

VIRTUAL SMALL GROUP GENERAL INFO

TIPS & TRICKS

- Watching the Bible story video: use your meeting app's "share my screen" option to play the video yourself. (Be sure to click "share computer audio" so kids can hear the video.)
 - We recommend watching the video together as a group, so your few can have a shared experience and you'll know that the follow-up activity will make sense to all of your kids.
- Navigating a virtual conversation:
 - Make "eye contact" as much as possible. The more "locked in" and engaged you are, the most your few will be as well.
 - Use the "host" functionalities of your meeting software to your advantage! Turn kids' mute buttons on and off as needed instead of leaving it to them to regulate.
 - At the beginning of every small group time, remind kids of the "house rules": try not to talk when someone else is talking, make sure you're listening to your friends and giving "eye contact" when they're talking.
 - If kids are talking over each other, let them know you're trying to get their attention and then wait for them to settle down. Don't try to talk over them in order to regain control of the conversation.
- Keep Small Group time short. Thirty minutes is about the maximum amount of time kids can be expected to sit in one place and focus on one thing. Expect about a 2-minute attention span for every year of your kids' lives. For a 7-year-old, that's about 14-18 minutes! Keep them engaged by doing that day's suggested activity (in the Leader Guide) along with the suggested conversation, instead of separating them.
- Your shy or more introverted kids might be used to participating in a virtual group setting by now, but if they still seem reluctant to share or fully engage, look for easy, low-impact ways to let them join in.
- Say their names! It sounds simple, but say their names so each kid knows you want to hear from them.
- Hope for a great time of connection, but don't expect it to be revolutionary! Simply by showing up virtually and spending time focusing on your few, you're communicating that you're there for them and they're important to you.

GAMES & ICE BREAKERS

Here's a list of games and icebreakers you can have on hand for when you need them.

WHERE'S THE WIDGET?

- Pretend like you're holding something small in your hand.
- Tell kids that they get pretend to hide it from you and you get to guess who's got it!
- Close your eyes or turn around while the kids silently decide who is going to be the one "holding" the widget.
- Slowly count to 10 and then open your eyes or turn around and face the computer.
- Based on facial expressions, overheard conversations, and general giddiness, take a guess as to who is holding the widget.
- (If you play this game enough, eventually your few will become rather adept at deception!)

WOULD YOU RATHER:

- Ask a few "would you rather" questions and lead kids to take turns quickly responding with their choice.
- Let them take turns asking their own "would you rather" questions of the group.
- This website has a huge list of "this or that" type questions for kids: <https://bit.ly/2Y0gg8q>
- You can also get really silly and random with what you ask, like,
 - "Would you rather eat dessert whenever you want to, but you can only have the same type for the rest of your life; OR only be allowed to eat dessert once a week, but you can choose whichever dessert you want?"
 - "Would you rather touch an alligator or hug a panda bear, if you knew neither one would bite you?"

TWENTY QUESTIONS:

- Choose one person to start, or ask for a volunteer.
- This person must think of an object. It can be any object, (as long as it's appropriate) and would be something everyone in the group would know.
- The rest of the group then takes turns asking yes or no questions about the object.
- The person who has the object in mind should answer

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the question with a simple yes or no, avoiding giving any other details.

- After hearing the answer, the kid asking the question is allowed one guess at what the object is.
- If a total of 20 questions gets asked with no one guessing what the object is, the kid who thought of the object wins and gets to reveal what the object was.
- If someone does guess correctly, they now get to think of a new object.

HIDE AND SEEK

- Choose three or four kids to be “hidiers” and one kid to be the “seeker.”
- The kids who will be hiding get to choose if they’ll move left or right of their device’s camera, or down below so they can’t be seen.
- When you say “Go,” the seeker closes their eyes while you count to 10.
- The “hidiers” will then hide by moving left, right, or down. Instruct the hidiers to stay put until you tell them to move.
- After counting to 10, let the seeker open their eyes and guess which direction each kid moved.
- If the seeker gets them all right, they get to be the seeker again.
- If they get any of them wrong, they choose the next seeker.
- The game is basically a game of chance, unless any kids accidentally reveal themselves by moving part of their bodies back into the range of their device’s camera!

