

## LESSON SNAPSHOT

**BOTTOM LINE:**

If we want to turn the tide against gossip and bullying, we have to commit ourselves to using our words for good and not for harm.

**OBJECTIVE:**

Kids will learn what they can do to stop gossiping and bullying.

**KEY PASSAGE:**

James 3:3-10. Taming the tongue.

**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. " - Proverbs 4:14 (NIV)*

Ask the kids what they think the writer was trying to say when he wrote these words.

**SUMMARY:**

In Battleship we fire pretend torpedoes at targets we cannot see hoping to sink our opponent's battleship. Just like Battleship, gossip, backstabbing and bullying are all ways that we fire hateful words at our peers. Our words can be just as damaging as torpedoes to a ship, and thanks to text messages, email, and social media, it's easier than ever to tear someone down. God wants us to use our words for loving and lifting others up, but it takes commitment on our part to turn the tide against gossip and bullying.

**SIMPLE PRAYER:**

*Dear God,*

*Help us to control our tongues. Teach us to encourage and love others and to stand up against gossip and bullies.*

*In Jesus' name,  
Amen*

## EASY AT HOME OBJECT LESSON

### ITEMS NEEDED:

A restaurant comment card or photo of one

*Read through the comment card with the kids. Ask who has been to this restaurant, and see who had a good experience and a bad one - if any.*

Restaurant owners like to know when they are doing a good job. More than that, they very much like to know when they're not doing a good job. They don't want people going out and telling others that they had a bad experience in a restaurant, so they provide these cards as a way of letting customers vent about bad experiences and problems they had in their restaurants.

Does anyone know why a comment card is more useful than face-to-face feedback? When someone is face to face with you, they tend to be a little more polite. They are less likely to tell you the food is terrible and the bathroom is a mess. But give a person a card and give them a chance to hand it in anonymously, you'll get a much more honest answer.

The same thing happens when kids mistreat one another anonymously, either through notes or emails or message on the Internet. The names and things that we say when we are looking at a computer screen and not a person can be far more brutal and hurtful. That's why we've seen so many more kids harmed by bullying. The Internet, email, Facebook, text messages, and other social media give kids a chance to blast other kids in a place the whole world can see. It's a much crueler world now.

When you're hurt and angry, it's easy to give into the temptation to blast someone anonymously, just like a game of Battleship. But God wants us to love others when we're away from them and not just when we're near. We need to turn the other cheek when people attack us. We need to turn a deaf ear to kids who want us to join in with bullying and gossip. And we need to hold our tongues and not fire back.

If you can't say it to someone's face, don't text it, type it, or post it. Evil will never be overcome with evil, but it can be overcome with good!

## FAMILY GAME TIME

### SINK THE BATTLESHIP

#### ITEMS NEEDED:

Two large tubs, filled with water

Two plastic toy boats

A dozen or so small balls (baseballs or tennis balls will do)

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

Stage the tubs approximately 10 feet apart in a large, clear area - ideally outside or some place where a little splashing and spilled water won't cause any damage to property.

Choose two contestants and stage them beside each tub. Hand each contestant half a dozen balls. The contestants will hurl their balls at their opponent's "battleship" and attempt to sink it. If they run out of ammo before one of the ships is sunk, they can grab the used ammo from their opponent and hurl that. The game continues until a boat is either capsized or sunk.

#### VARIATION:

Move the tubs closer for little kids, or just have one pool and make it a one person game.

#### WHAT'S THE POINT?

Don't "sink" other people with your words. Use your tongue for good and for encouraging others.

## LARGE GROUP LESSON

### **BOTTOM LINE:**

If we want to turn the tide against gossip and bullying, we have to commit ourselves to using our words for good and not harm.

### **OBJECTIVE:**

Kids will learn what they can do to stop gossiping and bullying.

### **KEY PASSAGE:**

James 3:3-10. Taming the tongue.

### **INTRO**

One of the coolest family games ever is not a board game. There's no dice, no spinner, and no little colored pieces to move around a board. It's two separate consoles that look like the radar on a US Navy ship. It has five ships and two sets of pegs - one red, one white. Anybody know what I'm talking about?

Battleship is a great game that involves skill, strategy, and sometimes a little luck. It's a fun game that puts you in command of a naval fleet at war. In the game, you have no visual contact with your opponent. Instead, you fire shot after shot on a blank grid, hoping to make a hit and ultimately sink your opponent's ships.

As fun as Battleship is to play, there's another game people play much like Battleship that's not so fun. It's one of the games we shouldn't play, and it goes something like this.

Someone at school made you upset. It doesn't matter what he did necessarily, but you're angry and you want to strike out at that person. But you don't do it where he can see you. When his back is turned, you shoot at this kid, like your opponent in Battleship. Maybe it's a name whispered to a friend. Or maybe it's a post on Facebook. Maybe it's a text or an email directed at the person.

Whatever it is, it's something you would never, ever say to his face because it's cruel, mean, and hateful.

