

Speak the Truth ...

Leader's Notes and Bible Passages Available Online

Please use the material provided as best fits the time constraints of your group. Suggestions have been made for sections that can be excluded and possibly used for personal Bible study at home. To conserve time, have group members look ahead and have the passages ready to read. The Scripture passages are printed in blue for the leader's convenience.

Introduction: Have you ever been “caught” in a lie (honestly!)? What were the consequences of that lie? *Whom* did it affect? Share your memories with a partner or in small groups. Encourage group participation. If your group is large, break up in small groups of 3 or 4. Remember, everything shared within the group is confidential.

If time permits, share with the group your definition of a “white lie” and a “bald-faced lie.” The dictionary defines a white lie as “an unimportant lie (especially one told to be tactful or polite).” A “bald-faced” lie according to the dictionary is one that is “brash or undisguised.”

Opening Prayer

O Lord, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Your sight! Be with us as we study Your Word. We give You thanks and praise for this opportunity as we remember that Your Word is truth. We boldly speak to You in Jesus Name. Amen.

In a popular movie entitled “A Few Good Men,” a courtroom scene pictures a young, ambitious military attorney questioning an older, more experienced officer about the truth behind the death of a young military man. After much badgering, the older officer finally yells at the younger man, “You can’t handle the truth!” When do you find it hard to “handle the truth”? Choose one or more from the following and explain why. *Once again, encourage group participation.*

The truth would:

- hurt my reputation
- damage my relationship with someone I love
- cause punishment or pain or both for me or someone I love
- be devastating

_____ (*your own answer*)

Speak the Truth

What does God command in Exodus 20:16? *The Eighth Commandment: You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way. (If time permits, see also the Second Commandment, its meaning, and related questions.)*

What does God forbid in this command? *See #1, #2, and #3 below.*

1. Zechariah 8:16–17, Psalm 34:13, Proverbs 19:5, Ephesians 4:25 **Speak the truth; do not lie about our neighbor in a court of law or elsewhere; do not lie about, lie to, or withhold the truth from our neighbor.**

Zechariah 8:16–17 – *These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts; do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this," declares the LORD.*

Psalm 34:13 – *...keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.*

Proverbs 19:5 – *A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will not go free.*

Ephesians 4:25 – *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.*

2. Proverbs 11:13, Matthew 26:21–24, 47–50 **Do not betray or reveal our neighbor's secrets.**

Proverbs 11:13 – *A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.*

Matthew 26:21–24, 47–50 – *And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?" Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.*

3. Matthew 18:15, Luke 6:37, James 4:11a **Do not slander our neighbor or hurt our neighbor's reputation.**

Matthew 18:15 – *If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.*

Luke 6:37 – *Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned...*

James 4:11a – *Brothers, do not slander one another.*

Read Proverbs 8:6–7. *Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right. My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness.*

What kind of speech does God instruct us to use? Wisdom is speaking here, giving us the example of speaking words that are worthy, right, true.

Read the following passages and identify characteristics of worthy speech:

1 Corinthians 13:1 and 7, Ephesians 4:15, 1 Peter 4:8b **love**

1 Corinthians 13:1 and 7 – *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. [Love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

Ephesians 4:15 – *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

1 Peter 4:8b – *Love covers over a multitude of sins.*

Proverbs 12:18, Proverbs 31:8–9 **compassion**

Proverbs 12:18 – *Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*

Proverbs 31:8–9 – *"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."*

Hebrews 3:13a (See also Ephesians 4:29) **encouragement**

Hebrews 3:13a – *But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

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.*

Deuteronomy 32:1–3, Psalm 51:15, Ephesians 5:19–20

praise/thanks to God

(See also Psalm 71:8 and Psalm 145:10–12, 21)

Deuteronomy 32:1–3 – *Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants. I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God!*

Psalm 51:15 – *O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.*

Ephesians 5:19 – *Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Psalm 71:8 – *My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendor all day long.*

Psalm 145:10–12, 21 – *All you have made will praise you, O LORD; your saints will extol you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.*

Psalm 49:3, Proverbs 20:15, Proverbs 31:26

wisdom, knowledge

Psalm 49:3 – *My mouth will speak words of wisdom; the utterance from my heart will give understanding.*

Proverbs 20:15 – *Gold there is, and rubies in abundance, but lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel.*

Proverbs 31:26 – *She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.*

Acts 4:29, Acts 28:31

boldness

Acts 4:29 – *Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.*

Acts 28:31 – *Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.*

James 1:26, Hebrews 12:5-11

discipline

James 1:26 ²⁶ If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

Hebrews 12:5-11 ⁵ And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶ because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” ⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? ⁸ If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. ⁹ Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! ¹⁰ Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Discuss: What makes it difficult to speak words of chastisement or reprimand? *Answers will vary. Included could be such things as: reprimand could cause alienation from another; chastisement could be thrown back to the chastiser (i.e. “you’re such a hypocrite, I know you’ve done the same thing”); it just makes us uncomfortable.*

If time permits, share with a partner or the group a “truth-ism” that is a favorite for you (this could include a Bible verse, hymn verse, pithy saying, or the like). *Encourage all to participate.*

Speak the Truth...about THE TRUTH

Jesus says in John 14:6, *I am the Way and **the Truth** and the Life*. What do the following verses encourage Spirit-filled believers to do?

