

Taming the Tongue

Lesson 12



Scripture: James 3:2-12










Bible Memory: Ephesians 4:29

Focus: ♥ The tongue is powerful.

Heart to Heart Teacher Devotion

With an awareness of your own imperfections, consider the students God has entrusted to you. Pray that your words will be used by God to relay His Word to them. Pray that God will help you control your tongue and that your speech will be an example to the preteens who are looking to you as a role model. Your tongue is powerful—use it for good and for God!

Lesson 12 at a Glance

<p>1 FOCUS IN Use one or more of these activities to help students <i>explore the power of the tongue.</i></p>	<p> Quick Step Hold Your Tongue</p> <p> Option Little Bit, Big Results</p>	<p>HeartShaper Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none • none 	<p>Other Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none • pretzel rods, string, scissors, chairs, blindfolds
<p>2 EXPLORE HIS WORD Use these activities to help students <i>explain what the Bible teaches about the power of the tongue.</i></p>	<p> Bible Exploration James 3:2-12</p> <p> Bible Memory Ephesians 4:29</p> <p> Optional Bible Skill Builder</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Resources</i> CD Photo Cards printable file, <i>Activities</i> for lesson 12 • <i>Resources</i> sheet 8 • none 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bibles, paper, pencils • Bibles, reusable adhesive • Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, paper, pencils, whiteboard, dry-erase marker
<p>3 MAKE IT REAL Use one of these activities to help students <i>realize the need to control their tongues.</i></p>	<p> Quick Step What Would YOU Do?</p> <p> Option Built It Up or Tear It Down</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Activities</i> for lesson 12 • none 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whiteboard, dry-erase marker • building supplies (see activity), timer
<p>4 LIVE IT OUT Use one of these activities to help students <i>plan to control their tongues.</i></p>	<p> Quick Step Rate Your Tongue</p> <p> Option You Can't Put It Back!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Activities</i> for lesson 12 • none 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pencils • tube of toothpaste, paper plate, plastic knives, moist towelettes

Focus In (10-15 minutes)

- 1** Use one or more of these activities to help students **explore the power of the tongue.**

Welcome

- Welcome each student warmly by name.
- Early arrivers will enjoy doing one or more of the additional activities described on the unit page.

Quick Step Hold Your Tongue

Ask each preteen to think of a compliment someone has given to him or her. Divide the class into pairs (or trios). SAY: **Tell your partner the compliment you received. The only catch is that you must hold your tongue between your fingers as you speak.** Allow time for students to try speaking to each other in this manner. Then, while preteens are still holding their tongues, read the tongue facts from the narrow column. Ask them to say whether each statement is true or false. (They're all true).

ASK: **Was it hard to hold your tongue while trying to speak? Why?** (Yes.

A person's tongue is controlled by muscles. When a person wants to speak, the brain tells the muscles to go to work and help to form the words. Even when the tongue is held, the muscles are still trying to work.)

What's another way to "hold our tongues" that's even harder to do? (when we've thought of something we're dying to say but know we shouldn't)

SAY: **Let's dig into God's Word to see what it says about the power of our tongues.**

Option Little Bit, Big Results

Before class, tie a piece of string three feet in length to the center of each pretzel rod. Prepare enough rods so there will be one for each student. Use chairs to create a simple maze in your classroom.

Divide the students into pairs and instruct one person in each pair to wear a blindfold. The student who is blindfolded should hold the pretzel rod in his mouth horizontally while his partner holds the free end of the string and leads him through the maze. If time permits, have the students switch roles. SAY: **The pretzel rods in your mouths are very similar to the bits that are used in horses' mouths to guide them.**

ASK: **How can such a small bit control the direction of a large, muscular horse?** (When a rider pulls the reins attached to the bit in a horse's mouth, pressure is felt by the horse, and the horse moves in response to that pressure.)

SAY: **Just as a bit can control a horse, the tongue can control a person's life. Let's dig into God's Word to see what it says about the power of our tongues.**

Focus

- ♥ The tongue is powerful.

Materials

none



Tongue Facts

The tongue has an average of 3,000-10,000 taste buds.
The tongue is used for speech; it helps with changes in sound.
The tongue has 8 muscles.
The tongue also works as a natural way of cleaning teeth after eating.

Materials

pretzel rods, string,
scissors, chairs, blindfolds



Teaching Tip

Tell preteens they are not to pull very hard on the strings. Make sure that everyone follows this rule.



Let students who don't want to be blindfolded observe. If any preteens have sensitivities, be sure that pretzels are gluten free.

Focus

♥ The tongue is powerful.

Explore His Word (25 minutes)

2 Use these activities to help students **explain what the Bible teaches about the power of the tongue.**

Bible Background for the Teacher

James begins the third chapter of his letter with an admonition to teachers. He speaks of the great responsibility teachers have in relating truths to others. No one has achieved perfection in his or her life, and what a person says often reflects those imperfections. With that in mind, James warns of the power of the tongue.

James's writing includes excellent word pictures that are understood easily by the reader. He uses the bit in a horse's mouth and the rudder of a large ship to illustrate that the tongue, although very small, possesses great power. Similar imagery is used to describe the difficulty of harnessing that great power. The spark of a fire is an effective comparison not only because of the tongue's ability to spread destruction rapidly but also because of the way it can set one's emotions aflame.

James addresses the paradox of someone who praises God but then turns around and curses people. According to tradition, whenever the name of God was mentioned in the company of a devout Jew, he would respond by saying, "Blessed be He!" This practice may have continued among the early Jewish Christians. James's letter was written to Jewish Christians. James states that believers in Jesus have no place praising God and then cursing those who have been made in His likeness.

Materials

Bibles, paper, pencils,
Resources CD Photo
Cards printable file, *Activities* for
lesson 12



Note

The Scripture text is provided on the *Resources* CD in both the *New International Version* and the *King James Version*, if you want kids to read from the same Bible version.

Tech Tip

Go to www.biblegateway.com or a similar website to play a dramatized reading of the Bible verses.

Bible Exploration James 3:2-12

Ask students to turn in their Bibles (print or digital) to the contents page. Have them look at the New Testament section.

ASK: **When the books of Romans through Jude are referred to as a group of books, what are they called?** (Letters)

Have students find James in the list and then turn in their Bibles to James 3. Distribute paper and pencils. Tell preteens to pay close attention because they will be listing various items from this passage. Have volunteers read James 3:2-6. SAY: **List every item these verses describe as small, yet powerful.** Allow students to make their lists and tell what they wrote. (Answers: bit in a horse's mouth, the rudder of a ship, a spark of fire, the tongue) Ask three volunteers to each hold one of the Photo Cards, show the other students the photos, and read what's on the cards.

ASK: **What do these things have in common?** (They are small, but powerful.)

Have volunteers read James 3:7, 8. SAY: **List everything that people have tamed and one thing they have not tamed.** Allow students to make their lists.

ASK: **What have people tamed?** (animals, birds, reptiles, sea creatures)
What has not been tamed? (the tongue)
What are the results when you let your tongue get out of control? (You get in trouble; someone gets hurt.)

SAY: **The final section of Scripture is James 3:9-12.** Have volunteers read those verses aloud. **List items that cannot happen naturally in the world.**

ASK: **What things don't happen?** (Fresh water and salt water cannot flow from the same spring. A fig tree cannot bear olives. A grapevine cannot produce figs.)

What should not happen with, or come from, a Christian's tongue? (cursing)

Distribute the leaflets, and have students look at the activity Taming the Tongue. Read the instructions, and let students work alone or in pairs to complete the page. When everyone is done, have volunteers read the statements, telling whether they're true or false. Ask preteens how they would change the false statements to make them true. (Answers: 1=T; 2=F, get us into lots of trouble; 3=T; 4=T; 5=F, no one can tame the tongue; 6=F, they are evil, full of deadly poison; 7=T)

SAY: **♥ The tongue is powerful, and God cares how we use it! Let's keep exploring the power of the tongue and how God wants us to control our tongues.**

Bible Memory 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."

Display the Ephesians 4:29 poster on a wall or bulletin board. Have preteens find Ephesians 4:29 in their Bibles, and have a volunteer read the verse aloud.

ASK: **What is unwholesome talk?** (offensive, unpleasant, nasty, objectionable, corrupt)

SAY: **Anything bad that comes from our mouths, or anything that's said to hurt others or to curse God, is NOT what Christians are to say.**

ASK: **According to our Bible Memory, what *should* come from our mouths?** (words that build others up, words that encourage others, words that benefit others)

SAY: **It matters to God what comes from our mouths, and it should matter to us. ♥ The tongue is powerful; let's use it for good and for God.** Lead everyone in saying the Bible Memory together. Challenge students to memorize this verse so they can think about it when they're tempted to say something that's offensive, nasty, or unwholesome.

Materials

Bibles, *Resources* sheet 8, reusable adhesive



Note

The Bible Memory in the *King James Version* is included on the *Resources* CD.

Optional Bible Skill Builder

Print and use the *Resources* CD Optional Bible Skills 12 printable file.



Focus

♥ The tongue is powerful.

Make It Real (10–15 minutes)

3 Use one of these activities to help students **realize the need to control their tongues.**

Materials

whiteboard, dry-erase marker, *Activities for lesson 12*



Tongue Twisters

Which wristwatches are Swiss wristwatches?
Six thick thistle sticks.
We surely shall see the sun shine soon.

Tech Tip

Record the preteens acting; then let them watch themselves in action!

Teaching Tip

If you have a small class, stay together as one group and let volunteers act out the different situations.

Materials

building supplies (can be whatever you choose: blocks, cups and plates, boxes, etc.), timer



If necessary, remove the competition component of this. Be sure preteens know that the towers are not meant to stay up; the towers falling is part of the lesson, helping them understand the power of words.

Quick Step What Would YOU Do?

Before class, write the tongue twisters from the narrow column on the board.

Call preteens' attention to the tongue twisters. SAY: **Choose a tongue twister, and say it three times to someone sitting next to you.**

ASK: **What happens to your tongue when you try to say tongue twisters?** (It's like our tongues get twisted. Research shows that the brain can get mixed up when saying syllables that sound similar.)

