

Today's Suggested Schedule—January 2024, Week 4

Today's Bible Story: Say What You Need to Say (Use Words Wisely) • *Ephesians 4:29*

Today's Bottom Line: Use your words wisely.

Monthly Memory Verse: "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. Luke 16:10 (ESV)

Monthly Virtue: Responsibility—Showing you can be trusted with what is expected of you

Basic Truth: I need to make the wise choice.

Before kids arrive, take a few moments to pray for them. Pray for those who might visit your group for the first time. Thank God for the meaningful conversations you've had all month and for the ones you will continue to have as you talk about using words wisely. Pray that your students will be willing to be real about the words they use and that they would understand the impact that they can have, both positive and negative, with their words. Pray that God will give you the right words to say so that you can be an encouragement for your kids today.

Check out our Pinterest page here <https://bit.ly/447HSZi> for a visual on some of the activities.

LARGE GROUP (35 minutes)

STORY: Communicating God's Truth in Engaging Ways

WORSHIP: Inviting People to Respond to God

- Hang Time
- Welcome/Opener
- Worship
- Bible Story
- Bottom Line
- Prayer
- Closer

SMALL GROUP (25 minutes)

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect

- Story Exploration
- Bible Story Review: PET!
- Application Activity: When Words Hurt
- Memory Verse Activity: Control Your Words
- Prayer Activity: Pray and Dismiss

HOME: Prompting Action Beyond the Experience

- Parent Cue Card (Print or Email)
- Devotionals for Kids
- Parent Cue App

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Use this if kids have questions about following Jesus.

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word gospel. Clarify that the word gospel means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

If a child has expressed interest in following Jesus, please let the parents know so they can be a part of the conversation that their child is having about faith.

What Now?

If you put your trust in Jesus Christ and believe in Him as the One who forgives your sins and makes it possible for you to know God, we are so proud of you! There is no greater single decision that you could make.

We believe that baptism is an important next step for you. Baptism is your way of telling your friends and family, “Hey, I'm a follower of Jesus!” If you're interested in learning more or participating in baptism, talk to a staff member about the next steps you should take.

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)

Story Exploration

In Psalm 24:1, David wrote, “The earth belongs to the Lord. And so does everything in it.” God is the author of creation, and God has entrusted us to care for and cultivate the world we see around us. We do that by taking responsibility. From work we need to accomplish, to people we meet, to the words we use, life is filled with moments where we can decide to reflect God’s character, take responsibility, and use what we have wisely. When we follow through and do what needs to be done, we can point others to Jesus, the One who took the ultimate responsibility for us and made it possible for us to be with God forever.

Following Jesus involves living a life that aligns with His teachings and example. When we look at Ephesians 4:29, it emphasizes the importance of cultivating a Christ-like character in our speech.

- **Love and Compassion:** Jesus demonstrated love and compassion in His interactions. Following His example means expressing our thoughts and opinions with genuine care for others, avoiding hurtful or negative speech.
- **Building Up Others:** Jesus sought to build up and encourage people. Following Him involves using our words to inspire, encourage, and support those around us, rather than tearing them down.
- **Wisdom and Discernment:** Jesus spoke with wisdom and discernment. Following in His footsteps means exercising discernment in our speech, choosing words that are not only truthful but also appropriate for the situation and beneficial for the listener.
- **Reflecting Christ's Character:** Following Jesus is about reflecting His character in all aspects of our lives, including our speech. Ephesians 4:29 calls us to speak in a way that shows others that we actually spend time with Jesus and are becoming more like Him.

Verses to look up and discuss about your speech: Proverbs 18:21, James 3:5-6, Proverbs 21:23, Proverbs 15:1, James 1:19

1. PET!

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Create: an activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing

What You Need: String, letter beads, colorful beads, tape, and scissors

What You Do:

- Read the “Pet Acronym Guide” below out loud to the group.
- Once you’ve read the PET Acronym Guide, give each kid bracelet supplies: string, color beads, a “P” bead, an “E” bead, and a “T” bead.
- Tape one end of each kid’s string down on a table or the floor to secure it.
- Instruct kids to add the “P-E-T” beads along with any additional beads they choose.
- Make sure they have “PET” on their bracelet.
- When the kids have beaded their bracelets, remove them from the floor, remove the piece of tape, and tie them around each kid’s wrist.
- Trim off extra string.

