



B REVEALING WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

# The power of our words to build or destroy



## Why use this Bible study?

This Bible study helps us to explore how our words affect other people, and what God has to say about how we talk to, and about, others.



## Taming the tongue

Read **James 3: 3-12** and **Ephesians 4: 25-32**

The Bible is clear that our speech is important - it matters to God. Harmful speech can hurt and destroy others, and it offends God. Earlier in Ephesians 4 (verse 15) we are told to 'speak the truth in love'. We need to learn to speak in ways that are truthful and that challenge and expose injustice and pain, but that also build people up and encourage them in God's love.



## Key points

- What we say matters. Our words can cause pain, hurt and discouragement.
- Our speech should build people up, not destroy them.
- Our words should reflect God's love for us and others.
- This does not mean that we should never challenge any wrongdoing or injustice. The Bible is clear that this is part of our calling.



## Questions for discussion

- What types of speech do the passages in Ephesians and James condemn?
- Read **Proverbs 11: 9**. How might speech destroy people?
- How do the passages encourage us to speak?
- James 3 tells us that we should only speak "what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen". What things are said in your church or community that do not build others up?
- Are there certain groups of people in your church or community who are teased by others because they are different in some way? In what ways could this be destroying them?
- How could our speech change so that we are better at building others up and speaking with kindness and compassion?
- How would our communities change if our speech reflected what these Bible passages say?

Awareness-raising

Children & youth

Climate & environment

Conflict & peace-building

Corruption & governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination & inclusion

Food & livelihoods

Gender & sexual violence

Health & HIV

Influencing decision-makers

Migration & trafficking

Water, sanitation & hygiene



## Reflection

Are there words that have been spoken to you, that have crushed you? Ask God to help you forgive the people who spoke these words. Find some Bible verses that speak of your worth and identity in Christ (for example, 1 John 3:1-2, 2 Cor 5:17, 1 Peter 2:9, 2 Tim 1:7, Rom 8:1, Rom 8:37). Speak these over yourself and let the truth of these words replace the harmful words that others have spoken.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if there are areas of speech that you need to bring before God, and repent of. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you speak words of truth, encouragement and love to others.

Draw a large arrow on a piece of paper or card (you can use the template below to help you), and cut it out. You could write a Bible verse on it, such as: *'say only what is helpful for building others up – Ephesians 4: 29'*. Put it somewhere to remind you that our words can either build people up and encourage them, or destroy them.

### Related tools

- A1 – Revealing stigma towards people with disabilities: information for facilitators [A1: *Discrimination & inclusion-1*]
- A1 – Revealing HIV: information for facilitators [A1: *Health & HIV-1*]
- A2 – Understanding vulnerability and disability [A2: *Discrimination & inclusion-1*]
- B – Each of us is special to God (Bible study) [B: *Discrimination & inclusion-5*]

