

Using Foul Language in Church

By Pastor Greg
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2 Samuel 5:6-8

Bunkertown COB

Back when Joshua led the people across the Jordan River, the land was divided among the descendants of Joseph. Well, the original inhabitants of the land just didn't pack up and move. So God promised to go before His people and drive these other nations away. But God reminds them that they *"must recognize that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land because you are good, for you are not—you are a stubborn people."*¹ (Deuteronomy 9:6) Because of their wickedness, God was using the nation of Israel to pronounce His judgment upon those people living in the Land of Canaan. But because of a lack of obedience and trust, not everyone was driven out. So when David became King, he set his sights on that one last city which remained occupied by a people who made a mockery of the living God.

Once established as King, *"David then led his men to Jerusalem to fight against the Jebusites, the original inhabitants of the land who were living there. The Jebusites taunted David, saying, 'You'll never get in here! Even the blind and lame could keep you out!' For the Jebusites thought they were safe. ⁷ But David captured the fortress of Zion, which is now called the City of David. ⁸ On the day of the attack, David said to his troops, 'I hate those 'lame' and 'blind' Jebusites. Whoever attacks them should strike by going into the city through the water tunnel.' That is the origin of the saying, 'The blind and the lame may not enter the house.'"*² (2 Samuel 5:6-8)

For years these Jebusites had been harassing the Israelites; throwing hurtful words and taunting remarks from atop their walled city. One has to wonder how many times David had actually heard their cutting remarks. Consider his words in Psalm 41. *"They visit me as if they were my friends, but all the while they gather gossip, and when they leave, they spread it everywhere."*³ (Psalm 41:6) And in reality, I believe if these Jebusites had spoken healing and soothing words to David, they would not have been destroyed.

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

³Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

The words that we speak have much more weight than we may realize.

Just out of curiosity, what do you feel is foul language? Is it merely those four letter words that are abrasive to the righteous and repentant? No, says the Apostle Paul. It's not just the words but also the language behind those words that are foul and abusive.

*²⁹ 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.*⁴

(Ephesians 4:29) Foul and abusive language is not just four letter words, but also anything we may say to or about an individual that is not good, helpful, or encouraging. And the way I see it, there is a lot of foul language even in the church. Most of us never take the time to think about what we say to someone, or what we say about someone. And we never consider the repercussions of the words we speak. Like the Jebusites, we may one day live to regret the words that leave our mouth.

A few years ago, while serving in the Midwest, I began to realize just how casually foul words pass from our lips. One year at District conference there was discussion about whether or not the Denomination should change its name. Some said Church of the Brethren was not gender inclusive. The conversation went back and forth until one man pointed out that regardless of what was decided here, "those people back east will vote it down". Many in the room nodded in agreement.

In one sentence (absent of what we would call "Foul Language") this man spoke words that insult, that divide, and that slander. In that church meeting most did not notice that what he said was foul and abrasive. This man was talking about my family and friends. He implied a division among the brethren, and then set one group above another; as if those on the east coast were stubborn and childish (unlike those in the Midwest). Truthfully, we should have been outraged by his remark, but instead he became District Moderator and a speaker at Annual conference.

⁴Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

The Bible takes a long, hard stance against those who gossip, those who slander, and those who tear one another down. From Proverbs (*As surely as a north wind brings rain, so a gossiping tongue causes anger!*⁵ 25:23) to the passage we read earlier from Ephesians, God has little tolerance for those who curse one another. James, the brother of Jesus, is surprised that, *"We use our tongues to praise our Lord and Father, but then we curse people, whom God made like himself. Praises and curses come from the same mouth! My brothers and sisters, this should not happen."*⁶ (James 3:9-10).

I know that this is a difficult lesson. And the Bible has certainly raised the standard of what is good and acceptable language. But it is a lesson we all need to hear. We all need to remember that what we are about to say will either tear someone down or build them up. And this person, who is the object of our conversation, is someone God loves. That's right! When we curse another person we are speaking foul about an individual for whom Jesus suffered and died. And if we think that what we say will go unheard or unnoticed behind closed doors, think again. As you rise to shut the door so that no one will hear your slanderous remarks, Christ remains in that room.

So the next time you speak about someone in hushed tones or nervously close the door for fear of who might be listening, please remember that this is a good indication that you are about to use foul language. You are about to tear someone down.

I suppose the best advice I could give is to stop for a moment before the words leave your lips and realize that if you can't say it to their face then you can't say it behind their back. And regardless if the door is closed or not, remember that your Father is listening, and that you're talking about someone He loves.

⁵Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁶*The Everyday Bible : New Century Version*. 2005 (Jas 3:9-10). Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson, Inc.