

## What The Bible teaches On Cussing

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Intro: I will forever have an image of my Mother Norma Jean Anthony cornering me in the bathroom with a bar of soap in her hand. Mom taught us not to cuss. As a rebellious teenager, I disregarded her "old-fashioned" virtues, thinking to myself that cussing just wasn't that big of a deal. For her and my Father's sake, as well as in front of my church family, I would stop letting the four-letter words fly; but there was a time at school in front of my peers when I cussed like everyone else. Cussing is most likely as old as the human race. Some people have long used profanity and obscenity privately when they are angry, disgusted, or excited. Some use it for emphasis. Some enjoy suggestive or off-color jokes. With others the practice is just a habit. Unfortunately, this is even true of some professing Christians.

More recently, such speech has become common, not just in private, but also in public and in the mass media. Finding a TV show, movie, or novel that does not use it is nearly impossible, even in so-called "family entertainment." Social media have gone so far as to give such expressions code abbreviations, so people can use profanity without having to type it out! Some professing Christians carelessly copy and distribute on their pages messages that include it.

Perhaps most objectionable of all, many school teachers and textbooks use such language, and reading assignments may be filled with it. When parents complain, often other people never realize how bad the problem really is, because the language is so bad that the media refuses to print actual quotations: the language violates the media's code of decency. And you know it has to be bad when you consider what they do publish!

Some defend such language on grounds of "freedom of speech" and "academic freedom." But even if all this is legal, that does not make it moral or acceptable to Yahweh. Public media and especially schools must realize that what they publish tends to mold the character of the audience, especially children. If the media does not affect people's conduct, why do companies spend millions of dollars to advertise there?

***The purpose of this study is to examine all the different facets of the language known as cussing in light of the Bible.***

To determine whether such facets as cursing, profanity, swearing, or obscenity is a "sin," we need to first discuss what sin is, and second define what cursing, profanity, swearing, or obscenity is. After this we'll discuss what the Bible says to do about it.

The Bible tells us that sin is the transgression of the law ([1 John 3:4](#)) and rebellion against Yahweh ([Deuteronomy 9:7](#), [Joshua 1:18](#)). It is furthermore described as imaginations of the unrenewed heart ([Genesis 6:5](#); [8:21](#)), defiling ([Proverbs 30:12](#); [Isaiah 59:3](#)), disgraceful ([Proverbs 14:34](#)), and unrighteous ([1 John 5:17](#)), among other things.

But some people place all improper speech in the category of "cussing," but don't realize that much speech is improper for other reasons. Others just assume that everyone knows what kind of language is wrong. The result is that many people who object to improper language do not know how to defend their view from Scripture.

When we look closer, at the dictionary definition and origin of the word cuss provided below, we see that it is derived from the word curse.

Dictionary.com defines what it means to **CUSS** [kuhs] Informal.

verb (used without object)

1.

to use profanity; curse; swear.

verb (used with object)

2.

to swear at; curse:

*He cussed the pedestrian for getting in his way.*

3.

to criticize or reprimand in harsh terms (often followed by *out*):

*The coach cussed out the team for losing.*

noun

4.

curse word; oath.

5.

a person or animal:

*a strange but likable cuss.*

Origin of cuss

1765-

75, **Americanism**; variant of **curse**, with loss of *r* and shortening of vowel, as in **ass**<sup>2</sup>, **bass**<sup>2</sup>, **passel**, etc.

Related forms

**cusser**, noun

As you can see, the word cuss originates as a variant form of the word curse.

Definition #1 lets us know that as a verb, there are three distinct types of language usage that can be defined under the category of

**CUSSING**:to use profanity; curse; swear.

As a noun there are two: curse word; oath

As you'll see the Bible gives us an even broader view of what the language of a cusser contains.

As you should have realized from the definition, there is a definite relationship between the terms cussing and cursing that makes them virtually identical in meaning. Since **cussing** has its origins or roots derived from **cursing**; we'll consider these two terms in general as interchangeable or synonymous. The term Cursing could have just as easily been used in the title of this study as Cussing. Moving forward, in this study, concerning these two interchangeable terms you'll see that there is a connection to certain other forms of improper speech. We will break down each connected speech type and find out if the Bible (the Word of Yahweh) defines these certain types of speech as improper or sin. So, lets explore the Bible teaching about the following types of speech starting with:

## CURSING

### Definitions and Examples

"*Curse* ... An appeal or prayer for evil or injury to befall someone ... To invoke evil, calamity, or injury upon..." (*The American Heritage Dictionary*, abbreviated AHD)

So, we curse someone or something anytime we say or express that we wish harm would happen to them or it. Examples:

A curse in an ancient idol's temple read: May the god strike X and Y with dumbness and impotence because they caused A to lose his job. (*Illustrated Wonders and Discoveries of the Bible*, Alan Millard, p154)

"*Damn* ... to bring condemnation upon; ruin ... to condemn to eternal punishment in hell ..." (*Random House College Dictionary*, abbreviated RHCD)

"*Hell* ... the place or state of punishment of the wicked after death ..." (RHCD)

So, we are cursing when we use the above words or similar language that expresses the desire for people, places or things to receive harm. Included are such statements as, "I wish he'd drop dead," "F\*\*\*you!", "Damn it," "To hell with it," etc. These are all modern ways that evolved from old fashion pronouncing a

curse upon either people or situations that express you do not, or no longer value or care to see someone or something doing well.