SCAVENGER HUNT

- Make sure you have everyone’s attention.
- Tell them you’re going to give them an object to find and the first person who returns and shows you the object first wins!
- Think of an object all kids would have in their homes. (Ideas and suggestions are below.)
- Tell kids what the object is and give them a second or two to think of where that object might be.
- Count to three and call out, “GO!”
- Kids should go find that object as fast as they (safely) can.
- You are the judge of who makes it back first. To keep it fair, you can make the stipulation that the winner

must be back in their seat in front of their device and you must be able to clearly see the object they’re holding.

- You can play a few rounds of this game and keep score. The kid who won the most rounds is the overall winner!
- Scavenger hunt object suggestions:
 - A spoon
 - A sock
 - Something fuzzy
 - Something orange (or any other color)
 - A sibling (only use this one if all kids have at least one sibling at home)
 - A grownup
 - A remote control
 - A ball
 - A shoe
 - A crayon/marker (for safety, no pencils)
 - Tape
 - Something edible
 - Something you can drink from (cup, water bottle, etc.)
 - A Bible or devotional book
 - A regular book
 - A pillow
 - Something artsy
 - A pet
 - Something electronic

SHOW AND TELL

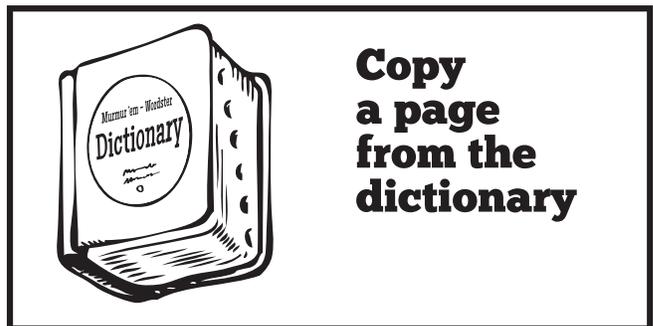
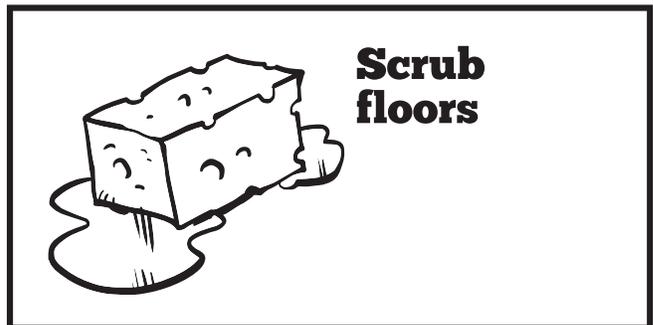
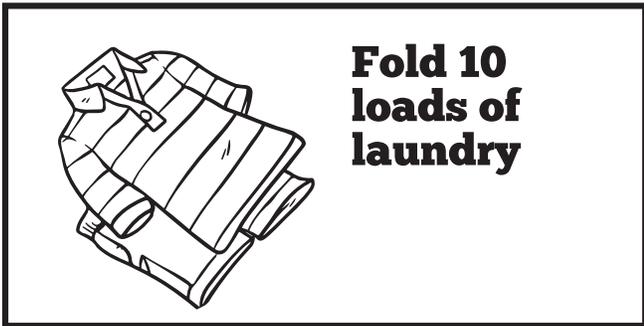
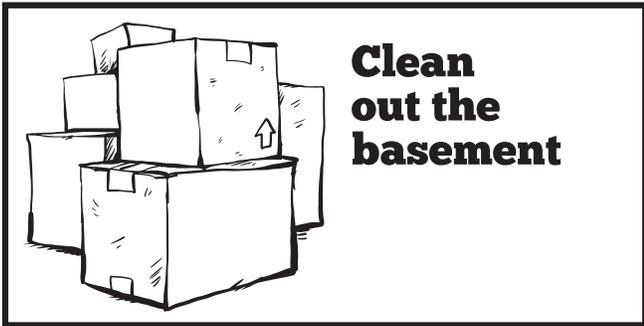
- Kids love sharing about themselves and what they like! Give them a chance to do that in this virtual twist on an old classic.
- If you’re doing show and tell, you may want to let families know ahead of time so kids can pick out that perfect show and tell item!
- As kids share about their item, encourage their peers to stay quiet and listen.
- Limit sharing to two minutes for each kid, and give them a countdown when their time is almost over. (You can hold up 10 fingers and lower them one at a time to show kids how much time is left.)
- If your group likes doing show and tell, you can do it often and choose a different theme each time!

ICEBREAKER CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- What’s your favorite thing you ate this week?

