



# TALK IT OVER

## KEY SCRIPTURES & LEADER NOTES

**Leader Tip:** Continue using name tags (even if only one person is new). See the **Orange resources** for a creative and affirming use of the name tags for this week.

**Instead of announcing that you will do an ice breaker, just lead it. Model the length of answer that you want and then invite the next person to share.**

*Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

**James 3:5-8**

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

**Ephesians 4:29 NIV**

*Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down."*

**Revelation 12:10 (NIV)**

*Therefore (Jesus) is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

**Hebrews 7:25 (NIV)**

*For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.*

**Galatians 5:14-15 NLT**

*Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing.*

**Proverbs 12:18 NLT**

A critical spirit is very easy to spot in others, but much more difficult to see in the mirror. Let's invite the Holy Spirit to help us see ourselves as he does, and determine to partner with him to change our hearts. Once that happens, our big fat mouths will be less quick to criticize.

**Start talking.** Choose a good conversation starter for your group.

- Briefly tell about a time when you were criticized. How did it feel?
- Did you grow up in a critical or encouraging home atmosphere?

**Start thinking.** Questions to get your group thinking.

- Why do you think it seems easier to criticize than to build up?
- In your opinion, does criticizing make us look smart, funny, or better than others? If not, what might it actually be communicating? (i.e. our own insecurities, that we're mean-spirited, etc.)

**Start sharing.** Choose questions to create openness.

- Of whom are you most critical? What could your criticism be destroying? (i.e. intimacy in marriage, distancing friends, pushing away children, etc.)
- Read Ephesians 4:29 aloud. On a typical day, are you more of an "Inspector" who's often finding fault or a "Prospector" looking for the good (and the gold) in others? Explain.

**Start growing.** These questions will challenge us to stretch our thinking.

- Read Revelation 12:10 and Hebrews 7:25 aloud. What is the difference between the way Jesus deals with faults and the way Satan deals with them? (*Leader's Note: Intercession vs. accusation*)
- What does it mean to *intercede* for someone or something? (*Leader's Note: Intercession is prayer for others; pleading another's case before God. It also means praying God's blessings and grace for them and not our own agenda for that person.*)
- Pastor Matt said that "Intercession must become the reflex of the Christian's heart." How easy or difficult might it be to allow prayer on someone's behalf to become your response when you are tempted to be critical, instead? Read: Proverbs 12:18.

**Start responding & praying\*.** Be bold and pray with power.

- Read Romans 15:13 aloud. How different might each day be if your words overflowed with hope from the Holy Spirit at home? At work? At church?
- Towards whom have you been especially critical of late? What is the Holy Spirit nudging you to do about this? (If prayer, remember to pray only blessings and God's agenda for that person.)



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*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**Romans 15:13 NIV**

**\* Leader Tip:** Invite people to pray and even repent during this time for their criticizing. Model for your group a brief prayer of encouragement for someone after they share, such as: “Lord, thank You for what You’ve revealed to (name) tonight. Help him now to find the strength and the will to change his perspective and pray your best blessings for those with whom he’s frustrated, instead of criticizing them.”

**After everyone who desires to pray has done so, conclude the prayer time as God directs.**

**Here’s a suggested prayer:**

*God, You are the ultimate supply of hope, peace, and encouragement. It is out of an overflow of Your presence in our lives that we can build up others. We want and need more of You. Holy Spirit, we invite You into this week, into this moment, to transform us into dealers of Your great hope. Amen.*

**Start doing.** Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Take time to encourage one another in your Community Group before you leave.
- Read Philippians 4:8 each morning before starting your day or leaving for work or school. Ask God to help you control your thought life by focusing on these positive things instead of on negative things. Allow him to change you from an “Inspector” into a “Prospector.”
- Who can you begin praying blessings and speaking life into through your words? Get specific about who you encourage through your words – perhaps beginning with those closest to you. Make a plan.