Cursing is our way of describing words that are, for the most part, culturally or socially unacceptable. It is a slippery slope, however, to define a curse word because words are always taking on new meanings. Some curse words in the English language are actually authorized words to describe authentic things (Ex. Ass=Donkey, bitch=female dog) but have taken on a new meaning as time has progressed (used to demean or devalue people). Because of this, it is nearly impossible to create a canonized list of words that are considered curses. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that there are words that are purely crude or demeaning and are therefore unequivocally curse words.

Therefore it needs to be understood that cursing can also include any verbal expression of a word that may not necessarily be considered a traditional curse word. This means that the understanding of cursing needs to be expanded to not only include culturally or socially unacceptable words, but any word that is used to demean another individual or express extreme dissatisfaction with a particular situation, especially when that dissatisfaction is directed toward Elohim.

### **Bible Teaching**

Luke 6:27,28 - We should love our enemies, do good to those who hate us, and bless those who **curse** us. Christians should love all people, and love requires us to hope they receive what is good for them, not that they be harmed (Rom. 13:8-10).

Romans 12:14,17-21 - Do not **curse** others, not even those who persecute you, but rather bless them. Do not return evil for evil or seek vengeance, but do good and leave vengeance to Yahweh. Yahweh will punish those who sin against us, if they do not repent.

Cursing is a violation of love because it wishes harm on others. We should not even curse our enemies, so clearly we may not curse anyone at all. Instead, we should bless, which means to wish for good to come to others.

(See also Psalm 59:12; 109:17,18; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 3:9; Job 31:29,30; Ex. 21:17.)

### **Consequences When We Curse**

Yahshua says in Matthew 5:22, *“but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”* These are serious words. Anytime you look at your fellow brother/sister in Messiah and call them a “fool”, you are in liability to the

fires of hell. [Repentance](#) is a must! Reconciliation to that brother/sister is a must!

Clearly Yahshua tells us not to use swearing or cursing to demean another person.

Cursing another person may take many forms. It can be as innocuous as talking derogatorily "behind someone's back." It can be verbal and quite hurtful. It can be as demonstrative as using vulgar and unmistakable hand gestures out a car window.

Instead of cursing, Yahshua encouraged us in [Luke 6:27-28](#): "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **ble**ss those who curse you****, pray for those who mistreat you."

Also, those who are not in Messiah that do curse and swear cause even more trouble for themselves and others. Here are some verses about this:

*"Whoever goes on slandering reveals secrets." (Proverbs 11:13a)*

*"The counsels of the wicked are deceitful." (Proverbs 12:5b)*

*"An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips." (Proverbs 12:13a)*

*"Whoever guards his mouth preserves life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin." (Proverbs 13:3)*

*"A harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1b)*

It is common today to hear curse words and think nothing of it. We have become so desensitized to swearing that some parents hear their 7 year old do it and they don't even bat an eye. Many of these young people grow up in school perfecting the art of cussing by trying to out curse or slandering one another. When I was in school, they called it **ripping**. As Christians, what can we learn about cursing from the Bible? Let us look to Yahweh's Holy Word for answers on this topic.

*"From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so." (James 3:10)*

Our job is simply to warn evildoers what Yahweh's word teaches. In doing this, we may properly use some of these Bible words ("curse," "hell," etc.) that describe the punishment Yahweh will bring on the wicked. But we must

remember that Yahweh Himself will curse the wicked in the proper time and manner according to His justice and wisdom. We must let Him handle this.

### **A Different Context Of Biblical Cursing Comes From Yahweh Elohim Himself**

Cursing is a topic found throughout all of the Bible. When it comes to what we mean by cursing, the context forms the bases of our meanings which accordingly can be different. One example that illustrates a different aspect or meaning of cursing is that **throughout the Old Testament you will read passages of Yahweh cursing or mentioning that He will curse a person/people because of disobedience.** Right in the beginning in Genesis after the fall, Elohim curses the serpent (Satan) as it says, *“Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.”* (Genesis 3:14) Yahweh also curses the ground because of Adam as He says, *“cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life.”* (Genesis 3:17) Later on in Deuteronomy chapter 28:15-68, Yahweh gives a list of curses that will come out of disobedience. The passage starts like this: *“But if you will not obey the voice of Yahweh your Elohim or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.”* (Deuteronomy 28:15-19) Yahweh is serious and He wants and deserves obedience from us.

## **PROFANITY**

Simply put, profanity is “abusive, vulgar, or irreverent language” (at least that’s what dictionary.com says).