PET Acronym Guide:

- In our story today, Paul’s writing reminded us that we shouldn’t let any evil talk come out of our mouths but instead let positive talk come out of our mouths.
- It can be really hard to show responsibility with our words. Sometimes our anger, sadness, our desire to be right, or excitement can make controlling our words a challenge.
- We’ll use the word PET to help us hold back harmful words so we can show responsibility with the way we talk.
- “P” stands for PAUSE. Before we respond in a harmful way, we should first pause and take a breath. You can practice taking a breath by pretending you’re smelling lovely flowers.
- “E” stands for EXHALE. After we pause and take a breath, we should exhale (breathe out). Try to breathe out for several seconds—like you’re blowing out birthday candles—as it helps to calm down our nervous system.
- “T” stands for TALK. Now that we have calmed ourselves and given ourselves a moment to think before we respond, we’re ready to talk!
- Because our words hold so much power, we can use these steps to make sure our words are bringing good to the world around us!

What You Say:

“Your bracelets turned out really awesome. I’m excited for you to have this with you all week to remind yourself to PET! Can anyone remind me what PET stands for? *(Allow time for responses—pause, exhale, talk.)*”

[Make It Personal] *(Share about a time you paused before you reacted so you could respond better.)*

“When you **[Bottom Line]** use your words wisely, you’re saying yes to changing the world around you for the better. Your words hold so much power to make an incredible difference, so let’s remember to use them for good instead of harm!”

*2. When Words Hurt

[Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Imagine: an activity that promotes empathy and facilitates biblical application through role-play and reenactment

What You Need: Prepared “When Words Hurt” Activity Page, “When Words Hurt Slips” Activity Page, plastic cup, glue sticks, kid scissors, clear tape, and colored pencils or markers

What You Do:

- Instruct the kids to sit in a circle.
- Put the “When Words Hurt Slips” Activity Page strips in the plastic cup.
- Give each kid a “When Words Hurt” Activity Page, a glue stick, and scissors.
- Set out the colored pencils or markers.
- One by one, instruct the kids to pass around the plastic cup, draw out a slip of paper, and read it out loud.
- If their paper has words that are wise, direct the kid to color a piece of their cat picture with a colored pencil.
- If their paper has words that are unwise, instruct the kid to carefully cut out one of the pieces of their picture.
 - Instruct the kids to glue the slip of paper with the statement on the puzzle piece they cut out and set it aside for later.
- Direct the kids to continue passing the cup around until all of the slips of paper have been pulled out and read.
- Discuss whether their picture is colorful or incomplete because of the words that were chosen.
- Set out the tape.
- Invite the kids to tape the sections they cut out back into their picture.

What You Say:

“When we choose unwise words with our friends, family, and the world around us, it’s kind of like your pictures. Unwise words can be hurtful. They can take something away from people that they can’t get back.

“Sure, we can say we’re sorry, which is very important! But just like we noticed with our tape, it doesn’t always put things back together like the original picture. On the flip side, when you **[Bottom Line] use your words wisely**, you encourage and uplift people, which can really brighten the world around us! You’re literally creating a better and more beautiful world!

“This week, think before you speak. Ask yourself, ‘Am I tearing someone down or building up a better world?’ This is the ultimate way we can show responsibility.”

3. Control Your Words

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Explore: an activity that extends learning through hands on experimentation and discovery

What You Need: Bibles, index cards, painter's tape, and small toy car; *Optional: remote-controlled car*

What You Do:

