value.”

Proverbs 12:14 “From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things . . .”

Proverbs 12:18 “Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

Proverbs 12:23 “A prudent man keeps his knowledge to himself, but the heart of fools blurts out folly.”

Proverbs 12:25 “An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.”

Proverbs 13:3 “He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.”

Proverbs 14:3 “A fool’s talk brings a rod to his back, but the lips of the wise protect them.”

Proverbs 15:1 “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Proverbs 15:4 “The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.”

Proverbs 16:24 “Pleasant words are like honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”

Proverbs 17:20 “. . . He whose tongue is deceitful falls into trouble.”

Proverbs 17:27 “A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.”

Proverbs 18:13 “He who answers before listening – that is his folly and his shame.”

Proverbs 21:23 “He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.”

Luke 6:45 “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

James 1:19 “My dear brothers take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”

James 3:9-10 “With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.”

## Kick-off craft

*In this activity, it’s okay to stick out your tongue! You’ll make a poster that tracks just how “sweet” your tongue is.*

### Honeycomb poster

#### Directions

- 1 Proverbs 16:24 says, “Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” To begin your poster, write this verse on a large sheet of paper. Use felt markers or stickers to decorate your poster with honeybees and a honeycomb design.
- 2 Glue a paper “tongue” along the bottom of the poster for each member of the family.
- 3 Draw or glue a picture of each family member above his or her “tongue.”

During the course of each day, listen for examples of your children speaking “pleasant words.” When pleasant words are spoken, place a check mark on the corresponding tongue. Let your children know that they can record your “score” as well. Allow each member of the family to exchange their check marks for sweet treats such as scoops of ice cream, honey on a spoon, candy or dried fruit snacks.

#### Other ideas

If you prefer not to use food as a reward, add stickers to the chart instead.

## Bible stories

Throughout the course of history, some things haven't changed. In both the Old and New Testament times people struggled to control their emotions – and how they expressed those emotions – just as we do today.

Choose one or two of the following Bible passages to read to your children. If the passage is too difficult for your kids to understand, use the summary provided in the “key concepts.” Use the questions for discussion to help your children internalize the Biblical truths and apply them to their own life.

### David has burning anger

Read Psalm 39:1-4,9,11.

#### Questions for discussion

1. Have you ever felt “burning” anger?
2. What did you say or do?
3. How did David describe his anger?
4. Who did David talk to when he was mad?
5. Why did David remain silent?

#### Key concepts

It can be hard to restrain ourselves from saying things we shouldn't. In Psalm 39, David said he remained silent when he was angry because he recognized that God was in control. Talking to God and remembering that God is in control can help us stay quiet even when we feel like yelling or saying hurtful things to others. God gives us instructions in the Bible to help us stay in control of the words we say (James 1:19-20). Pray, asking that God would give you wisdom to talk to him first when you are angry or upset as David did.

### Courteous communication habits

Read James 1:19-20.

#### Questions for discussion

1. Do you prefer talking or listening?
2. Which is easier for you to do?

3. What is the first thing many people do when they get mad?
4. What should we do first?
5. What should we be slow to do?
6. Why should we be slow to speak and become angry?
7. If we were to follow the Bible's instructions on communication, how would things be different at our house?

#### Key concepts

The Bible has very clear instructions on how to have harmony in communication. James wrote that we are to be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to get angry. Most people use poor communication skills, rather than those described in the Bible. Communication works better when we are focused on listening rather than speaking. Choosing to be patient and forgiving, rather than being quick to get angry with each other, helps keep our home peaceful.

- 1 Have your children practice filling in the blanks in this phrase from James 1:19: “Everyone should be quick to \_\_\_\_\_, slow to \_\_\_\_\_ and slow to become \_\_\_\_\_.”
- 2 Now pray James 1:19 aloud, allowing your children to fill in the missing words as you pray.

### Building what?

Read Psalm 52, Ephesians 4:29 and Jeremiah 9:23-24.

#### Questions for discussion

1. How do you feel when someone brags about what they have done?
2. How do you feel when another kid keeps talking about a new toy they have?
3. Do you like it when people talk about themselves a lot?
4. In Psalm 52, what were the people boasting about?



5. What do you or your friends boast about?
6. What will God do in the end for the person who boasts about evil?
7. Does boasting encourage others?
8. What kinds of things can we say that do help build others up?
9. In Jeremiah 9:23-24, what does it say we should boast about?

### Key concepts

It is better to let others praise us than to praise ourselves. No one likes to hear people boast and brag. We encourage others when we say kind things about them. The Bible tells us that the only thing that we should boast about is knowing God.