VIRTUAL SMALL GROUP GENERAL INFO

- What or who do you play with when you're outside?
- Who has a family pet that they can show on camera?
- What was the best part of yesterday?
- What's the longest you've gone (during social distancing) without showering?
- If you could BE any famous person, who would you be and why?
- How many stuffed animals are on your bed right now?
- What's one thing you don't miss when school is out for summer or holiday breaks?
- What's one thing you DO miss when school is out for summer or holiday breaks?
- If you could add one thing to your bedroom, what would it be?





**One hour
of extra
screen time**

\$100



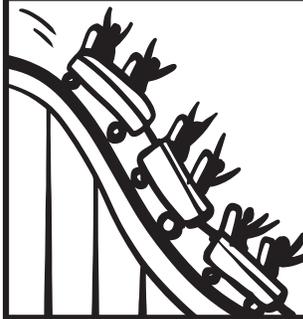
**An ice
cream
cone**



**A
sleepover
with a
friend**



A new bike



**A trip to a
rollercoaster
park**

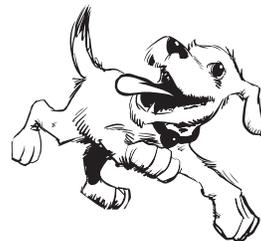
\$5



**15 minutes
of extra
screen
time**



**Lunch
at your
favorite
restaurant**



**A new
pet**

What to Do:

Print and cut apart, keeping Work and Reward cards separate.

1. Who wrote the letter that we read part of today? (*Paul*)
2. What church did he write this letter to? (*the church in Ephesus*)
3. Where was Paul when he wrote this letter? (*in prison*)
4. What was the point of the Scripture that we read today? (*We should use our words wisely and to build each other up.*)
5. What's something encouraging or helpful you can say to someone else today?
 - a. *If kids are stuck for ideas, ask prompting questions like: What's something kind that you can say to your brother or sister? Your grandma or grandpa? Someone who's sad? Someone who needs help?*

What You Say:

"Sometimes we forget how important our words are and how much they can affect someone else. **[Make it Personal] (Tell about a time someone used their words wisely toward you and showed you Jesus' love.)** Here's the thing, God put us on Earth to point everyone to Him. When you **[Bottom Line] use your words wisely**, everyone around us has a better chance of feeling His love and knowing Him! When we leave today, we can remember the awesome responsibility and role we have to show everyone the love of Jesus through our powerful words."

Close your group in prayer:

"Dear God, thank You so much that all of Your words are trustworthy and true. Help us show others what You're like by saying words that build up and help the people around us. Help us say words like (*repeat some of the encouraging and helpful things kids mentioned in your earlier conversation*). And when we make mistakes with our words, please help us be quick to say, 'I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?' Thank You for loving us so much, God. We love You, too. Amen."

Small Group Leader Guide

Virtual Small Group

January Week 1

January 10

Preteen

Today's Bible Story: The Greatest (The Greatest Commandment) • *Matthew 22:36-40*

Today's Key Question: What are things you're expected to do?

Today's Bottom Line: Love God. Love others.

Monthly Memory Verse: *Suppose you can be trusted with something very little. Then you can also be trusted with something very large.* Luke 16:10a (NirV)

Monthly Life App: Responsibility—Showing you can be trusted with what is expected of you

Basic Truth: I should treat others the way I want to be treated.

What You Need:

- Before the Small Group time begins, ask families to allow kids to have a few items of clothing nearby. Any type of shirts, pants, socks, etc. will do.

What You Do:

- As kids join the meeting and get settled, engage them in conversation about the past week.
- If you choose, consider using one of the ice breakers or games on the “Virtual Small Group General Info” page.
- If you've chosen to watch the Bible story video presentation as a group, get that started once you've given latecomers a chance to join the meeting, and once the group feels settled.
- After the Bible story video, transition into the activity below.

Activity:

What You Do:

- Ask kids to silently think of a responsibility they or kids their age typically have.
- Invite kids to take turns using the clothing items they have nearby to shape clues for others to guess the responsibility they thought of.
 - Clarify that they don't wear the laundry, they just use it to create a picture, scene, or word that shows something they are expected to do.
- Give them a few minutes to make their creations, off-camera somewhere nearby. (i.e., the rest of the group should not be able to see what each kid is making, but all kids should remain in the vicinity of their devices so that the group is still “together”)
- When everyone is finished with their laundry creations, let kids take turns pointing their camera to their creation while the rest of the group tries to guess what it is.
- Especially if you have more than five kids, try to keep this moving quickly by calling on the next kid to share their creation as soon as the previous kid's creation is correctly guessed.