- Divide kids into pairs.
- Give each pair an index card and a Bible.
- Together, look up Luke 16:10 in the Bibles using the Bible Navigation tips below.
- **Finding verses with 2nd and 3rd graders:** Guide kids to open their Bibles to the front and find the table of contents. Hold up a Bible opened to the table of contents to show the kids what the page looks like. When the kids find the table of contents, lead them to find "Luke" in the list under "New Testament." When the kids find Luke, lead them to look at the page number beside the word. Explain that the number tells them on what page they can find Luke. Help the kids find the page. When they find Luke, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. Help them find chapter 16. Explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Help them find verse 10 in chapter 16.
- Read the verse out loud.
- Assign each pair of kids a different piece of the memory verse to write on their card so the entire memory verse is written among the group's cards.
- Tape a five-foot road or track on the floor of your space.
- Tape the index cards with verse phrases along the painter's tape road in random order so the order is mixed up.
- Give one kid the toy car.
 - *Option: Use a remote control car.*
- One by one, instruct the kids to take a turn driving the car up and down the track to try and complete the memory verse in order.
 - For example, direct the kid to "drive" the car to the first part of the verse on the track, then to the next, etc.
 - If a kid needs to go backward to reach the next part of the verse, instruct them not to turn around, but to drive in reverse!
- If the kid drives the verse in the incorrect order, direct them to go to the back of the line and give the next kid a turn.
- Continue until all kids have had a turn.

What You Say:

"Wow! You have some amazing driving skills. Did you notice that it was more work to go backwards when you needed? (*Invite responses.*) Sometimes, controlling our words will take more work. You can make someone's day—or ruin it—with just one sentence. One of the best ways to show you're following Jesus is to use your words wisely.

"Have you ever experienced a time when you didn't use your words wisely? (*Invite responses.*) We've all been there! There's not one perfect person in this group. That's why we need Jesus. When you believe in Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit to help guide you to **[Bottom Line] use your words wisely.** When we begin to obey the Holy Spirit's guidance, God can trust us with more."

4. Pray and Dismiss

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

Made to Reflect: an activity that creates space for personal understanding and application

What You Say:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember?
- How do they help me trust and love God?

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- Invite kids to sit in a circle with you.
- Say, "Let's go around the circle and each say something nice about the person sitting to the left of us."
- Remind kids of the different kinds of helpful words they can use: encourage someone, celebrate someone, serve someone, and thank someone.
- Say something kind about the kid on your left to start the conversation.
- Invite that kid to do the same for the person on their left, and so on.
- Close your group time in prayer.

What You Say:

"Dear God, please help us see people the way You see them. Give us opportunities to be wise with our words. Through a compliment, encouragement, even a simple hello, we know that You will help us be responsible with how we show care to the people around us. It can be as simple as looking to the person to our left and saying something nice. Give us an excitement and passion as You remind us to **[Bottom Line] use your words wisely** this week. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

As adults arrive to pick up, ask the kids to show off their "When Words Hurt" page. Remind them that this week they have the opportunity to show responsibility by using wise words to paint our world a more beautiful place!

GETTING READY

Here's everything you need to know to get ready for this week.

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible story applies to real life experiences, through interactive activities and discussion questions.

(Choose as many of these activities as you like.)

**If you don't have time to do all these activities, be sure to do activity #2.*

Story Exploration – No supplies

1. PET!

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Create: an activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing

What You Need:

- Nylon string for bracelets
 - Cut string into ten-inch pieces—one for each kid.
- Colorful and fun beads for bracelets
- Letter beads (P, E, and T)—one set for every kid to spell “PET”
- Tape—one for each Small Group
- Scissors—one for each Small Group

*2. When Words Hurt

[Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Imagine: an activity that promotes empathy and facilitates biblical application through role-play and reenactment

What You Need:

- Print “When Words Hurt” Activity Page on cardstock and cut out the cat using the outer lines only—one for each kid
- Print “When Words Hurt Slips” Activity Page on paper and cut apart—one set for each Small Group
- Plastic cup—one for each Small Group
- Glue sticks—one for every two kids
- Kid scissors—one for every two kids
- Clear tape—several rolls
- Colored pencils or markers

3. Control Your Words

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Explore: an activity that extends learning through hands on experimentation and discovery

What You Need:

- Bibles—one for every two kids
- Index cards—one for every two kids
- Painter's tape—one for each Small Group
- Small toy car (like a Matchbox™ or Hot Wheels™)—one for each Small Group
- *Optional: remote-controlled car*

4. Pray and Dismiss

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

Made to Reflect: an activity that creates space for personal understanding and application

What You Need:

- No supplies needed

HOME: Prompting Action Beyond the Experience

- Print on cardstock or email this week's devotionals and Parent Cue cards.
- Tell parents about our additional family resources: **Parent Cue app**