*Close by praying a prayer similar to this one: "God, please watch over the door of my mouth so that I do not brag about myself. Instead, help me to think of things that I can say to encourage and build others up."*

### Where does our talk come from?

#### Questions for discussion

1. Have you ever said something that hurt someone else's feelings?
2. What were you thinking at the time you said it?
3. Were you happy, sad, mad or just careless?
4. *Read Matthew 12:34-37.* Where do our words come from?
5. Who will ask us to give an account of every word we have said?
6. *Read Psalm 139:1-4.* Who knows what we are thinking?
7. Who knows how we feel?
8. Who knows what we are going to say before we say it?

9. *Read Psalm 141:3.* Who can help you to be careful about the words you say?

### Key concepts

Before we speak, it is important to consider how we are feeling. Prior to voicing our thoughts, we should ask ourselves, "Am I angry, sad, hurt, jealous or feeling bad in some other way? Then we need to take those feelings to God and ask Him to help us get our feelings under control before we speak. God already knows what we are feeling and thinking. He is our best helper in times when we are frustrated, upset, angry, hurt or disappointed. God can help us control our emotions and allow us to speak to others with gentleness, kindness and respect, even though we are feeling bad.

*Close by reading 1 John 1:9. Pray together, asking God to forgive any sins like hatred, discord, fits of rage, selfishness and envy and to fill your hearts with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness instead (Galatians 5:22-23).*

### Please listen to me!

Read Proverbs 16:21,24.

#### Questions for discussion

1. How do you feel when someone speaks harshly to you?
2. What kind of animal sounds harsh when it is upset?
3. How do you feel when someone speaks gently to you?
4. What kind of animal makes gentle sounds?
5. When you are trying to get someone to listen to what you are saying, what do you do?
6. Who would you rather listen to – someone who is yelling or someone who is speaking calmly?
7. Do you think the Bible can give us wise counsel on how we should speak in order to make others want to listen to us?

8. What does the Bible say about speaking gently?
9. When do you yell like a \_\_\_\_\_? (Name the animal selected for question 2).
10. When do you sound like a \_\_\_\_\_? (Name the animal selected for question 4).

### Key concepts

It's tempting to raise our voices, talk louder or yell to get others to listen to us. But when we speak with soft and gentle words, others are more likely to listen to us than when we yell or scream. Let's pray, confessing that at times we have spoken with harsh or unkind words. Let's ask God to help us speak with pleasant and kind words instead.

*Give your children the opportunity to pray, repeating your words after you.*

### The best way to say, "I love you" Questions for discussion

1. Does an angry dog wag its tail? Or does an angry cat purr?
2. What does an angry dog do? What does an angry cat do?
3. Has anyone ever told you they feel a certain way, but you know or suspect that they are really feeling another way?
4. Read 1 John 3:16-18. What type of actions fit with the words, "I love you"?
5. How can we do this in our home?
6. How can we do this in our community?

### Key concepts

Actions that express concern for the needs of others indicate love for that person. Saying "I love you" carries little meaning unless it is accompanied by actions that show love. Pray, asking God to help you show love to others through actions and words.

## Creative discipline

*Discipline should never be neglected, but some discipline techniques are more effective than others. If you have doubts about your past success in shaping your children's verbal responses, try these ideas. Your goal is to be firm, but affirming.*

### For problems due to speaking without thinking first

#### Biblical basis

Proverbs 12:23 "A prudent man keeps his knowledge to himself, but the heart of fools blurts out folly."

Proverbs 10:19 "When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise."

#### Suggested disciplinary action

When your child speaks harsh or hurtful words, take a bin full of blocks or other small items and dump them on the floor. Instruct your child to pick up the spilled items. While they are picking the items up, talk to them about the power of hurtful words.

- Is it harder to dump toys or pick them up?
- How many toys did you have to pick up?
- Is it harder to speak or remain silent?
- We can clean up dumped toys, but can we clean up the hurt that your unkind words have caused?
- When are you most likely to say hurtful things?

Discuss how easy it is to say things without thinking, and how words that have been spoken cannot be taken back. Remind your child that the more we say, the more likely we are to sin (Proverbs 10:19). Instruct them that sometimes it is better to be quiet than speak aloud the words that we are thinking. The toys can be put back in a bin, but the hurt (mess) caused by saying unkind words can be impossible to clean up completely.

