

Sticks & Stones

My worth is not in what others say about me.

No matter what anyone says about them the girls should always remember that God takes great delight in them and thinks they are amazing!



Summary of what the girls will be learning

What the world says...

When someone has wronged you and you are no longer friends, it's acceptable to speak badly about that person or to spread untruths about them so others will know what they have done or said.

What God says...

God is very clear throughout the Bible that He loves us and there is nothing that we can do to separate us from the love of Christ.

Romans 8:38-39 "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, [a] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The challenge...

Our responsibility is two fold

(1) We need to take to heart what the Bible says about us and not what other people say. (2) We also have a responsibility to be careful about the words we choose to use about other people.

"The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

Zephaniah 3 v 17

PRAYER BEFORE YOU GO.

Pray the Lord will help you be sensitive to this topic. Be aware that some of your girls may be getting bullied, they may even be going through this at the minute. They may have nasty words said about them on a daily basis by someone-a "friend" or even a family member. Pray the Lord will help you to guide the class and for the girls to learn a life long lesson.

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Background notes

Unfortunately for a lot of young people (particularly girls), gossip is rife among their peers. They can often have words said about them that are nasty and untrue. Then if the girl hears it about herself often enough she begins to believe what she is hearing and that can become how she values herself.

Unfortunately it does not even need to come from her peers it can come from a family member and then the girl thinks, "well if they are saying it they must be true". However we want to challenge this in today's lesson and help the girls to realise that their worth is not in fact found in what other's say about them, it is found in how God views them. Similarly we want the girls to be challenged this week to think about how they speak about others and to think before they say something that could potentially scar that other person for a long time.

This week the girls will be looking at a few verses within Scripture to help them understand what the Bible has to say about gossip.

Break the Ice

Get the girls to play a quick game of Chinese whispers. Give them a phrase or sentence to whisper to one another. It will be interesting to see if the correct sentence makes its way back to you (in order to make it more difficult you could create background noise or get the others to chat when they are waiting their turn).

The purpose of this icebreaker is to get the girls to think about how easy and quickly it is to pass on words. It should also get them to think that very often we can say something and when it is passed on to many people the content can be distorted.

Begin tonight's discussion by asking the girls have they ever heard the rhyme "Sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me."? Have they ever chanted this rhyme at anyone? Do the girls think this comment is true? Very often we can call someone something and say it in a playful manner however the reality is that names hurt and can scar someone for a very long time.

God considered gossip as a serious matter when He included it in the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20 v 16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor". There are many other verses within Scripture that warns against the dangers of gossip and spreading lies about people. This week the girls will be looking at a few of the verses in Proverbs.

Read Proverbs 11 v 13, Proverbs 26 v 20 and Proverbs 21 v 23 and pray God will help you to explain what each of these verses mean. If you have time read them in other versions of the Bible to help give you an understanding of their meaning.

The girls are also asked to look at Psalms 57 v 4 which is a Psalm David wrote when he was fleeing from Saul. David is the subject of gossip and people saying negative things about him and this verse in the Psalms illustrates how David responded when he was the subject of negativity. This week we want to encourage the girls to learn from David and turn to God when they know people are saying negative things about them

Ask the girls do they know what the word gossip is? The Oxford English Dictionary describes gossip as *casual or unconstrained (unlimited) conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details which are not confirmed as true*. Perhaps they have been involved in spreading gossip or perhaps they have been the person people have been gossiping about. Either way gossip is not good. Ask the girls what the danger is of spreading untrue words about someone?

Almost all of us will have been the subject of gossip or have had nasty things said about us. Very often we can begin to believe what is said and think that is all we are worth. Explain to the girls that in this week's class you are going to be exploring the damage gossip and nasty words can do to someone and to hear what the Bible has to say about this topic. However the good news is that our worth is not in what people say about us but in what God thinks of us and they will be hearing at the end of the night exactly what the Bible has to say about them.

