

WATCH YOUR WORDS! HELP KIDS STAND UP AGAINST PROFANITY

Compared to other sins, cursing might seem tame. But Scripture takes a strong stand against sins of the tongue. God makes it clear that obscenities and impurities have no place coming out of the mouths of Christ-followers.

Unfortunately, Christian kids often struggle just as much with their words as their unchurched peers do. Infractions range from the ubiquitous and casual use of the f-word to rude, suggestive, and vicious references about other people. "Profane" means "to treat something sacred with abuse, irreverence, or contempt." So when kids use the f-word, they treat something sacred (the act of intercourse) with contempt. Try these approaches to tackle profanity:

- **Ask kids to keep a running tally** of the number of profanities they hear during one day at school or one night of TV-watching. Have them report back; then ask them if they were surprised by what they learned.
- **Tell kids the truth.** Research shows that people who curse are respected less in our society and have fewer deep relationships. Cursing also can cause other people to stumble and violates our calling to love our neighbors as ourselves.
- **Challenge kids to use only "prayer" words.** If they wouldn't use the word in conversation with God, then it isn't appropriate in any other context. Give kids alternative attention-grabbing words that can substitute for profanity.

TIPS >>>

Media editor and screenwriter Bryan Belknap offers these insights into language:

- **Cursing is akin to unbelief** because it denies Jesus' presence in all things, at all times. Why is speech that's unacceptable for Jesus okay for us?
- **It's impossible to unconditionally love someone using foul language.** Cursing does nothing to communicate grace.
- **Cursing violates the spirit of humility.** Words are a barometer of character and can show an unwillingness to submit to authority.
- **Cursing undermines integrity.** When kids use swear words in

certain situations but not others, they're teaching themselves to play fast-and-loose with their morals.

- **The broader culture still labels foul-talkers as ill-educated, uncreative, and lacking in self-control.** Initial impressions of people who cuss don't include happiness, intelligence, or Christianity.
- **Clean language is the ultimate counterculture rebellion.** Even a 2-year-old can say potty words. The world notices and respects people who refrain from using profanity. All kids want to stand out from the crowd and carve their own path as unique individuals. Clean speech is one way to do it. In fact, pure language might become the new cool.

THE VIEW

- When Gallup researchers asked 13- to 17-year-olds to rank a long list of "serious behaviors," kids said using profanity in public was the least serious offense of all.
- The Center for Media and Public Affairs found that profanity is used every six minutes on network TV shows, every three minutes in movies, and every two minutes on premium cable shows.
- To combat high-tech gossip, some schools are punishing students for what they post on the Internet after school hours.

PONDER THIS

- What do your own words say about your character, your values, and your relationship with God?
- What sins of the tongue are the most challenging for you? for your teenagers?
- How might your family members be able to hold one another accountable for how they speak?





GOING DEEPER

Expert Insights for Parents of Teenagers

By Jasper Rains

At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, Jasper Rains offers suggestions for ways that adults can use their words wisely, especially in tricky situations:

Clear the air. People-pleasers don't want to rock the boat. This is a major way the enemy gets a foothold in relationships. We tend to bottle up our anger until we blow. If you don't lovingly confront an issue right away, it will only fuel anger until you confront in frustration.

Often, things that eventually become major issues start with bad communication and continue to build. Put concerns on the table as

soon as they happen. That clears up misunderstandings and opens the door to speedy reconciliation.

Speak less. This may seem like a contradiction to the first point, but sometimes when we're stressed we tend to be too confrontational. We want to put people in their place. We often end up in arguments that only contribute to the problem and don't preemptively lead us to healing.

Sometimes the best thing to say is nothing at all. Prayerfully seek when it's right to confront and when it's right to be silent.

Stop gossiping. Even if you dress

something up as a "prayer request," talking to others about a frustrating situation shouldn't be your only step. Instead, go to the source of the issue rather than speaking behind other people's backs.

A good rule is to share frustrations with only one person, such as an accountability partner. This will help you release some steam but will also give an opportunity for this person to hold you accountable to making things right while they pray for the situation as a whole.

RESOURCE



In *Live Large, Be Different, Shine Bright* (Simply Youth Ministry), Doug Fields and Joshua Griffin explore 12 contagious qualities for healthy relationships, including communication.

BIBLE FOCUS

The tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.

James 3:5-6

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

MAINSTREAM MUSIC



THRICE

Background: This Orange County band has never been labeled a Christian band, despite the fact that lead singer Dustin Kensrue is a staunch Christian and his lyrics are often straight from the Bible. Their songs deal with topics such as Peter's dark night of betrayal, Christ's invitation for us to take rest in him, and how earth isn't our real home. The music is as deep and thoughtful as the lyrics. Kensrue recently became worship leader at the O.C. branch of Mars Hill Church.

Albums: *Major/Minor* (2011), *The Alchemy Index* (2007), *Vheissu* (2005)

What Thrice Says: Regarding where he gets inspiration, singer Dustin Kensrue says, "Definitely the Bible; I draw from that a lot. Usually not as the starting point for things, but it is very much where I am rooted. I feel like it speaks to a lot of things.... I'm constantly inspired and challenged by reading it."

Explore: Check out Thrice on Spotify or on their mySpace page at www.myspace.com/thrice.

CHRISTIAN MUSIC



FAMILY FORCE 5

Background: This crunk band incorporates punk, hardcore, R&B, dance, electronica, funk, and rap metal into party songs. It's as crazy as it sounds, but the songs are hits. Three band members are brothers. They've been criticized for using almost no overt references to God or their faith, though they do maintain positive lyrics.

Albums: *III* (2011), *Dance or Die* (2008), *Business Up Front/Party In the Back* (2006)

What Family Force 5 Says: Regarding the band's Christian image, singer Solomon Olds says, "They want Sandi Patty all over again. They want Amy Grant.... We want to make music that is for God, but at the same time, we want to make music that people enjoy and that they're not turned off by."

Explore: Check out their videos at www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSkzHFUheXA.

MOVIES

Movie: *The Three Musketeers*

Genre: Action, Adventure, Romance

Rating: PG-13

Synopsis: A spirited young man named d'Artagnan joins forces with three Musketeers who have rebelled against their order and try to take down the evil forces threatening their land.

Our Take: Despite director Paul W.S. Anderson's history of the *Resident Evil* movies, the action here will likely be closer to the recent *Pirates of the Caribbean* films—epic action with a few laughs, but nothing too offensive.

Movie: *Real Steel*

Genre: Action, Drama

Rating: PG-13

Synopsis: In this futuristic boxing movie, Hugh Jackman is a washed-up ex-fighter. He makes a comeback as a trainer for a huge battling robot—and draws close to his estranged young son in the process.

Our Take: The premise sounds ridiculous, but this movie looks like it has heart to accompany the special effects.

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VIDEO GAMES



Batman: Arkham City—This is a sequel to one of the best games to come out in recent years. The first game was a blast, with a wide-open world and gameplay that was a super-fun mixture of stealth and fighting. The female villains Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy wore skimpy outfits, so if they make a reappearance, that would be the biggest red flag in an otherwise teenage-friendly game.

Dark Souls—This sequel to the cult hit *Demon's Souls* will likely be very similar to that dark, violent action game. The gimmick here is that the game is incredibly hard, and there are no places to save within levels; players die and go all the way back to the beginning. This one isn't for the kiddos.

OCTOBER 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23/30	24/31	25	26	27	28	29