What You Say:

- Ask: (Depending on how your conversation goes, you won't necessarily need to ask all of the following questions. These are meant to be a starting point for your group to discuss today's Scripture and think about how it might apply to their lives.)

- When doing a task that is boring or that you don't enjoy doing; such as, helping with laundry or cleaning your room, how does it help to think of ways those tasks are showing love for God or others?
- Can someone love God and not others? Explain.
- Can someone love others and not God? Explain.
- If you do the things that are expected of you but have a bad attitude about it, are you still being responsible? Why or why not?
- What's one benefit of being responsible?
- What's one consequence of not doing what is expected of you?

Close your group in prayer:

"Dear God, You are the perfect example of love. You gave us your Son who loved us because He loved You. Help us to follow You well this week by growing in our love for You and choosing to love others as much as we love ourselves."

Small Group Leader Guide

Virtual Small Group

January Week 2

Sunday January 17

Preteen

Today's Bible Story: Give It Away (Bigger Barns) • *Luke 12:13-21*

Today's Key Question: What do you have that you can share?

Today's Bottom Line: Share what you have.

Monthly Memory Verse: *Suppose you can be trusted with something very little. Then you can also be trusted with something very large.* Luke 16:10a (NirV)

Monthly Life App: Responsibility—Showing you can be trusted with what is expected of you

Basic Truth: I should treat others the way I want to be treated.

What You Need:

- “Dare to Share” Activity Page (either printed or pulled up on a separate device so you can hold it up to your camera and show your group)
- Ask families to make sure kids have pen and paper before joining the small group meeting.

What You Do:

- As kids join the meeting and get settled, engage them in conversation about the past week.
- If you choose, consider using one of the ice breakers or games on the “Virtual Small Group General Info” page.
- If you've chosen to watch the Bible story video presentation as a group, get that started once you've given latecomers a chance to join the meeting, and once the group feels settled.
- After the Bible story video, transition into the activity below.

Activity:

What You Do:

- Do a quick review of the story by asking the following questions:
 - What is a parable?
 - What was the problem the man had in the parable?
 - What was the man's solution for handling all his extra stuff or crops?
 - What would you say is the main point of this parable?
 - What were some options the man might have had to deal with his growing amount of stuff rather than building more barns?
- Then, show kids the “Dare to Share” Activity Page.
- Instruct them to write down five things from the list, in order of how hard they think it would be for them to share that thing. (Each kid can choose any five things they wish to.)
- Let kids quickly share their lists as they finish.

What You Say:

- Ask: (Depending on how your conversation goes, you won't necessarily need to ask all of the following questions. These are meant to be a starting point for your group to discuss today's story and think about how it might apply to their lives.)

- Encourage kids to discuss why some things are harder to share than others.
- Out of all the things on the list you made, what would you say is the hardest thing for you to share? What's the easiest? Why?
- ***[Make It Personal] (Tell kids about something that you find it hard to share. Maybe it's hard for you to give regularly to the church. Maybe you have a hard time giving of your time to others.)***
- Do we need to have a lot in order to share a lot? Why or why not?
- What's the main difference between being responsible with the things God has given us or being foolish?
- Would you say it's easier to be the GIVER or the RECEIVER when it comes to sharing? Why is it hard for some people to accept the help of others?
- How can we share with others without making them feel embarrassed or less important?

Close your group in prayer:

“Dear God, it's so easy for us to hold on too tightly to the things we have. Help us to let go when we see others in need and be willing to share what we have. You have given us so much—even Your own Son to die in our place. Help us to look for and not ignore opportunities to share what we have with others. Amen.”

a puppy

**Amazon gift card
for \$1,000**

a new phone

**riding lessons
and a horse**

**Disney Cruise
tickets for
your family
and a friend**

**free ice cream
for a year**

**a closet full
of cool clothes**

**a backstage pass
to meet your
favorite celebrity**

What to Do:

Print on cardstock and cut apart. Provide one for each small group.

"Dare to Share" Activity Page

January 2021, Week 2, Virtual Preteen Small Group

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Small Group Leader Guide

Virtual Small Group

January Week 3

Sunday January 24

Preteen

Today's Bible Story: Ants Marching (Ant and Sluggard) • *Proverbs 6:6-8*

Today's Key Question: When have you had to work hard?