#### Affirmation

Assure your child that you believe they want to control their tongue. Remind them that God will help them. Then read or quote Psalm 141:3: "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the



door of my lips” or Proverbs 16:24: “Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” Challenge your child to be someone who speaks words that heal rather than hurt. Pray, asking God to help your child guard his/her mouth.

### **For problems with speaking unkindly** **Biblical basis**

James 3:9-11 “With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?”

### **Suggested disciplinary action**

When your child speaks inappropriately, “cursing” another person, have them gargle with a small spoonful of salt water or put some salt on their tongue. Ask the following questions to help your child understand that taste of salt water is a reminder to speak words that are kind and refreshing to others, rather than hurtful, stinging words.

- How did the salt taste?
- How do you think your words sounded to \_\_\_\_\_?
- Would you be able to drink water from a salt spring?
- If you were lost in the desert and horribly thirsty, which would you want to find: a salt spring or a freshwater spring?
- Which kind of water is more refreshing, salty or fresh?
- What kind of words would you rather speak? Salty or fresh?

### **Affirmation**

Pray with your child, asking God to wash the sin out of his/her heart so that he/she can produce encouraging words instead of hurtful words. Use Luke 6:45 as a basis for your prayer, which says, “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things

out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

## **Hands-on options**

*Put away the shopping list! You don’t need exotic or expensive props to reinforce what your children are learning about courteous communication. These suggestions will help you create “memorable moments” from materials you have on hand. Choose one or two activities that will fit your schedule.*

### **Family building project**

#### *creative crafts*

For this activity, you and your children will build a house together – a reminder of Ephesians 4:29.

Construction materials can include Lego®, sugar cube “bricks” or other creative raw materials. The teaser is that your children must earn the raw materials for your house by speaking in a way that “builds others up” – by solving problems politely, speaking gently and respectfully, and encouraging others through kind words. Every time someone speaks “building words” they receive a brick to add to the house.

Make this a family affair by inviting your children to catch you speaking positive words as well! Talk about how much can be accomplished when a family works together and gets along. Point out that just as it is satisfying to build a house together, so it is satisfying to speak words that build each other up. Make a sign to put out in front of your house with all or part of Ephesians 4:29 on it.

### **Relevant Scripture**

Ephesians 4:29 “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

### **The powerful tongue!**

#### *physical activity*

Here are a number of activities that help illustrate the power of the tongue, as described in James 3:2-12. As you participate in these activities, talk about how much power our tongues have. Discuss ways that words can be used to encourage and build others up, or to discourage and destroy others.

- Light a fire in a fireplace or fire pit and observe how quickly the initial flame grows and spreads.
- Light a candle and carefully supervise your child as you guide them to hold their hand close enough to feel the heat. This is a good way to demonstrate how much pain we can cause others if we let our tongues “burn” out of control.
- Visit a stable and allow your children to witness first-hand how a rider can control a horse by the bit in its mouth. Alternatively, rent a small sailboat to give your children a hands-on opportunity to feel how a rudder controls the course of the boat.

### Relevant Scripture

James 3:2-12.

### Matching words and actions

*science with a twist*

Use this matching lesson to explain the truth of 1 John 3:16-18.

First, cut out some cardboard shapes, making matching pairs of squares, triangles and circles. Have your children identify which items match and which ones don't.

After you have had fun playing “the matching game,” explain that our words should match our actions. Give examples that your children will understand. For example, hold up a triangle and say, “I love you.” Hold up another triangle and say, “You can share my doll,” while you place the triangles on top of each other to show that they match.

Next, use an example where words do not match what we do. Hold up a circle and say, “You are my friend.” Then hold up a square beside the circle and say, “I will not share my cookies with you.”

Following this discussion, speak a blessing to your children when their words and actions match. Conversely, you can remind them of the shapes when their words and actions are not congruent.

### Relevant Scripture

1 John 3:16-18 “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”

### Fruity fun

*fun with food*

Your goal for this activity is to work together as a family to “earn” enough fruit to make a fruit salad – a tasty reminder of Proverbs 18:21.

Begin by placing an empty bowl in a visible location. Let your children know that you will be listening for “words of life” and rewarding positive communication by allowing them to place a fruit of their choice in the bowl. Explain that when the bowl is full, they will be able to “eat its fruit” in a fruit salad.

“Award” fruit when you hear your children speaking in a kind, loving and/or encouraging way. Be especially watchful for situations where your children speak politely despite a difficult situation.

Once enough fruit has been collected in the bowl, cut it up for fruit salad. As you prepare the fruit, talk about what it means to “speak life” and what it means to “speak death.”

