

Series Title: Agent I²

Session Title: Noteworthy Speech

Date and Time: _____

Number of Students: _____

Materials Needed:

- ☐ 3x5 cards with words/phrases from 1 Timothy 4:12 (see Lead In)
- ☐ One see-through bag containing a large amount of candy
- ☐ Overhead projector, LCD projector or board
- ☐ Overhead with 1 Timothy 4:12 or markers/chalk
- ☐ Five bowls
- ☐ Copies of pages A57-59 stapled together (enough for one per group)
- ☐ Pens

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Begin to memorize 1 Timothy 4:12a
- Understand and appreciate the remarkable and noteworthy value of pure speech in three tangible areas of expression:
 - Selfless affirmation
 - Courageous honesty
 - Tethered tongue

Pastoral Objectives:

Agent I² Lead In:

This lead in is actually more of a series lead in than a session lead in. Before jumping into the session on speech, it will be helpful for the students to gain a big picture understanding of the focus of this series and its focus Scripture passage, 1 Tim. 4:12.

The goal of this lead in is for students to begin to memorize 1 Timothy 4:12. This is only one suggestion of many creative ideas that could be used.

Instructions:

Before the lesson, take the words or phrases of 1 Timothy 4:12 and write them on 3x5 cards (or paper). Depending on the size of your group short phrases such as “the believers” may work better than single words. Make four sets of the cards (one set is one whole verse). You may need to revise this number based on the size of your group. Put each set into a separate bowl and place the bowls around the room you will be using. Then, as the students enter the room have a leader at the door telling them to be absolutely silent and to take a seat as quickly as they can.

Once all the students are seated, without using words, divide the students into four groups (have leaders assist in this activity). Send or move each group to one of the bowls. Then without speaking hold up a big bag of candy and draw their attention to the board or overhead, revealing only the words: “1 Timothy 4:12”. Hold up the bowl to indicate the connection between the words in the bowl and the words on the board/screen and the candy. Then wait.

Your students should quickly deduce that you want them to take the words and phrases out of the bowl and order them as they are on the board or overhead. The first group to complete this challenge gets the candies!

Once the winning group has finished their verse, ask them to read it out loud for the entire group.

Consider transitioning from this series intro into the session by saying something like:

Tonight we are starting a new five-week series entitled Agent I². This series is based on the Scripture verse we have just started to memorize. To become an Agent of Irresistible Influence our lives need to be markedly different than the lives of those around us. When our lives reflect the challenge that the apostle Paul gave to his young student Timothy, others will begin to notice that we live remarkably different as a result. This will lead to natural conversations about our lifestyle, our beliefs, and our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Tonight we are going to focus on the first aspect that Paul draws attention to in 1 Timothy 4:12, our speech.

Session Lead In:

Tell the students that you are going to play a game in which they must be absolutely silent at all times. Ask for a volunteer and give them a card with the following instructions on it. Tell them they have two minutes to complete the task. Let the volunteer lead the tasks.

1. Get a group of six students to build a pyramid.
2. Have one student from the group bark like a dog.
3. Have one student from the group get a glass of water and return it to the volunteer.

After the volunteers try this out, ask the students to guess the meaning behind this demonstration. The right answer is something like “communication is hard work.” You could transition by saying something like:

In this exercise we have discovered that communication is hard work, particularly when we can't use words. Words matter. In fact they matter a great deal. In the book of James 3:8 we read, “No one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.” We have all heard or been the perpetrators of hurtful words used against others. The reality is that in our world, most people don't think all that carefully about their words at all. People curse and swear, put each other down, gossip and criticize, or lie consistently. The apostle Paul in I Timothy 4:12 is telling us that as young people we can have a remarkable impact in our world by taking the words we say and don't say seriously. It's not easy but the payoff in terms of impact is huge!

Exploring the Concepts:

Put the students into groups of five to eight students each. Tell them that they are going to read three stories in order to identify three things that make a person's speech noteworthy. Two stories are from the life of King David and one is from English history. Each story illustrates an important aspect of noteworthy speech. Clarify that they have understood by asking checking questions such as, “How many stories are you going to read?” and “What does each story illustrate?” Now hand out pens and copies of pages A57-59 to every group. This should take about twenty minutes and *it should be challenging*. Don't worry if your students have to struggle for the answers; that means they are thinking.

If after ten minutes, the students do not seem on track, give them the following clues:

1. The S in the first question is selfless.
2. The C in the second question is courageous.
3. The second T in the third question is tongue.

