

GOSSIP & ENVY

JOY Session

OBJECTIVE:

To teach the group that gossip and hurtful words are harmful, because they hurt us and others, taking us away from God.

PREPARATION:

Read Matthew 15:10-11 ahead of time. Familiarize yourself with the passage and interpret. Understand that although fasting and what we put in our bodies is important, what comes out of ones mouth is incredibly important as well.

OPENING PRAYER:

Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations. *Psalms 100*

ACTIVITY:

Have the group sit in a circle. Begin by whispering into one child's ear a short phrase or sentence. Instruct each child to whisper what you have said into the next person's ear (like the game "Telephone"). Once the last person has been told the sentence, have them say it out loud to the group. Chances are it will be different from what you had originally said. If it has not changed at all, and time permits, you may do this same activity a few times, with a different sentence each time.

DISCUSSION:

Share with the group the original sentence that was told, and then compare it with the newest sentence that was shared out loud. Ask the group why they think the sentence was different the final time it was said.

Ask the group:

- What is the danger of retelling a story several times? (*the original message gets changed or totally lost*)
- Have you ever said something that somebody else told somebody and it wasn't what you had really meant because it was retold too many times? (*let children answer; or, share a time when this happened to you*)
- Were you upset that people thought that you may have said something bad about them?
- Have you ever actually said something bad about someone?
- Did the person/people that you talked badly about find out?
- If so, did you feel bad? If they did not find out, did you still feel bad for saying something mean about them?

- Have you ever been on the other end? Has anybody ever said anything bad about you? How did that make you feel? (*Let children share their stories, but try to keep the discussion on topic*)
- When you were being talked badly about, did it make you think about a time that you said something bad about someone? Did it make you feel worse?

SCRIPTURE:

Read these passages from the Gospel of Matthew, explaining that Christ said this to His people:

"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Matthew 12:34

"Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." Matthew 15:11

DISCUSS:

- What do you think these passages mean? (*If participants are confused by the emphasis on what goes in the mouth, you can explain that Jesus was talking to the Jewish people, who had specific rules about what they could and could not eat - what was "clean" and "unclean"*)
- Have you ever gotten distracted by what goes in your mouth that you forget what comes out? (*Let participants share brief stories, or if no one will answer, you may begin by sharing a situation of your own*)
- Ultimately, Jesus points out that when we speak, our words come from where? (*our heart*)
- Why do you think He said this? What does it mean when we say something hurtful?
- How can we change our habits of gossip and mean talk? (*We need to focus on our hearts: are our hearts troubled or angry? These things can be taken to God in prayer, confession, and worship.*)

WRAP UP/CHALLENGE:

Although what we eat is important, and fasting is important, Christ is telling us that what comes out of our mouths, what we say about ourselves and others, is what really explains who we are as Christians. What comes out of our mouths reflects what is in our hearts - good or bad.

- What comes out of our mouths is so important because it can have an affect on so many people.
- What comes out of our mouths reflects what is in our heart. If we find that we are constantly saying negative or mean things, we should examine our hearts.
- Being more aware of this should help you to watch what you say about people because the way that you feel when they gossip about you isn't a good feeling.

Today I challenge all of us to pay attention to our attitudes and words to other people. What is the motivation for what we say and do? If there is anger, jealousy, hurt, or other negative emotions, do we express those in our words and actions towards others? The next time something critical or hurtful comes out of the mouth, I challenge all of us to stop and think where it's coming from, and examine our hearts prayerfully. It may be a good idea to keep a journal of what we find!

CLOSING PRAYER:

Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations. Psalm 100