### Relevant Scripture

Proverbs 18:21 “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

### Communication capers – the cow and the parrot

*drama / role play or drive time or any time*

Begin by sharing the following knock-knock joke with your kids:

*First person: “Knock, knock.”*

*Second person: “Who’s there?”*

*First person: “Interrupting cow.”*

*Second person begins to say: “Interrupting cow, who?” but is interrupted part-way through when the first person says, “Moo!”*

Help your children to understand that although this joke is funny, it is not funny when we interrupt others in daily conversation. Continue the lesson by modelling two conversations between you and your spouse, or involving another adult.

In the first conversation, have one person behave like the “interrupting cow,” continually interrupting the other person. The second conversation, however, should demonstrate good listening skills. Ask your children to point out the differences between the two conversations. Emphasize that good listening skills involve facing the speaker and looking at them with undivided attention.

Introduce this next exercise by explaining that you want your children to communicate like a parrot, and not like an “interrupting cow.” Point out that people train parrots to talk by rewarding them for repeating back phrases spoken by their trainer. Explain that, like the parrot, your kids can show they have listened well by repeating back what someone has just said. Then introduce this “game” that allows your children to practice being “parrots” by reflecting back what others say. Take turns being the one who speaks first and the one who “parrots.”

Here are some examples for you to begin with:

*Dad: “Please do up your seat belts before I start driving.”*

*Child: “What I heard you say, Dad, was that you want us to do our seat belts up as soon as we get in the car.”*

*Child: “It would be nice to have hamburgers for supper tonight.”*

*Mom: “I think you are asking for hamburgers for supper tonight. Is that right?”*

*Mom: “I’m exhausted. While you were at school, I bought the groceries, paid some bills and met with \_\_\_\_\_.”*

*Child: “Are you tired from the all the running*

*around you have done?”*

*Mom: “Yes. Thank you for listening.”*

To further reinforce good listening skills say, “I think I can smell a cow!” whenever you notice your child interrupting. (Or create a similar gentle reminder.) Likewise, when your child “parrots” back what you have said, affirm them and let them know that you prefer the “parrot” over the “cow.”

## **Relevant Scripture**

Proverbs 10:19 *“When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.”*

Proverbs 18:13 *“He who answers before listening – that is his folly and shame.”*

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## **Garbage busters**

*science with a twist*

Hold your nose! For this exercise, you will need a bag of rotten garbage and some shiny silver coins. These props will help to illustrate the truths in Luke 6:45 and also Proverbs 10:20.

- 1** Plan ahead and don’t empty your kitchen garbage for a few days. Make sure some meat, vegetable and fruit scraps have been left to produce a rotten smell. Have your children observe the refuse. Ensure they get a big whiff of the dreadful aroma. Ask them if they see anything in the garbage that is worth keeping.
- 2** Next, open your wallet or purse and show them some shiny silver coins. Ask your children if they see anything valuable in your wallet.
- 3** The concept you’ll want to convey is that our attitudes and words flow from our hearts. Explain that when we have sinful or selfish thoughts in our hearts, what we say will be of little value – like the garbage. Words of little value can be silly talk, or words spoken with a selfish or mean intent. When our hearts are pure in thought (like the refined metal used for making coins), then the talk that comes from our mouths will be like precious metals – kind, gentle and respectful words that encourage others.

- 4 Write each of the following examples of “garbage talk” and “precious words” on a separate slip of paper. Read the words aloud and ask your children to identify where the words belong – in the garbage or in your wallet. Scrunch up the garbage words and throw them away. Place the precious words in your wallet or a piggy bank. Feel free to add your own examples to this list:

“I hate peas!”  
“This is a great supper, Mom!”  
“Get out of here!”  
“Please stop doing that.”  
“I don’t like you!”  
“That is an ugly drawing.”  
“You stink.”  
“I like your artwork.”  
“I love you.”  
“I’m glad God gave me you as part of my family.”

- 5 Close by praying, asking that God would put kind and loving thoughts in everyone’s heart so that you will be a family who speaks choice words, rather than words of no value.

Reaffirm these truths with your children and have some fun by referring to “garbage talk” or “precious words” throughout the days to follow.

### Relevant Scripture

Luke 6:45 “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

Proverbs 10:20 “The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value.”

### Life has its share of spills

*drama / role play*

This is another suggestion that can be used to illustrate Luke 6:45.

Begin by showing your children a glass full of warm water and another glass full of hot water. Shake each glass and show how it spills all over the table. Then,

explain that each glass represents a person and the water represents what is in that person’s heart. When life shakes us up, what is inside comes out.

