43 Thoughts and Language

OBJECTIVE

Each young man will desire to control his thoughts and use uplifting language.

PREPARATION

1. Prayerfully study Leviticus 19:12; Matthew 5:34–35; 15:17–20.
2. Materials needed:
   a. Copies of the scriptures (each young man should bring his own).
   b. A glass half full of water.
   c. Various colors of food coloring.
   d. Pencils for marking scriptures.
3. Prepare a chart with 1 Timothy 4:12 written on it.
4. Fill a clear glass bottle with liquid bleach and label the bottle "Mind and Language Cleaner."
5. To ensure success, experiment with the object lesson before teaching the lesson.
6. On separate sheets of paper, write the solutions to the case studies found in the last section of this lesson. Give one solution to each young man to be read aloud at the appropriate time.

SUGGESTED LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Object lesson and chalkboard discussion

There Are Many Ways We Can Keep Our Thoughts and Language Clean

• What are some things in our society today that may have a bad influence on our thoughts and speech?

Write the young men's responses on the chalkboard and discuss them. They may include the following:

Many television shows and movies
Many magazines and books
Swearing
Dirty jokes
Pornography
Jealousy
Selfishness

As the young men mention each evil influence, add a drop of food coloring to the glass of water. Use several different colors.

Explain that our minds become clouded like the water when we let vulgar and impure thoughts and language into our minds.

• How can we keep our thoughts clean so that the Lord's Spirit can dwell in us?

Tell the young men that cleaning agents exist to help us keep our minds and language clean.

Ask a young man to pour a little bleach from the bottle marked "Mind and Language Cleaner" into the water containing the food coloring. At the conclusion of the readings, the water should be clear again. Tell the quorum that if we use some of the cleaning agents

mentioned below, our minds will be clean like the water. Review and discuss the quotations and ideas.

Sacred Music

"Choose from among the sacred music of the Church, one favorite hymn. . . .

"Now, go over it in your mind very thoughtfully a few times. Memorize the words and the music. . . . Use this hymn as your emergency channel. Use this as the place for your thoughts to go. . . . It will change the whole mood on the stage of your mind. Because it is clean and uplifting and reverent, the baser thoughts will leave" (Boyd K. Packer, *Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts,* Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Provo, 26 Sept. 1967], p. 10).

Earnest Prayer

"Through the exercise of self-control and by engaging in earnest prayer, it is possible to learn to govern one's speech" (Henry D. Taylor, in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, p. 89; or *Improvement Era,* June 1964, p. 494).

Savior's Example

"A person who is striving to pattern his or her life after that of the Savior will be pure in thought and action. His or her speech will then be clean, dignified, and worshipful" (Henry D. Taylor, in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, p. 90; or *Improvement Era,* June 1964, p. 494).

Good Company

Choose your company so you will not be tempted. Good choices and self-control are often influenced by those with whom we associate.

Mental Control

Visualize your mind as a big television screen or theater stage. When an evil thought enters, mentally change channels or change the scene or set, and think of something uplifting.

Memorized Scripture

Pick a favorite scripture that has special meaning to you and memorize it. When the temptation to think evil enters your mind, quote the scripture over and over until the thought leaves.

Special Rock

A father tells of the time his little girl presented him with a rock as a special gift. It was small and fit nicely into his pocket. Whenever an evil thought entered his mind, he took out the rock and looked at it. It reminded him of the sweet, innocent spirit and personality of his little girl. While he was thinking of her, no evil thought could stay in his mind. Some object, such as a rock, could remind us of a person whom we hold in such esteem that we could not harbor evil thoughts while thinking of him or her.

Avoid Evil

Avoid pictures, books, magazines, movies, or anything else that would bring evil thoughts into your mind.

Quotation

Read the following quotation:

"Thoughts are the tools with which we shape our character, just as truly as a great sculptor with chisel and mallet chips and chips on the rough marble until it's shaped, perhaps, into . . . a splendid and perfect work of art. Just so every thought is shaping our character and, consequently, shaping our destiny and our lives. Therefore the result is, in all our thoughts, the creation of a character" (George Q. Morris, *The Importance of Habits,* Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Provo, 20 May 1953], p. 3).