Today's Bottom Line: Work hard.

Monthly Memory Verse: *Suppose you can be trusted with something very little. Then you can also be trusted with something very large.* Luke 16:10a (NirV)

Monthly Life App: Responsibility—Showing you can be trusted with what is expected of you.

Basic Truth: I need to make the wise choice.

What You Need:

- No supplies needed

What You Do:

- As kids join the meeting and get settled, engage them in conversation about the past week.
- If you choose, consider using one of the ice breakers or games on the “Virtual Small Group General Info” page.
- If you've chosen to watch the Bible story video presentation as a group, get that started once you've given latecomers a chance to join the meeting, and once the group feels settled.
- After the Bible story video, transition into the activity below.

Activity:

What You Do:

- Ask kids to silently think of three jobs they consider hard.
- Two of the jobs should be jobs they have actually done, and one should be a job they have never done.
- Give them instructions on how to secretly send you their list: through text/email or the chat function in your meeting app.
 - Instruct kids to put an asterisk next to the job they've never done.
 - Be sure kids know to send their messages only to you!
- Clarify that all of the jobs must be ones that kids their age are capable of doing.
- The goal is to make it hard for the other kids to guess which jobs they've done and which they have not.
- Go through the lists of jobs, reading one kid's list at a time and letting the group guess who they think the list belongs to and which job is the one they have never done.
- Award the following points to the guessers:
 - One point for guessing the identity of the writer
 - One point for guessing the job that was not true
- Award the following points to the kid whose card is being read.
 - One point for each incorrect guess of the writer
 - One point for each incorrect guess of the job that was not done by them

- After the game is over, let each kid totals up their points. Announce a winner!

What You Say:

- Read Proverbs 6:6-8 aloud.
- Ask: (Depending on how your conversation goes, you won't necessarily need to ask all of the following questions. These are meant to be a starting point for your group to discuss today's Scripture and think about how it might apply to their lives.)
 - In what ways does hard work honor God?
 - Describe what it feels like to be lazy.
 - When you're feeling lazy, what helps you to get going again?
 - Describe a time when you had to work hard. How did it feel? What did you enjoy about that experience? What did you not enjoy?
 - Why do you think some people are harder workers than others?
 - If someone is super smart, does that mean they don't have to work as hard as others?
 - What are some lazy areas of your life that you can work on to be more responsible this week?

Close your group in prayer:

"Dear God, when we face a hard job this week, help us to call on You for help to do our best and not give up. Even when a job is super easy, we need Your help to not be lazy and put it off or do a bad job. Remind us that You are with us and that all that we do is seen by You. We want to honor You by being hard workers. In Jesus' name, amen."

Small Group Leader Guide

Virtual Small Group

January Week 4

Sunday January 31

Preteen

Today's Bible Story: Golden Slumbers (Parable of the Bags of Gold) • *Matthew 25:14-30 (NIV)*

Today's Key Question: How can you use what you've been given?

Today's Bottom Line: Make the most of what you've been given.

Monthly Memory Verse: *Suppose you can be trusted with something very little. Then you can also be trusted with something very large.* Luke 16:10a (NirV)

Monthly Life App: Responsibility—Showing you can be trusted with what is expected of you

Basic Truth: I need to make the wise choice.

What You Need:

- No supplies needed

What You Do:

- As kids join the meeting and get settled, engage them in conversation about the past week.
- If you choose, consider using one of the ice breakers or games on the "Virtual Small Group General Info" page.
- If you've chosen to watch the Bible story video presentation as a group, get that started once you've given latecomers a chance to join the meeting, and once the group feels settled.
- After the Bible story video, transition into the activity below.

Activity:

What You Do:

- Assign each kid an even amount of money between \$1 and \$10. (Actual cash is not needed.)
- Challenge kids to each do the number puzzle below.
 - Double the number of dollars you were assigned.
 - Add 6 to the new amount.
 - Divide that amount by 2.
 - Subtract the original amount of money you were assigned at the beginning
 - Multiply that amount by 100.
- Ask:
 - How much money did you end up with? (*Note that each kid should end up with \$300.*)
 - What would you do with that amount of money?
 - How do the choices we make with our money show others what is important to us?
 - As a kid, you aren't usually given a ton of money that you can use to help others. But what are the things you DO have that you can serve God with?