Isaiah 52:7 **Tell the good news about Jesus; proclaim salvation.**

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Psalm 40:10 **Speak of God's faithfulness, salvation, love and truth.**

I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly.

Psalm 71:15 **Continually speak of the salvation of God.**

My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure.

Acts 4:20 **Witness about what God has done for us.**

For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

Matthew 28:18–20 **Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them in the Name of the Triune God.**

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Words are the way we verbally express ourselves to one another. They can encourage or discourage; they can be eloquent or misunderstood. Read 1 Corinthians 2:13. *This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.*

What words does the Spirit enable us to speak? Those that express spiritual truths

What “faith-words” does the Spirit help us to share with those around us? See Ephesians 1:7–8, Psalm 30:10–12, Philippians 4:7, Exodus 15:2, Ephesians 2:8–10, and John 3:16 for six words of faith. **Forgiveness, Joy, Peace, Salvation, Grace, Eternal Life** What additional words could be added to the list? **Answers will vary, but could include: Love, Mercy, Justification, Righteousness**

Ephesians 1:7–8 – *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*

Psalm 30:10–12 – *Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me; O LORD, be my help. You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever.*

Philippians 4:7 – *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Exodus 15:2 – *The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.*

Ephesians 2:8–10 – *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

John 3:16 – *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

If time permits, share a new word you have recently learned with a partner and share an old word of faith with that partner at the same time. ***Challenge:*** Learn a new word this week and share it with a friend. Share an old word of faith with that friend at the same time.

Speak the Truth...by living the truth

Words have little meaning if not accompanied by action. See 1 John 3:18. *Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

Read Colossians 3:12–17. *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Paul's word-picture in this passage beautifully illustrates the connection between words and actions. How should all our words and actions be done (v.17)? **Thankful to God, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

What specific words and actions could accompany the following: **Answers will vary – stress citing specific actions.**

(v. 13) – “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.” **Making the first move to clear up a misunderstanding; speaking words of forgiveness.**

(v. 14) – “And over all these virtues put on love...” (What “little acts of kindness” show your love for others?) **Cards, phone calls, e-mails, actions (i.e. cleaning the bathroom, ironing a shirt, etc.)**

(v. 15) – “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...” **Sharing the Good News of salvation; giving our concerns to the Lord in prayer (and letting Him handle them); sharing words of comfort and joy with fellow Christians.**

(v. 16) – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...” **Daily Bible study, participation in small group Bible studies, reading through the Bible in a year, memorizing Bible passages.**

If time permits, discuss what we can learn about our speech-actions from the following: **Each passage shows how our speech and our actions are bound together.**

1 Corinthians 1:4–7 **We hear the Word, speak about it, and use our individual talents and abilities (spiritual gifts) to build up the Body of Christ. See also 1 Corinthians 12.**

I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge— because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

Colossians 4:6, Matthew 5:13 **Live a life that makes a difference! In conversation and action, “spice up” the world.**

Colossians 4:6 – *Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

Matthew 5:13 – *You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.*

Philippians 1:14 **Paul commends the Philippians for “getting the Word out” – that takes action. We might have to move out of our comfort zones.**

Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

1 Peter 3:8–9 **Showing sympathy, love and compassion require action, but they need to be accompanied by harmonious words of blessing.**

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

James 1:19–20 Hurtful actions can result from anger; this passage cautions us to avoid those actions by really listening before we speak and act.

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

James 2:12 “What would Jesus do?” is a good standard to follow in both speech and action.

Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom.

If time permits, discuss:

Why is it important to speak words of forgiveness and not just say, “That’s okay”?

It is important to hear the words – for example, if the grocery cart hits your foot from behind and the driver says “I’m sorry” and you reply “that’s okay,” the response could be, “well, if that’s okay, then I’ll hit the other foot!” Sin is *not* “okay”. A more serious example might be if words of anger are spoken between husband and wife — condemning, accusing, and hurtful words. Words of forgiveness need to verbally be shared between the couple; the rift needs to be healed and the words “that’s okay” cannot heal. People appreciate **hearing** they are forgiven — it even takes some by surprise. Practice this by beginning in the home.

Challenge: Memorize a new verse from the Bible and rejoice with the Psalmist in 119:11a: *I have hidden Your Word in my heart...*

Prayer

Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet and a light for our paths. Father, we confess that our speech is often not worthy or is even unwholesome and does not give You glory. Forgive us because of the saving work of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Help us to keep our conversation and actions salty and spicy even when situations arise that make it uncomfortable for us to speak. Enable us by the power of Your Spirit, to share our faith-words with those who need to hear. In the Name of Jesus, the Word made flesh for us. Amen.

Sing

“Thy Word” (*LSB* Accompaniment Edition #973) or “Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide” (*LSB* 585; also found in *TLH* 292 and *LW* 344)

Shari Miller, wife of Rev. Larry and mother of Joshua and Johanna, is the Chairman of the LWML Bible Study Task Force, which has completed its assigned task of evaluating current LWML Bible studies. She lives in Helena, Montana, and has written various articles and studies for the LWML.