

CREW Bible Study

Message – NOW & LATER Week 5

- **BOTTOM LINE:** If you want to be heard, use gentle words.
- **GOAL:** To help students realize that choosing to use gentle words can help them keep their influence and lead to healthier relationships.
- **SCRIPTURE:** *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1*

MESSAGE

There's an old phrase that says, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Have you ever heard that? Every time I hear this phrase I think, "I wish!" In my experience, and maybe for you too, words absolutely do hurt. Sometimes they hurt a lot.

The truth is, a lot of us don't fully understand the power our words have. And we don't filter them as often as we probably should. We just say them – whatever comes to mind comes out of our mouths.

Our words can be used for good... to share ideas, to help someone feel better, or to make someone laugh. But our words can also become a sort of weapon. What we say and how we say it often carries more power than we realize. The things we say – or maybe type – can literally be offensive or at least come across that way. And that can create tension in our relationships.

- Have you ever had a friendship end over the words that you or the other person said or texted?
- Have you ever gotten into a huge argument with your parents because of the words you used or they used, and it created a wall between you?
- Is there someone who you hate to see coming because they always have something rude, mean or disrespectful to say?

We all need to use words to communicate. So, is there a way to communicate that allows us to be honest and real with each other? Is there a way to get our point across, but in a humble, respectful, chill, way? And will it keep our friendships and relationships in tact instead of cracking them apart?

Throughout this message series called "Now & Later," we've been looking at passages in the Old Testament book of Proverbs. There's a lot of great advice in Proverbs from the very wise King Solomon that teaches us how to make good choices and live our best lives. Today we're looking at Proverbs chapter 15 verse 1.

Listen to this:

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

King Solomon is saying that you have a choice to make. Will you be gentle or will you be harsh? Your choice.

Let's start with the "harsh" choice. King Solomon warns, "a harsh word stirs up anger." It might be helpful to really think about what is considered *harsh* because it's important to all be on the same page. In general, consider harsh words to be unpleasant and unkind, with an angry tone, and frequently said or typed with the intent of shutting someone down.

If you've recently been in trouble, in an argument or a disagreement with someone, you probably know what I'm talking about. You've felt the urge to say something sarcastic, rude, or disrespectful. Any of those things qualify as the "harsh words" that Proverbs is referring to.

Now, I know we're all confined to our houses right now, but stick with me here on this example. Let's say there's a gathering on the beach that a whole bunch of your friends are going to and you want to go. You ask your mom and dad, and they both say no. You don't feel like they even give you a chance to state your case before shutting you down. So, you're mad. You yell at them and accuse them of ruining your life. And maybe you throw in the phrase, "I hate you."

That's harsh, right?

Your disrespectful words and angry tone likely ended in your parents feeling angry, frustrated and hurt too. And your harsh words NOW solidified your LATER staying at home. No one walked away from that feeling good about the relationship.

Now, let's go back to that first part of this verse and the word, "gentle." The first part says, "a gentle answer turns away wrath." Gentle words make it harder to be mad. They can diffuse the tension in a conversation or situation. Gentle words can literally turn away anger.

Think about it. Whether it's your parents, or your sister, or somebody you're fighting with, when you speak in a calm tone and choose your words carefully, it's really hard for the argument to keep escalating. A calm tone and gentle words allow you a better chance at two things:

1. To make your point. Instead of shutting down the conversation, gentle words can open it up.
2. To be heard. Gentle words give you the best shot at helping the other person understand your view.

Watch what you say and how you say it. It can all be about the delivery.

When it comes to dealing with conflict and arguments, there's really just one choice. Here's what wisdom teaches us: If you want to be heard, use gentle words.

FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Share a time when the words someone said to you truly hurt you. How did you react?
2. What are some ways you're harsh with people that don't involve words?
3. Which of the following ways of being harsh are you most tempted to use? sarcasm, brutal honesty, social media, ignoring someone – what else?
4. Has someone ever responded to you in a kinder way than you felt like you deserved? If so, what happened?
5. Have you ever needed to repair and mend a relationship after you said something you regretted? How did that turn out?
6. In a culture where people often don't use gentle words, why is it important for us, as followers of Jesus, to lead our lives in this way?
7. What does it look like for you to respond with gentle words at home and with friends? In what friendship or relationship do you need to start using less harsh words and a more gentle tone this week?