girl talk
the power of your words

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Pam is a native Texan who became a Christian at youth camp at age 13. She began working in youth ministry at age 19. She graduated from Wayland Baptist University before getting her Master’s of Divinity degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Pam and her husband Jim have one daughter, Kaitlyn. Pam loves dark chocolate, traveling, good books and movies, and girls’ nights out with her friends.
session 1

choice words
Words—so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil they become, in the hands of one who knows how to combine them!
—Nathaniel Hawthorne

You wore that?

You’re so gay!

I hate you!

Go away.

You’re nobody.

You’re a failure.

You really think he would date you?

You’re soo stupid!

If you heard these statements all day, how would you feel about yourself? Your future? The world around you? Pretend you spent a day hearing only those kinds of words—painful, hurtful, soul-killing words. Write a journal entry below about what you’d be thinking and feeling.
Words satisfy the mind as much as fruit does the stomach; good talk is as gratifying as a good harvest. Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit—you choose. — Proverbs 18:20-21 (The Message)

Now, what if you heard these phrases instead?

I love you.
You’re so smart!
You’re my best friend.
Wanna come with us?
Cute outfit!
He likes you.
Good job!

The point? _______________ are _______________.

Scripture tells us that our words carry great influence. Read Proverbs 18:20-21. In the space provided below, rewrite these verses in your own words. If you could narrow them down to a simple phrase, what would it be?

small things, big impact

What do all of these have in common?

A MATCH          A COMPUTER CHIP          A HABANERO PEPPER
A MOUSE          AN EYELASH             A BLISTER

The answer? They are small things, but they can create big problems: a match in the middle of a dry forest. A computer chip gone haywire. An eyelash stuck in your eye. A mouse loose at a ladies’ luncheon. A habanero pepper lodged in your mouth. A blister on your foot during a
Now when we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we also guide the whole animal. And consider ships: though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how large a forest a small fire ignites. And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among the parts of our bodies; it pollutes the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is set on fire by hell. —James 3:3-6

Read James 3:3-6. What did the writer say was small but had a big impact?

life or death

Not only does Scripture tell us that our words have a great impact, but it also tells us that our words can bring life or death. In Matthew 12:33-37, Jesus gave us a principle for our speech. He also gave a warning. Write down both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE PRINCIPLE</th>
<th>THE WARNING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus set forth a pretty tough principle. He said that the words that come out of our mouth—good or bad—come from what is already in our hearts. Bad speech reflects a sinful heart. Positive speech reflects a heart of love. Jesus’ statement echoes Proverbs 18:20-21.</td>
<td>Words bring __________ or __________.</td>
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</tbody>
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Around the bubbles below, list some things that people have said to you, both positive and negative.
Now that you’ve evaluated how others’ words have made an impact on you, it’s time to take a look at your own speech.

List the last five people to whom you’ve spoken, e-mailed, or sent a text. Next to each name, list the main focus of your conversation. Then, determine whether or not that speech was life-giving or life-taking. Was it positive or negative? Hurtful or healing?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>CONVERSATION</th>
<th>HURTFUL OR HEALING</th>
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chooses, chooses

Think about your typical day. From the time you wake up to the time you go to bed, you make hundreds of choices. However, there are some things you do because you just don’t have a choice in the matter. Using the time line below, write down the things that you don’t have a choice about in a typical day.

WAKE UP

LUNCH

BEDTIME

“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. A good man produces good things from his storeroom of good, and an evil man produces evil things from his storeroom of evil. I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

—Matthew 12:33-37
You have a choice about whether your words bring life or death to people.

While you may not have a choice in lots of things that take place during the day, there is one important area in which you have all the freedom in the world.

You have a choice in what ________ ____________.

Reread Proverbs 18:21 from the margin of page 7. Summarize it below.

You have a choice about whether your words bring life or death to people. You can choose to hurt people with what comes out of your mouth, or you can choose to help them. You can be known for your kind words or your painful words. Let’s look back at some of the painful conversations you’ve had lately. Times when you’ve lied or gossiped or said something mean. A conversation with your mom or a teacher or your friends. What could you say differently? What are some better choices you could make with your speech?

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<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>WHAT YOU’D SAY DIFFERENTLY</th>
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Over the next few chapters, you’ll discover the power of your words. Take some time right now and ask God to soften your heart to see the ways you’ve hurt people and the ways you can be a life-giver.