Tell your children a story of two different people: one who has good things in their heart (generosity) and one who has bad things in their heart (selfishness). You can be creative and invent your own story, or use this one:

*At the playground, Jenny begins to play with an unattended toy shovel. Brandon, who owns the shovel, is feeling selfish. He has a tantrum and yells some mean things at Jenny. Curtis is also at the playground. He sees how upset Jenny is. Curtis has God’s love in his heart and decides to offer to share his toys with Jenny and her friend.*

### Questions for discussion

Use the following questions to help emphasize the point that we need to make sure that our hearts are full of God’s love so that kind, gentle and respectful words come out of our mouths, even when we are “shaken.”

- How would it feel to have hot water spilled on you?
- Would you prefer to have warm water on your hand?
- What kind of water did Brandon (the first boy in the story) spill?
- What kind of water do you think Jesus would spill if He were at the playground?
- What kind of water would you like to spill on others?
- What could make you feel shaken or ready to spill hot water? (Ideas include being teased, losing at a game, or someone taking something that belongs to them.)
- Who can help you when you feel hot water boiling up inside of you?

Together with your kids, brain-storm some difficult situations they are sometimes faced with. Imagine these are “real” scenarios, and role-play how you might respond. After each scenario, discuss which responses were appropriate, or how they could be improved.

Refer to the **kids talk with God** section for prayer examples and have each child choose a prayer that they can use when they are upset or angry.

### Relevant Scripture

Luke 6:45 “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

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### Pudding fun

*fun with food*

Whip up a treat, and a teaching tool! Prepare by filling a small bag with pudding, then use a twist-tie or bag clip to firmly close the opening. With a pair of sharp scissors, cut a small hole at one of the bottom corners of the bag. (Yes, you guessed right: this is messy fun; choose an area where clean-up is easy!) Give each child a prepared bag of pudding and a plate. Let the children have fun squeezing the pudding out all over their plates.

Next, ask each child to put the pudding back in the bag. Obviously they can’t, so instead, invite them to eat the pudding. While they are enjoying the snack, initiate a discussion about speaking hurtful words.

Be sure your children understand that, just as it was easy to squeeze the pudding out of the bag, it is easy to allow harsh or unkind words to spill out of our mouths when we are upset or angry. Once our words have left our lips we cannot take them back, just as we could not put the pudding back in the baggie.

### Questions for discussion

- Was it easier to squish the pudding out of the bag or to put it back in?
- When we are angry or upset, is it easier to speak or to remain quiet?

- What kind of words do we usually say when we are angry?
- How do these words make others feel?
- Was it possible to clean all of the pudding off of the plate?
- Is it possible to mend the hurt in someone’s heart after you have said something unkind?

Refer to the Proverbs listed below and finish the discussion by brainstorming some words of “death” and “life.” Close by praying a short prayer based on Psalm 19:14. For example, “Dear God, May the words of my mouth and the thoughts in my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock. Amen.”

### Relevant Scripture

Proverbs 13:3 “He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.”

Proverbs 18:21 “The tongue has the power of life and death . . .”

Psalm 19:14 “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

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### Recommended resources

For a list of children’s stories that reinforce the theme of this lesson, consult the home page for the **courteous communication** lesson at [Kidsofintegrity.com](http://Kidsofintegrity.com).



# Planning card for courteous communication

point form

## God's way

### I am demonstrating godly character when:

- I speak with kindness, gentleness and respect
- I use good listening skills
- I consider the feelings of others before I say something
- I encourage others

## My way

### When I am tempted to:

- speak unkindly or disrespectfully
- interrupt when others are speaking
- ignore others when they are speaking
- speak without considering the feelings of others

## And God is pleased!

## I know that I need to go to God for help.

*This week, we will focus on learning about courteous communication by:*

**Date complete:**


**Daily reminders:** PRAY! | Speak words of blessing and affirmation | Review memory verse

**Memory verse:**

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# Planning card for courteous communication

calendar form

## God's way

### I am demonstrating godly character when:

- I speak with kindness, gentleness and respect
- I use good listening skills
- I consider the feelings of others before I say something
- I encourage others

## My way

### When I am tempted to:

- speak unkindly or disrespectfully
- interrupt when others are speaking
- ignore others when they are speaking
- speak without considering the feelings of others

## And God is pleased!

## I know that I need to go to God for help.

### This week, we will focus on learning about courteous communication by:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Daily reminders: **PRAY!** | Speak words of blessing and affirmation | Review memory verse

Memory verse: