

## **Discussing Cussing**

by Brad McCoy

Pastor, Tanglewood Bible Fellowship, Duncan, OK

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Cussing is common through out our culture today. In the athletic world, it is the norm among most coaches and athletes. But it simply isn't true that "everybody does it." Bob Simons, Head Football coach at Oklahoma State University, has taken a firm stand against cussing. He has forbidden all vulgarity by players or coaches at games an on the practice field! As Christian coaches you are in a strategic position to impact those around you for good in this area.

### **Two Major Passages**

You don't need to be a Bible scholar to realize that cussing is wrong. Two passages make this point. Exodus 20:7 says, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain." This verse clearly prohibits all flippant use of the name(s) of God. Ephesians 5:3-4 says, "Do not let immorality or impurity or greed even be named among you as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness or silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting but rather the giving of thanks." These verses directly prohibit all searing and "dirty" jokes.

### **What I Am Not Talking About**

First, I am not talking about "swearing" in the sense of taking formal oaths or making binding legal promises (see Hebrews 6:13). Second, I'm not talking about "cursing" in the sense of stipulating negative consequences or penalties in the event that a someone does not fulfill his/her promises (see Genesis 12:3). Finally, I'm not talking about all verbal expressions of pain or frustration or appreciation of clean light-hearted positive humor (see Ecclesiastes 3:4).

### **What I Am Talking About**

What do I have in mind is "swearing" or "cursing" in the sense of profane speech – "cussing." The problem with "cussing" is simply that it makes common or base that which is sacred and/or private and which therefore demands to be treated with deference and respect. Cussing is a serious sin because it:

(1) belittles God Himself (when one uses God's name(s) to punctuate his sentences), (2) dares to put the human speaker in God's place and belittles eternal judgment (the use of terms like "damn" or "hell" in nontheological contexts), (3) degrades the uniqueness and beauty of sexuality (the use of sexual expletives and dirty jokes), and (4) crudely exposes what ought to be private (slang references to excretion and "bathroom humor.") Such speech is an affront to the Holiness of God and as such it is serious sin – it is not cute, funny, or sophisticated.

Note however, that it is perfectly proper for husbands and wives to say highly erotic things to one another in the privacy of their bedroom (see the Old Testament Song of Solomon), which would be improper for them to say to anyone else or express in a public

setting. Common sense, not pharisaic insistence upon the “letter of the law” should always be the order of the day as Christians seek to practically apply God’s Word!

### **Cussing: A Watershed Moral Issue**

Cussing is bad enough all by itself that it should be unilaterally repudiated by Christians. Beyond its inherent sinfulness however, there is an even more distressing fact to be considered. Cussing is often just the first step of overt rebellion against God’s standards in a person’s life leading to an increasing spiral of even more serious sin. The progression is as follows:

(1) a person rebels against God by rationalizing cussing in his own life, (2) but he remains careful not to swear in certain settings (children in the presence of their parents; adults in the presence of the clergy; men in the presence of women and children), (3) over time he thinks that he is “getting away with sin” leading him to the point of rationalizing other “bigger” sins, while continuing to live a “double life” at home and/or church.

This slippery slope is especially tragic in the lives of the young people you coach today. There are few teenagers who begin using alcohol or drugs who have not already lost the battle of the tongue relative to cussing! Likewise, how many teenagers who have become sexually active have not already lost the moral high ground by making cussing a part of their lifestyle?

### **The Bottom Line**

The good news is if one wins this battle he will be fare better able to stand against future temptations to fall into even “bigger” sins. The bad news is if one loses this battle it only becomes that much easier to lose even larger moral battles in the future. How about you, Coach? If you have been regularly losing this battle of the tongue, quit rationalizing this serious sin; confess and renounce it before God (Proverbs 28:13/1 John 1:9) and begin anew to walk closely with the LORD today! Do not tolerate cussing in the athletes under your charge. Make it a point to explain to them why you find such speech improper and encourage them to direct their energies in more positive directions.

### **Why Do People Cuss?**

There are four major reasons: (1) We are lazy – cussing is often just a bad habit, it is much easier to unthinkingly use cuss words than to go through the more difficult process of thoughtfully using decent/proper speech. (2) We want to “fit in” – peer pressure tempts us to go along with the crowd. (3) We like to be sophisticated – and one way to achieve this in our fallen world is to swear. (4) We are selfish – and cussing is a powerful way for us to express our selfish concerns, to project our selfish anger, and to gain our selfish desires. While these four factors are *major explanations* as to why we are tempted to cuss, *they are not excuses* for us to do so! As Christians we must reject laziness, peer pressure, worldliness, and selfishness if we are to wage successful spiritual warfare generally and especially if we are to be victorious to the glory of God in the moral battle against cussing!

A great passage to memorize which will help any Christian to retain or gain victory in this area is Ephesians 4:29 – 32 which says, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from

your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.