

WATCH YOUR WORDS! HELP KIDS STAND UP AGAINST PROFANITY

Ships used to rely on the wind for power. Sometimes the wind blew favorably; other times, it hindered progress or even destroyed ships. The book of James reminds us that large ships are steered by a very small rudder. In the same way, our tongues, although small, steer us. Our words can move us in positive ways or in negative, damaging directions.

I've tried several methods to help young people "tame their tongue," including having them move a bracelet from one wrist to the other every time they curse and challenging them to record every curse word they say in a week and then read the list out loud to the senior pastor. Although these approaches have met with minor success, I've found that the most effective tool in helping young people improve their language is setting an example for them to follow.

Our kids take their cues from us in many aspects of behavior. The best method of empowering young people to use positive language is modeling this for them with our own words.

Let's steer our ship in the right direction, charting a clear path for our young people to follow!

—Hank Hilliard, Young People's Ministries, hilliard@GBOD.org

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.

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

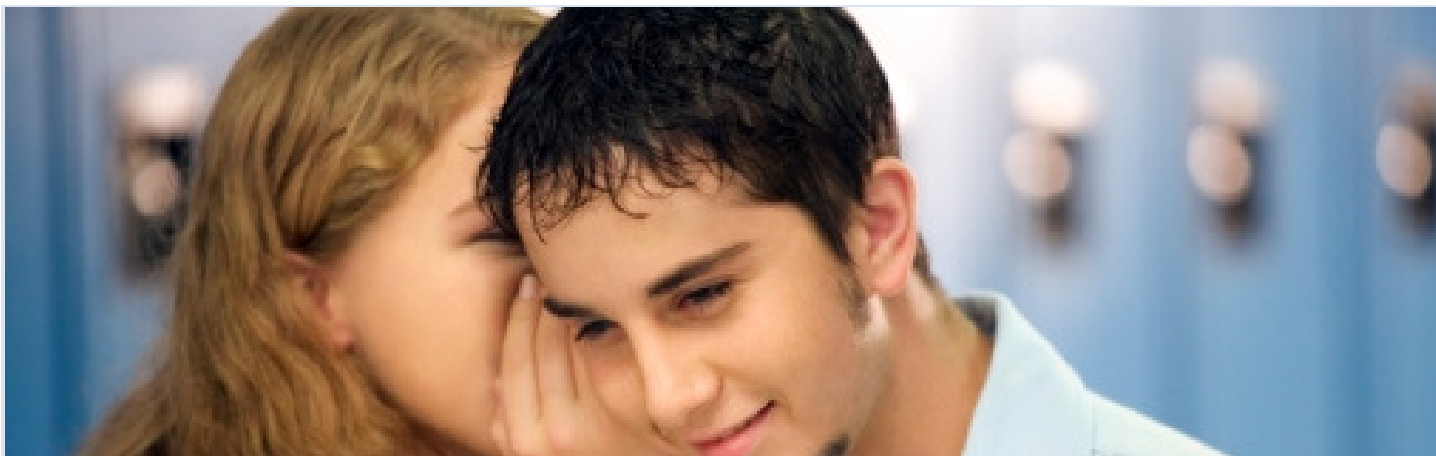
certain situations but not others, they're teaching themselves to play fast-and-loose with their morals.

- **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.

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