

Mean Words

A 20-minute lesson for Sunday school, VBS or midweek kids · Ephesians 4:32 and Genesis 50:20

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AGES	4–10 (adaptations for 3–5 and 10–12 at the end)
YOU NEED	A screen for the episode · building blocks or paper cups · paper folded into cards · markers or crayons · the coloring page
EPISODE	Ep 12, Mean Words (3:26) · youtu.be/ylbyVaW0vL8
MEMORY VERSE	“Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other.” Ephesians 4:32
BIBLE STORY	Joseph forgives his brothers, Genesis 37, 45 and 50
THE ONE THING THEY TAKE HOME	Our words can build people up or tear them down. When we hurt someone, we say sorry and make it right, and we forgive others just as God forgives us.

The class plan

MIN		WHAT HAPPENS
0–2	Welcome	Ask: “Can you remember a time someone said something kind to you? How did it feel?” Let a few children answer.
2–6	Watch	Show Ep 12, Mean Words (3:26).
6–10	Talk	Three questions below. Let them answer before you do.
10–13	Bible	Tell how Joseph forgave his brothers (Genesis 37, 45 and 50).
13–18	Activity	Build up or tear down tower, then a sorry card (below).
18–20	Pray	Close with the episode prayer.

Talk about it (5 minutes)

1. How did LJ’s words make Londyn feel? How did LJ feel afterwards?

Londyn was hurt and walked away, and LJ’s angry feeling turned into a heavy, sad one. Help children notice that mean words hurt both people.

2. Why does saying sorry take courage? Who helped LJ find the courage?

Mom reminded him that words are powerful and Dad shared how he said sorry first. Point out that LJ chose to make the card and say sorry himself.

3. Joseph forgave his brothers. Is there someone you can forgive, or say sorry to, this week?

Let children answer in their hearts if they prefer. Forgiving doesn’t mean what happened was okay; it means we choose love and let God make it right.

Open the Bible (4 minutes)

“And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God also in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32 (WEB)

How to tell it

Set the scene: Jacob gave his son Joseph a colorful coat, and Joseph’s older brothers grew jealous (Genesis 37:3–4). Tell how they took his coat and sent him far away to Egypt. Pause and ask: how do you think Joseph felt? Then jump ahead: God made Joseph a great leader, and when a famine came his hungry brothers traveled to Egypt to buy food, and they were afraid. Read Genesis 45:4–5 and 50:20. Finish: Joseph hugged them, cried, and forgave them, because God had turned something bad into something good.

Going deeper with older kids

With older kids, read Genesis 45:1–15 and 50:15–21 together. Why were the brothers still afraid years later? What did Joseph believe about God that helped him forgive? Connect it to Ephesians 4:32: we forgive “just as God also in Christ forgave you.”

Activity: Build up or tear down tower (4 minutes)

- Give each small group a pile of building blocks or paper cups.
- Take turns saying one kind, true thing about someone in the group. Each kind word adds one block to the tower.
- Point out how slowly a tower goes up, and how one push could knock it all down. Mean words work the same way. (Talk about it; you don’t need to knock it down.)
- Finish by folding a paper card, drawing a big red heart like LJ’s, and writing or dictating “I’m sorry” or “You’re the best” for someone at home.

A WORD OF CARE

Some children are hurt by words at home or at school, and some carry big hurts. Never pressure a child to forgive someone or to say who hurt them. Forgiving never means a child has to stay somewhere unsafe; if a child shares something serious, follow your church’s child-safety policy.

Close in prayer (2 minutes)

Have the children fold their hands and repeat after you, one line at a time:

God, thank You for forgiving me. Help my words build people up and not tear them down.
When I hurt someone, give me courage to say sorry, and when someone hurts me, help me forgive like You do. Amen.

Adaptations

Ages 3–5

Skip the writing. Practice “I’m sorry” and “I forgive you” with a puppet, then say the verse with hand motions.

Ages 10–12

Do the Going Deeper section. List how Joseph’s brothers hurt him and what Joseph chose instead.

Large group

Build towers in small groups with a leader in each. Take three answers to each question.

Short on time (10 minutes)

Watch from Londyn walking away (2), one question (2), tell Joseph (3), say the verse (2), pray (1).

A note for teachers

The heart of this lesson is that words have power, and that saying sorry and forgiving both take courage and love. Children should leave knowing how to make things right when they hurt someone, and that God forgives them.

Send the family guide home with every child so families can watch and talk about it together. It is free to print and share at ljandfamily.com.