

Avoiding Foul and Abusive Language

It seems we are living in a world where rude, crude and even lewd language is used as common vernacular—by men *and* women. Even presidential and vice presidential candidates swear in public.

If you've been around public playgrounds, you may have heard children shouting profanities, swear words or curses at each other. Where did they learn such offensive words or terms? Likely at home. Or did they hear these expletives from some of our elected officials?

Presidential Swearing and Cursing

Former President Donald Trump recently told a rally of supporters in Philadelphia that he had received a letter from evangelist Franklin Graham (son of Billy and Ruth Graham), urging him to improve his public speeches by refraining from using foul language. Trump said he was trying to control his language, but his lengthy campaign speeches sometimes need a bad word or two to better relate to his audience.

The Washington Post reports that current White House aides have a “dictionary” of swear words President Biden or Vice President Harris use with them present or directed at them.

Profanity Is a Persistent Problem

While today, some seem to think of curse words as accepted vulgarity, the Bible often addresses cursing and lying together as forms of despicable speech. Ephesians 4 explains:

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– “Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly

righteous and holy. So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body" (Eph. 4:24-25, NLT).

– "Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them" (v. 29).

– "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior" (v. 31).

Israel's famous King David declared: "May the words of my mouth, and the thoughts of my heart, be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer" (). Over 120 psalms later, he pleaded: "Take control of what I say, O Lord, and guard my lips" (Ps. 141:3).

Ephesians 5 calls us to follow God's example in everything we do. We are to avoid and reject impure or immoral speech or behavior. These will contradict our profession of faith in Christ, the holy one of God. Verse four specifically warns us: "Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you."

And verses 15-16 call for believers not to live "like fools, but like those who are wise," making "the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days." We must live circumspectly and sensitively—in word and deed—as a person would when walking through thorny terrain.

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'Here's the Deal'

The Bible teaches that our speech indicates what is in our hearts. Jesus said, "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil

things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of" (Luke 6:45, NIV).

Sin is a condition of our hearts and minds (Rom. 7:14-25). What is stored in our inner man is released in our thoughts, words and actions. We show the polluting sin stored in our hearts if we swear, curse or take part in malicious behavior. These sins must be confessed and repented of.

When we put our faith in Jesus Christ, we receive a new nature from Father God (2 Cor. 5:17). This new nature transforms our thinking and refines our speech (Rom. 12:1-2). Thankfully, if or when we fail and confess our wrong, God is "faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The Heart of the Matter

One wonders if the current lack of respect and honor for some of our politicians and government leaders is caused by those who choose to express their expletives over being examples in speech and conduct.

"Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good" (Rom. 12:21, NLT).

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