This game takes a number of different forms and names. It's name-calling. It's gossip - spreading rumors about someone that are untrue. It's backstabbing. It can even be called bullying.

# LARGE GROUP LESSON

It's not a new game, but it's a game that's grown in popularity and meanness in recent years. Thirty years ago, kids mostly whispered behind each other's backs or passed notes. But just as Electronic Battleship made that game more popular and fun, technology has enhanced this other bad game as well. Now we can send text messages straight to the person. Now we can put a note on Facebook. We can send emails and messages a number of ways that get directly to them or other people.

Sad to say, all this technology made it so much easier for kids to hurt other kids that more and more kids are doing it. When we don't have to look a person in the eye, there's no limit to the evil thoughts that can come from our lips and our finger tips.

My guess is everyone in here has been the victim of this game at one time or another. If I had to guess, I'd say many - if not all - are guilty of playing the game as well. It's sad because once you've been the victim, you know just how painful this game can be.

James writes about the destructive nature of this game, and his words about the tongue are as important for us today as they were then.

## **READ James 3:3-10**

### **MAIN POINT**

"Out of the same mouth comes praising and cursing." God made our tongue so we could communicate with him and with one another. He intended it to be a positive thing. We can use our tongue to praise God, to pray to him, and share him with others. We can use our tongue to encourage others, to show love, and to be a friend.

But the tongue can also be a destructive weapon, one that destroys others like a wildfire destroys a forest. Not a week goes by when you can't read a story in the news about kids taking their cruelty too far. You probably hear sad stories in your school as well- stories where kids really got their feelings hurt because of someone else's cruel words. Maybe you've been that kid with the hurt feelings.

Schools are getting tougher on kids who mistreat their classmates. Police have even taken action against kids who have taken their actions too far. But the real answer to this game is not new school rules or new laws. It's God.

### **DRIVE IT HOME**

When Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment, he gave this statement:

## **READ Matthew 22:34-40**

As Jesus said, the Ten Commandments can be summed up in these two passages. The first four deal with how we treat God.

# LARGE GROUP LESSON

The last six deal with how we treat others - including one that specifically says DO NOT make false statements about other people!

There are three things we can do to put an end to this game. Number one: stop playing. Stop slamming other kids behind their backs. When someone hurts you, take your hard feelings to God, not to Facebook. Let God know how you feel, and pour out your heart. Ask God to give you a love for that person so that you will not be tempted to say something cruel. When in doubt, never say or type anything you wouldn't say to someone's face.

Number two: don't let others do this with you. When your friends try to get you to engage in gossip or bullying, don't engage with them. Make a joke about something else. Change the subject. Or simply tell them you're not going to play. If they keep persisting, then walk away. And don't let anything they say bring you back in.

That takes me to the third thing: shut your ears. This is probably the hardest thing to do, especially if you are the victim. But if you can shut your ears, you take away the power someone has to hurt you. Remember that God made you special, and it's his opinion, not theirs, that should form your self-image. Take your hurts to the Lord. Ask forgiveness for those who are cruel to you. And ask God to help you show those kids that they cannot hurt you.

How nice would it be if kids everywhere would stop playing Battleship with each other's hearts? It can happen, but it has to start with individual kids saying, "We will not play your game!" Commit yourself to taming the tongue, and refuse to play. Don't let other kids pull you in, and don't let them bring you down. God made you special, and he made our tongues to share love and kindness. Let's use them the right way, and put an end to gossip and bullying.

## **CLOSE WITH A SIMPLE PRAYER**

*Dear God,*

*Help us to control our tongues. Teach us to encourage and love others and to stand up against gossip and bullies.*

*In Jesus' name,  
Amen*



## LESSON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### ICEBREAKER

Have you ever been out on a boat?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read James 3:3-10

How does James describe our tongues?

Why does James say we should not be using our tongues for praising and cursing?

How do kids use their tongues to hurt other kids?

How does Jesus want us to use our tongues?

Why is it so much easier to tear someone down when you're not face to face with him/her?

How many of you have been the victims of bullying or gossip?

How hard is it to resist joining in when your friends begin talking bad about someone else?

How can we respond to bullying or gossip when we are the one being picked on?

What if you see someone else being bullied or picked on? How can you use your tongue (or words) in a positive way to help him/her?

### SIMPLE PRAYER

*Dear God,*

*Thank you for the gift of tongues and speech. Forgive us for using them, and the technology of our time, to hurt others. Help us to become people who not only refuse to gossip and pick on one another, but show love to those who have been picked on by others. Give us courage to take a stand and show God's love to those who need it.*

*In Jesus' name,  
Amen*



## LESSON REVIEW GAME

**True or False.**

James says our tongues are as destructive as a fire.

TRUE

We can use our tongues to praise and to curse.

TRUE

We have no control over our tongues.

FALSE

It's harder to gossip about people when they are not there.

FALSE

God is not concerned with the words that we say.

FALSE



## CRAFT ACTIVITY

Have the kids cut out and decorate a boat with construction paper. Write the scripture “Love your neighbor as yourself” on the boat.