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Reading the Bible

Explain to the girls that gossip and saying nasty things about people has been around from the beginning of time. It is part of human nature. However that does not excuse the fact that it is not right. The Bible even mentions it as part of the Ten Commandments God gave to Moses (Exodus 20 v 16)

Read Psalm 57 v 4. David was also faced with people who gossiped and said nasty things about Him. How did David respond? By talking to God about it.

Ask the girls what can we learn from David in his response to gossip?

Read together the following verses from the Bible: (Get the girls to jot down their answers in page XX of their journals). Proverbs 11 v 13, Proverbs 26 v 20, Proverbs 21 v 23 What do these verses say about gossip?



Journals

The girls will already have completed the first page of their journals when looking at the Bible verses on gossip.

Ask them to turn to page XX of their journals. Ask them why do they think people say nasty things about others? In their journals ask them to write around the image of the girl, nasty phrases they hear girls saying about each other.

Explain that very often verbal abuse is a lot more damaging than physical abuse. It is soul destroying and destructive for people. Very often people are called a name and it sticks with them for the REST of their life.

There are a few questions on page XX which the girls are asked to answer. You can ask them to split into groups to discuss these or you can answer them together.

1) What should we do if we have nasty things said about us (or about a friend)? Encourage the girls to think of ways they can deal with gossip and not engage in it.

2) How can we challenge those around us about what they are saying without our friends falling out with us? Is this possible?

For some they may not think this is possible so and we don't want the girls to end up being excluded because they are challenging those who engage in gossip. Suggest subtle ways in which they can be salt and light instead of confrontational e.g. suggest they walk away from the group when they are gossiping or by chipping in positive things about the person in question when an opportunity arises. Acknowledge to the girls this is difficult for anyone to address regardless of their age and encourage them to pray when they are faced with this situation.

3) What ways can we offend people without saying it face to face? This questions is included to encourage them to think how we can say hateful and hurtful words through text messages or social networking sites.

In the final page of their journals there is the same image of the girl that was on page XX. This time the girls are asked to write the Bible verses round the image. These verses describe what God thinks of them.

Finishing off

Finish the lesson by reinforcing the Bible verses the girls have just written around the girl in the last page. Explain that it is part of growing up that we change friends and views on people. However this is not how God works, His view of us is constant and never changes. He always takes pleasure and delight in us, His Creation. Encourage them to not listen to any negative words they may hear about themselves (in fact but to always remember that God, the Creator of the Universe delights over them.

Added Extra: If you like you could print out some of these verses and give each girl a verse. Encourage them when they feel bad about themselves or when they hear someone saying something negative about them to read the verse to remind them their worth is found in what God thinks of them.

NOTES

EXTRAS

CREATIVE PRAYER

Take a piece of paper and pen and write down the worst thing that someone has said about you (it can be friends, family, whoever you like). Now fold it up and dispose of it as the leader instructs (shredder, scissors etc). Now take the little card the leader is giving you and go find a space in the room to be quiet with God. Remind yourself that your worth is in how your Creator sees you and NOT in what others in this world think of you. Alternatively allow the girls time to repent from anything nasty they have said about anyone else.

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK.

How will u speak about others? Set the girls a challenge for the week ahead to consciously think about the words they are saying.

FURTHER DISCUSSION FOR BRIGADERS

Have the girls ever heard of the phrase negative humour? This is when we are teasing our friends but using negative words to do this. E.g “You are not going out in that are you?”, This is very innocent and the intent is not to hurt people’s feelings. Very often we can tease our friends but if they are feeling vulnerable or worried they can sometimes take it to heart. In the example above they may actually think they look ridiculous in what they are wearing when you actually did not mean it in that way. This is why we should always be careful what we say.

PRAYER TO FINISH WITH:

Dear God, Thank you that you love us and that regardless of the negative words people may say about us we can always be assured that you think we are wonderful and your thoughts about us never change. Help us Father God to always be careful about the words we use when talking about others and to always guard our tongues.

In Jesus’ name, amen.