

STUMMIN

SMALL GROUP
LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE
SCHOOL
FOCUS

CHEAT CODES

MARCH 22, 2023

Week 4 of a 4-week series about the relationship between wisdom and faith

BOTTOM LINE

Your words matter.

SCRIPTURE

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

- Proverbs 15:1 NIV

"Let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!"

- John 8:7b NLT

GOALS OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to see the impact of their words and to help them apply wisdom to the things they say

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: The goal this week is to help your middle schoolers develop some self-awareness around their words. The reality is, they rarely think before they speak. And in this phase, that's normal! Their brains are still developing, so the ability to pause and consider their words—to practice a little self control—isn't fully there yet. They may realize their words matter when they see the impact of them on someone else, and they certainly know what it feels like to be on the receiving end of harsh words. However, we want them to take this a step further, and wisdom can help. Our hope is that they'll begin to consider the weight of their words before they experience the fallout of them. Whether they see the impact their words have on others or not, wisdom will help them consider it before they speak. Will they get this right away? No! And will they get it right all the time? Of course not! But perfection isn't the point. So, celebrate even the smallest steps you see your students taking to choose their words wisely as a means of encouraging them to keep going and growing in wisdom when it comes to their words.

>> DURING GROUP

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DO THIS:

Give one of the provided scenario cards to each person in your group. One-at-a-time, ask each student to read the scenario aloud to the group. Then have everyone brainstorm what could make the situation better. If necessary, remind them of the options discussed in the message. They could talk about how pausing before responding, naming what's bothering them, not using harsh words, or using "I think" or "I feel" phrases could help in these situations.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What's the nicest thing someone has ever said to you?
- Share about a time you said something kind and/or helpful to someone.
- Think about the last time you were hurt by somebody's words. Without using names, share how their words impacted you?
- On a scale of 1-10, how much do you think our words matter?
- Who is someone you know who uses their words wisely? What can we learn from them?
- This week, which one of these things do you want to focus on when it comes to the words you use:
 - Pausing before you respond?
 - Using "I think" or "I feel" to help you communicate in a calm, thoughtful way?
 - Naming what's bothering you?
 - Stopping the back and forth of harsh, hurtful words?

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THINK ABOUT THIS: When it comes to recognizing the power of their words, encourage students to think outwardly first. In other words, ask them to consider the way the words of others have impacted them. Doing so will put your students in the headspace to recognize the power of both harsh and gentle words. Then, ask them to think inwardly, applying that same knowledge to the way their words may impact others. It will likely be easier for them to recognize the power of their own words on others after they sit in the feeling of the way someone else's words have made them feel, too.

>> DURING GROUP

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.

DISCUSS THIS:

- Think about the last text you sent, caption or comment you posted online, or words you said out loud. How much consideration did you give to the words you chose before you used them?
- In what ways have you used your words to encourage or build others up?
- Now, be honest here: In what ways have you used your words to do the opposite?
- How have you seen words impact relationships?
- Which do you think matters most:
 - The words you choose?
 - The way you say them?
- How might wisdom help us with our words?
- What do you think a gentle word looks like in real life? Give some examples of gentle words you have heard recently.
- How might choosing gentle words help us make a bigger impact?
- What's one way you're going to apply wisdom to your words this week?

DO THIS:

Hand out the provided worksheet and pens. Give students time to fill in each section. If students are open to sharing, give them time to talk about some of what they wrote down with the group to close.

>> AFTER GROUP

Follow up with each of your group members individually this week. Send a text saying, "Checking in to see how you're using wisdom with your words this week!"