After the twenty minutes are up, move into a time for feedback. Re-gather the whole group and allow each small group to suggest their best answer. If there is disagreement, give them time to have it out. If there is agreement, give them time to be confused. Do not give away the answers at first. Allow the students time to process, argue, defend, and question. Once

they have had that time, tell them if you agree with their answers. They may get the answers exactly as they are in the lesson; great! They may get different but equally valid answers; super (tell them the “right” answers also)! Or they may get answers which are too far off the mark to be reasonable; suggest the “right” answers and allow them to ask questions for clarification. The right answers are: Selfless Affirmation, Courageous Honesty, and Tethered Tongue.

Here is the thinking behind this lesson so that you can facilitate this feedback time. You can use this text but remember that the students have just spent twenty minutes exploring these themes; they are ready with their own opinions and insights. This text is for you to overview the content of this lesson and to be accordingly prepared.

The three aspects of noteworthy speech that we have looked at today are just the beginning of a life characterized by noteworthy speech. Consider the impact of these three concepts and how our regular use of them would make a huge impact on those around us.

First, selfless affirmation. Selfless affirmation is costly. It is easy to say, “Dude you are so cool”, but it was exceedingly costly for Jonathan to tell David that he knew David would become king after Saul’s death. Jonathan was the crown prince; the throne was rightfully his. Yet he respected God’s decision and spoke words of deep encouragement to his friend.

Selfless affirmation is all about the words we don’t say. Most of us don’t embark on the journey of selfless affirmation because it costs our ego far too much. Affirming others can be costly when that affirmation puts them ahead of us. To tell someone that you honestly believe they are better than you at something is costly. Costly affirmation actually begins to replace gossip and criticism, because the heart condition of selfless affirmation is completely opposite to the heart condition that causes gossip and criticism. Gossip and criticism come out of fear, arrogance, jealousy, or even hatred. Affirmation comes from a heart filled with love, generosity, courage, and freedom.

Second, courageous honesty. Courageous honesty is something that is pretty rare in our world, wouldn’t you say? Think of how many people in your schools or lives are doing things that are really dumb, or wrong, or dangerous. How frequently do people have the courage to approach them to talk? Courageous honesty is a biblical concept that requires us to be noteworthy in our courage to confront wrong-doing or dangerous behaviour. We often don’t talk to our friends or family because of fear, selfishness, or self-protection. When Nathan confronted King David it could have spelled death. It could have resulted in the king’s anger at Nathan. Yet Nathan confronted David out of love and conviction. Nathan loved David and wanted David to do what was right. He allowed David to see the wrongfulness of his actions, but he wasn’t arrogant, harsh or judgemental. You and I can make a noteworthy impact in our church, our homes and at school by our willingness to step up with the courage to love someone by sharing tough words with them.

Third, a tethered tongue. How many times has something slipped out of our mouths and we have wished we could rewind the tape, erase that moment and start all over. King Henry and Thomas Beckett were friends, but the king abused his power and in a moment of foolishness

asked his knights to do something he never wanted them to do. All of us have had moments of regret about our loose tongues. Sometimes it is because we have said something careless; sometimes it is because we have broken confidence; and sometimes it is because the words we speak are just plain mean. Jesus taught, “The things that come out of the mouth come from the heart” (Matthew 12:34). Part of being an Agent of Irresistible Influence is for us to prayerfully seek to control our tongues. A wise and mature person is able to tether their tongue; a foolish person is not.

All three aspects that we have looked at today are important, and I hope that some of them have been surprising to you. Most often when a youth group talks about speech, it is about things like swearing or gossip. These are important issues, but probably more important is what is happening in our hearts that generates that kind of speech. Today we looked at three aspects of speech that are directly impacted by our heart condition:

- *Selfless affirmation is the ability to encourage and affirm others, even at cost to ourselves.*
- *Courageous honesty requires us to say hard things to people, even though it may cost us.*
- *A tethered tongue will help us to refrain from things like gossip, swearing, but more importantly, from saying the kinds of things that lead to deep regret.*

In Scripture, James warns that the tongue is a poisonous weapon (James 3). I believe that our tongues can also be deeply influential in the lives of other people.

Making it Personal:

Have students gather together in their small groups again and read them the following three questions. They can write them on the back of their handout. Each student could answer one of the questions. After they do so, they should pray together about what they have shared.

1. Name one way in which your attitude needs to change in order to speak words of selfless affirmation.
2. Name one barrier that exists to you being a person of courageous honesty?
3. What is a time that you wish you had tethered your tongue?

Bring the lesson to a close.