We Should Use Clean Language in All Situations

Case studies

Explain that it is easy to rationalize the use of some bad language. But young men who are disciples of the Savior should strive to use clean language in all situations, as made clear in the discussion of the following case studies.

Give each young man a solution to one of the following case studies and ask him to read it silently. Then present a case study and allow the young men to discuss it. Afterward, have the young man with the solution share it with the quorum. Do this for each of the case studies.

1. *Problem:* David has noticed that his friends at school swear in their everyday language. They say that the words are so common that they should not be classified as swearing. David is confused. He would like to know just what it means to swear. Could you tell him?

   Solution: Swearing includes the taking of the Lord's name in vain. This is sometimes called profanity, and the Lord has clearly condemned it (see Exodus 20:7).

   "There are no doubt some unacceptable words that . . . are offensive only because society happens to consider them so. We should keep in mind that many good people (right or wrong) are offended by these terms and consider them evidence of a lack of Christian dignity or even a lack of morality" (Daniel S. Hess, "Offend Not in Word," *New Era,* Mar. 1975, p. 9).

2. *Problem:* Joe's friends are convinced that swearing is completely acceptable. "Everybody does it," they say to rationalize their habit. What answer would you give to this statement?

   Solution: "Despite the prevalence of profanity, there is still good language and bad language, refined speech and crude speech, reverent language and irreverent language, and the prevalence of such practice hasn't removed the difference between the two" (Richard L. Evans, "The Use of Profanity," *Improvement Era,* June 1965, p. 554).

3. *Problem:* Russell has let the sacred names of Deity become common in his language at school. He has been careful not to use them at home, but one day one of the words slips out. When his mother tries to talk to him about it, Russell replies, "They are just words. They don't change how I feel about the Lord. I can't see anything wrong with them." If you were Russell's mother, what would you tell him?

   Solution: "The Lord said: 'Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name. . . . ' (3 Ne. 27:7.)

   "In the Church that Jesus Christ established, all things are done in his name. Prayers are said, children are blessed, testimonies borne, sermons preached, ordinances performed, sacrament administered, the infirm anointed, graves dedicated.

   "What a mockery it then becomes when we use that sacred name profanely" (Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1967, p. 128; or *Improvement Era,* Dec. 1967, p. 97).

   "To use the usual swear words is bad enough—they brand one as crude and careless—but to use profanely any of the names of our Lord is absolutely inexcusable. Should one ever slip in this way he should repent in 'sackcloth and ashes,' the same as if he had committed any one of the other serious sins" (Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], p. 54).

4. *Problem:* When John asked his friends not to swear around him, they laughed and ridiculed him: "Why be a hypocrite? This is the real world. You might as well accept life as it really is." What can John say?

Solution: "Many things that are *real* are not *right*. Disease germs are real, but must we therefore spread them? . . . The reality of profanity does not argue for the toleration of it" (Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1967, p. 127; or *Improvement Era,* Dec. 1967, p. 96).

5. *Problem:* Ron's parents disapprove of his friends because they swear. Ron feels that his parents are judging his friends unfairly. Are they?

   Solution: "Profanity is filthiness. A person is known as much by his language as he is by the company he keeps. . . . Filthiness in any form is degrading and soul-destroying and should be avoided" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation,* 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56], 1:13).

The Lord emphasized the importance of strengthening each other in our speech as well as in our actions when he said, "Strengthen your brethren in all your conversation, in all your prayers, in all your exhortations, and in all your doings" (D&C 108:7).

Conclusion

Scriptures and discussion

On the chalkboard list Leviticus 19:12 and Matthew 5:34–35; 15:17–20.

Have the young men find the scriptures and read them aloud.

Briefly discuss each scripture, pointing out that because the Lord has commanded us not to swear or profane, we really need no other reason to keep our thoughts and speech clean.

Point out that a spiritually mature young man will do the things his Heavenly Father asks of him, having faith that Heavenly Father will ask him to do only those things that bring happiness. He will keep his language clean.

Challenge

Challenge the class members to try one of the methods suggested to control their thoughts and speech. Emphasize that someday they will serve as examples on their missions and to their children. They now serve as examples to their friends and other family members. With such a responsibility, now is the time to build thought and speech habits worthy of emulation.