Note: It's easy for kids to identify certain talents such as being smart, good at sports, art, or a music, but help them to think about skills that may not be as obvious but are talents God can use in unique ways. For example:

- *love of animals*
- *cooking or baking*
- *sense of humor*
- *creativity*
- *physical strength*
- *compassion*
- *calm and quiet spirit*
- *technology*
- *writing*
- *love of helping wherever needed*
- *hard working*
- *friendly*

What You Say:

- Ask: (Depending on how your conversation goes, you won't necessarily need to ask all of the following questions. These are meant to be a starting point for your group to discuss today's story and think about how it might apply to their lives.)
 - It's clear that God gives each person different types and amounts of talents and gifts. Why do you think He doesn't give everyone exactly the same?
 - Regardless of the specific gifts, talents, and possessions God gives us, what are we expected to do with them?
 - Fill in the blank to finish this sentence: If I could _____, I would make the most of it by _____.
 - What are some reasons why people might waste the gifts God has given them?
 - Of the following reasons, which do you feel are hardest for you to overcome when it comes to using what you've been given?
 - Being afraid to use my gifts because I might fail or be made fun of
 - Being lazy
 - Being too busy with other things
 - Not really knowing what to do with my gifts
 - Not really sure what my gifts are
 - Waiting until I'm older to use my gifts
 - How important do you think it is to *know* the gifts God has given you? Why?
 - What are some ways you can make the most of what God has given YOU this week?

Close your group in prayer:

"Dear God, thank You for entrusting us with so many good things and so many talents and skills. Help us learn what we're good at and continue to get better at those things. Help us to be responsible with what we've been given and use everything we have to show others who You are. Amen."

Small Group Leader Guide

Virtual Small Group

January Week 5

Sunday February 7

Preteen

Today's Bible Story: Use Words Wisely • *Ephesians 4:29*

Today's Key Question: Why do your words matter?

Today's Bottom Line: Use your words wisely.

Monthly Memory Verse: "Suppose you can be trusted with something very little. Then you can also be trusted with something very large." *Luke 16:10a NIV*

Monthly Life App: Responsibility—Showing you can be trusted with what is expected of you

Basic Truth: I need to make the wise choice.

What You Need:

- Each kid will need a sheet of paper and something to write with.

What You Do:

- As kids join the meeting and get settled, engage them in conversation about the past week.
- If you choose, consider using one of the ice breakers or games on the "Virtual Small Group General Info" page.
- If you've chosen to watch the Bible story video presentation as a group, get that started once you've given latecomers a chance to join the meeting, and once the group feels settled.
- After the Bible story video, transition into the activity below.

Activity:

What You Do:

- Tell kids to think of (but not say) what the following sentence means to them: "Use your words wisely."
- Instruct them to secretly write their thought in the form of a short phrase, example, or sentence on their paper by drawing a blank line for each letter in each word and placing a space between words. (Similar to a game of Hangman.)
 - If they need help remembering the exact wording of their phrase, they can write the answer on another sheet of paper and keep it out of view of their device's camera.
- When kids are finished, choose one kid to show their paper to the others.
- Invite kids to take turns naming a letter.
- If the letter they guess is in any of the words, the card's "owner" fills in the blanks wherever that letter appears.
- If the letter is not in any of the words, the kid to the left of the first guesser takes a turn.
- Kids who guess a correct letter can take another turn or try to guess what's written on the card.
- Continue until the phrase or sentence on the card is guessed correctly.
- Repeat as time allows, letting kid take turns sharing their card.

What You Say:

- Read Ephesians 4:29 aloud.
- Ask: (Depending on how your conversation goes, you won't necessarily need to ask all of the following questions. These are meant to be a starting point for your group to discuss today's Scripture and think about how it might apply to their lives.)
 - Why do words matter so much?
 - What is something good that words can do?
 - Why do you think encouraging or positive words are so powerful?
 - Why are hurtful or negative words so powerful?
 - Think about times at home, school, or other places when it's hardest for you to watch your words. What sets you off? What can you do to respond the right way? *(Remind kids that evil/unwholesome words are not just hateful or curse words. Lead them to consider how complaining, gossiping, and disrespect can be just as destructive.)*

Close your group in prayer:

"Dear God, we all know the difference between wise and unwise words. We know what it feels like to be hurt by words as well as to be encouraged. Since the things we say can be powerful, we ask that you give us the courage and wisdom to watch what we say especially when we are upset, angry, or feel like getting even. Please give us the help we need to live, speak, and act in ways that show others we can be trusted with what is expected of us. Amen."