

commanded!

Taming the Profane Tongue

No man can tame the tongue (James 3:8), BUT GOD is able to tame the tongue! God has taken those with the most profane, vile, reprehensible and vicious language, and changed them! That change is still possible. John Bunyan (*Pilgrim's Progress* author) after giving up profanity, "Now I could speak better and speak with more pleasantness than ever I could before." This reality is still available. A control of profane language is possible when you develop:

- ⇒ A reverence for our Holy God! (1 Peter 1:15). Once we understand the majestic holiness of the Almighty God, how can we trivialize His great Name?
- ⇒ A reverence for People. We need to realize that any speaking that strips away the value and dignity of another human is unacceptable (2 Corinthians 5:16).
- ⇒ A concern for Excellence. Here is the checklist to evaluate your words (Philippians 4:8).
- ⇒ A spirit of Thanksgiving. Look at others and condition yourself to look for qualities for which you are thankful! (Ephesians 5:4). If you are truly thankful for a person then it is impossible to be verbally insensitive, vulgar or abusive in your communication.

The Nobility of language

You have a language and vocabulary that are designed to be used with sensitivity, precision and beauty. Because of your words, you can give strength to the weak and hope to the suffering.

Profanity is the vocabulary of Satan. It seeks to nullify everything godly conversation accomplishes. Those who speak with profane words deny the purpose for which God created them to communicate and demeans both the speaker and the one speaking.

There are times when verbal exclamations are needed. There is catharsis in unloading our internal hostilities and irritations. Even good ole Charlie Brown had to vent "Good Grief!" at times.

Christians need to control their speech so when they do "vent" they do not ridicule our great God or destroy another made in the image of God. We have the resources, the vocabulary, the control to tame our tongues!



Lesson Seven: Taming the Profane Tongue **Dalraida Church of Christ**

John L. Kachelman, Jr.

"(M)ake a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean" (Leviticus 10:10).

In the past, a child using disrespectful language and especially profanity, had his mouth washed out with soap! The use of profanity is troubling. It is characteristic of a devolving culture.

Language that was never spoken in public is now commonly used. Politicians seem to have removed all decorum in Congressional speeches and media interviews. The entertainment venues once had harsh ratings for vulgarity and profanity, but now only a subtle line of "harsh language" is posted (Jeremiah 6:15).

The inevitable end to a nation that loses its sensitivity and cannot blush at vulgarity and ungodliness is stated by Jeremiah, "Therefore they will fall at the time that I punish them, they will collapse, says the Lord."

The use of profanity is troubling. The obscenities of yesterday's locker rooms are now blasted on today's elementary playgrounds! Commercials are filled with vulgarities and sporting interviews recognize no boundaries in their speech.

What is "Profane"

The term literally refers to that which is "before the Temple." This refers to what is not sacred or revered; something that has no acceptance inside the Temple. To "profane" is to treat the holy with an unholy attitude. Man decides

to replace the “holy” requirements of the Lord God Almighty with the “unholy” modifications that man thinks are acceptable (Ezekiel 22:26).

Profane words arise from the areas of human living that are most sacred and intimate. The terms are phrased to show total disrespect. Human dignity is attacked with verbal profanity.

No word or expression is profane by itself. People assign words meaning. Culture assigns specific terms as profanity. Profanity can come from “innocent words” used in unholy speaking because of anger, contempt or racism. The sin of profanity replaces devotion to God is replaced with devotion to ME.

Jesus on Profanity

Profane speaking is not restricted to speaking “curse words.” It refers to our speaking words that are “careless” (Such words do not work to accent our speech as God’s People. Matthew 12:36-37). Examples of profanity are listed by Christ in Matthew 5:21-22.

- ◆ “Raca” is an Aramaic term of insult and contempt implying stupidity and inferiority.
- ◆ “You fool” is a Greek expression insulting not only one’s intelligence but criticizes God creation.

These words and the spirit prompting them have no place in the Kingdom’s vocabulary! Those who use profane speech are in real danger of God’s eternal Judgment. Please consider that it is not only the vulgarities of cussing BUT profanity includes using common words to communicate a disrespectful message!

What is “Profanity”?

Most want to restrict profanity to “four letter words.” Every civilization, nation, language, and culture have its own “four letter words” and expressions. Many are “righteous” and never use any of the “four letter words,” BUT they develop their own vocabulary of profanity! And they commend themselves while “cursing” those using cultural profanity.

Do we really need profanity to communicate? Why do people use profanity?

- ◆ *To communicate disdain for authority.* Social protest movements strive to make an impact by using profane words and expressions. Profanity is used to communicate defiance to parents, teachers, government, or God.
- ◆ *To Blow Off Steam.* Some psychologists consider swearing/cursing/profanity to be safety valves for releasing pent-up hostilities.
- ◆ *To Punctuate Conversation.* Profanity is used as an effective attention tool and a means to add “color” (actually “off-color”) and punch to the

conversation. Cultural shifts in language have changed this purpose.

- ◆ *To Retaliate Against Others.* Profane words are verbal missiles; dangerous swords wielded with evil intentions. When a person’s pride is wounded or his efforts frustrated, he seeks to retaliate with the closest weapon. Profane speaking is both potent and punitive. It communicates disrespect, criticism and condemnation.
- ◆ *To Gain Social Acceptance.* Children begin using profanity because they listen to parents. Many foolish thinking people equate profanity with power. In breakrooms some will speak profanely so they will not feel ostracized.

Major Categories of Profanity

- ⇒ *Taking God’s Name in vain—Blasphemy.* (Revelation 4:8; Psalm 96:9). Profanity mocks the holiness of God (Exodus 20:7). It is speech that dismisses God. This is evident in today’s cultural profanities using “God” in speech (“OMG,” “Golly,” “Gee,” etc). Notice how people use God’s name (“God”) as nothing. It is a trite, meaningless expression. God is trivialized.
- ⇒ *Designed to offend deliberately—Vulgarity.* These are words typically referring to sexuality and body functions. These are offensive because they depreciate and demean (Colossians 3:8). Vulgar speech is sinful because it intends to be offensive.
- ⇒ *Calling people unclean—Racial Slurs.* Racial slurs are profane speech. Why are certain “four letter words” sinful but then we wink at language demeaning a person because of his race or we laugh at a joke whose humor ridicules a certain ethnic group? (Philippians 2:3; James 3:8-10).
- ⇒ *Words of Disrespect.*

Sarcasm and Insults. Sarcasm is insults aimed for the areas where one is weak, fearful and insecure. The weakness of others should be targeted by Christians for strengthening (Romans 15:1-2).

Insensitive Humor. Vicious humor at the expense of another is not speaking from the heart. Ridicule is often thrust and followed afterwards by the “Oh I was just kidding!” (Ephesians 5:3-4—“coarse jesting”). We must be careful that our humor does not ridicule others.

Labels. Christians must guard against profiling people with labels. Profiling identifies groups with specific actions. Just because one belongs to a certain group, does not mean that person maintains the traits of the group. One must not render a verdict based on a label. Such are: “He’s a Yankee.” “He’s a bureaucrat.” “He’s divorced.” “He’s never married.” “Oh well, after all she’s a blond.” Etc. Instead of labeling another, get to know that person as Christ