SAY: **Even when we're not saying tongue twisters, our tongues can get twisted and messed up a lot.** Ask students to turn in their leaflets to the activity What Would YOU Do? Read the instructions, and have volunteers read the situations aloud. Then divide the class into two groups, and assign each group two of the situations. Challenge groups to talk about what could happen, and then act out what could happen, if the people *don't* control their tongues and what could happen if they *do* control their tongues. When the groups are ready, let them act out their situations. Talk about the differences in outcomes when we control our tongues versus times when we don't control our tongues. ♥ **The tongue is powerful. That's why one of our biggest needs is the need to control our tongues.**

Option Build It Up or Tear It Down

Divide the class into two teams. Give each team plenty of building supplies. SAY: **You have one minute to work together to build a large structure. Go!** Call time when one minute is up. **Here comes the fun part!** Choose a volunteer from one team and tell that student: **You may go to the other team's structure and remove five blocks** (or whatever you're using) **or you may add five blocks** (or whatever you're using) **to your team's structure. But you can only do one of these actions. We'll go back and forth like this until I call time. The team with the largest structure wins!** Keep the action going by calling names one after the other. Be sure that everyone has at least one turn. Tell the teams to keep their structures in place.

ASK: **How is taking off the other teams' blocks similar to *not* controlling our tongues?** (both tear something down, both are destructive)

SAY: **You controlled your tongue instead of yelling at your little brother. Each team may add two blocks.** Pause as they do that. **You controlled your tongue and didn't talk back to your parents. Add two blocks.** Pause as teams do that. **You controlled your tongue and didn't tell that annoying kid to shut up. Add two blocks.** Pause as teams do that. **You controlled your tongue and didn't lie to your teacher. Add two blocks.** Pause as teams do that. **Do you see the point? ♥ The tongue is powerful and can be destructive. But the best thing to do is to build up, not tear down. That's why one of our biggest needs is the need to control our tongues.**

Live It Out (10 minutes)

- 4 Use one of these activities to help students **plan to control their tongues**.

Focus

♥ The tongue is powerful.

Quick Step Rate Your Tongue

Have preteens turn in their leaflets to the activity Rate Your Tongue. Read the instructions. SAY: **Many of us struggle with saying hurtful words to others—especially to family members. Take a few minutes and fill out the chart. Of course, these phrases are only a sampling of what we may say to family members. Tally your Xs and determine what your plan of action will be as you strive to control your tongue. If you find out that you say “Don’t bother me” a lot, work on not saying that. If you find out that you say a lot of put-downs, work on not doing that. ♥ The tongue is powerful. God wants us to build each other up, not tear each other down. Let’s use our tongues for good and for God!** Give preteens time to work on this.

Close with a time of prayer. SAY: **Don’t forget that you don’t have to control your tongue on your own. God will help you—if you ask. Let’s ask Him right now.** Ask for volunteers to pray, asking for God’s help in controlling their tongues. You could assign each volunteer to pray about a place where it can be hard to control our tongues, such as at school, at home, while playing sports, and so forth. After volunteers have prayed, close in prayer.

Option You Can’t Put It Back!

Do this object lesson where everyone can see it. Put the tube of toothpaste on the paper plate. Let preteens take turns squeezing out some toothpaste. Give everyone a turn who wants to. Be sure that at least half the toothpaste has been squeezed out. Tell preteens that now they have to put the toothpaste back into the tube. Provide a few plastic knives to help them in their efforts. Let everyone have a turn who wants to. Of course, they won’t get much toothpaste back into the tube. If desired, you could give each student a small tube of toothpaste to do the experiment.

SAY: **Our words are like the toothpaste that’s on the paper plate. Once our words come off our tongues, they’re out there and there’s no putting them back into our mouths. Of course, we can and should apologize and ask for forgiveness. But it’s so much better if we never have to apologize or be sorry for something we said. ♥ The tongue is powerful. God wants us to build each other up, not tear each other down. Our challenge is to control our tongues and use them for good and for God! When you’re tempted to say something you shouldn’t, remember trying to put the toothpaste back into the tube. Once you say something, you can’t put it back into your mouth. Before you speak—think!**

Close with a time of prayer. PRAY: **Dear God, we praise You for being our creator. Thank You that You created us so we could talk to each other. God, please help us to control our tongues. When we’re tempted to blurt out stuff we shouldn’t, help us to think before speaking. Help us to control our tongues and say things that build others up instead of tearing them down. In Jesus’ name, amen.**

Materials

Activities for lesson 12, pencils



Materials

tube of toothpaste, paper plate, plastic knives, moist towelettes (optional: 1 small tube of toothpaste and 1 paper plate per student)



Be sure that no one is allergic to the ingredients in the toothpaste.

Live Wire

Distribute *Live Wire* to students before they leave. They will enjoy the articles, puzzles, and other features included in this fun student magazine.

Be sure parents know about the *Faith & Family* pages available online to print and use with their children at home. Go to www.heartshaper.com.