Taking this vague definition at face value, one could say that profanity can also include much more than the common words we label as “curse” words.

## Definitions and Examples

"*Profane* ... Showing contempt or irreverence toward Yahweh or sacred things..." (AHD). Profanity involves referring to anything holy in a way that mocks or ridicules it, or otherwise fails to show proper respect or reverence for it. (Note that, technically, cursing and profanity do not mean the same. A person may be profane without cursing, and vice-versa.)

Some people profane the Holy one by showing contempt or irreverence in their use of names or titles that belong to, or give reference to the Holy One (Yahshua, God, Jesus, Christ, Yahweh, Lord) by using them as expressions of anger or disgust or in a light, flippant way. Likewise, others profane sacred things that Yahweh has created specifically for his use such as: hell, the holding place of the wicked dead; heaven, the dwelling place of YAHWEH; or the Scriptures, the word of YAHWEH.

Another problem is the practice of referring disrespectfully to acts of worship such as prayer, the words of spiritual songs, and various Bible phrases (such as "hallelujah," which means "praise Yahweh"). Sometimes people pervert the teaching of Scripture to make a joke.

## Bible Teaching

Ezekiel 22:26 - Priests were guilty of *profaning* Yahweh's holy things, making no distinction between what was holy and what was common. So, to treat holy things as though they are common is to profane them. This passage refers especially to profaning Yahweh's word and worship. (See also Lev. 10:10.)

Exodus 20:7 - "Thou shalt not take the name of Yahweh thy God in *vain*." "Vain" means empty, meaningless, without proper respect and reverence. To refer to God's name in such a way would be profanity.

Leviticus 19:12 - You shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you *profane* the name of your Elohim. Contrary to the article mentioned earlier, Yahshua said, "do not swear at all" (Matthew 5:34). And much common speech includes the frivolous swearing that Yahshua forbids.

Matthew 6:9 - "Our Father which art in heaven, *hallowed* be thy name." A name stands for a person. Since Yahweh is holy and reverend, so also is His name. To profane Yahweh's name or even a title (secondary name) that references Him, by using it as a term of anger or disgust is to disrespect Yahweh Himself. [Psalm 111:9]

1 Timothy 1:9-11 - "*Profane*" conduct is contrary to sound doctrine just like murder, fornication, etc. The word here translated "*unholy*" also includes the idea of disrespect for holy things. Vine defines it "profane." Moffatt translates it "irreverent."

Romans 1:18 - "For the wrath of Elohim is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness..." Titus 2:12 adds that the grace of God teaches us to deny

ungodliness. "Ungodly" means "want of reverence, respect ... piety toward Yahweh" (Thayer). So profanity is ungodly.

When a person takes the holy name of Yahweh or other sacred things, and uses them as nothing more than common expressions of anger and disgust, that person is ungodly and profane. Is your speech profane, or do you show proper respect for Yahweh and sacred things?

(See also Lev. 18:21; Luke 1:49.)

The Bible is very clear that there is one form of profanity that is worse than all of the others. When you take Yahweh's name in vain you are sinning against the 3<sup>rd</sup> [Commandment](#) which says, "*you shall not take the name of Yahweh your Elohim in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.*" (Exodus 20:7).

## SWEARING

### Definitions and Examples

**swear**  (swâr). **swore** (swôr), **sworn** (swôr-n), **swear-ing**, **swear** v.intr. **1.** To make a solemn declaration, invoking a deity or a sacred person or thing, in confirmation of and witness to the honesty or truth of such a declaration. **2.** To make a solemn promise; vow. **3.** To use obscene or blasphemous language; curse. **4.** Law To commit oneself by oath to giving evidence or testimony that is truthful. n. A swearword.

#### Phrasal Verbs:

##### **swear at**

To use vulgar language against; curse:

##### **swear by**

**1.** To have great reliance on or confidence in: *He swears by his personal physician.*

**2.** To have reliable knowledge of; be sure of: *I think she left early, but I couldn't swear by it.*

**3.** To take an oath by: *He swore by all the angels and saints of heaven.*

**swear in** To administer a legal or official oath to: *swear in a mayor.*

**swear off** Informal To pledge to renounce or give up: *She has sworn off cigarettes.*

As we can see, another form of word use that both the [AHD] and the Bible talks about is swearing an oath. The Bible says much about swearing that is connected to the idea of swearing an oath. In this context, to swear means to make a solemn declaration, invoking a deity, or a sacred person or thing, to confirm the honesty, truth, and/or the intentionality of the one swearing the oaths to fulfill the declaration.

An example today of swearing an oath occurs in the courtroom when we swear to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God."

Swearing oaths was a common practice in Yahshua's day. He took oath swearing a step further in Matthew 5:33-37: "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord. But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is Elohim's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'-- anything beyond this comes from the evil one."

## **OBSCENITY**

### **Definitions and Examples**

"*Obscene* ... offensive to modesty or decency; indecent; lewd ... causing or intended to cause sexual excitement or lust..." (RHCD).

Often jokes and humor contain sexual suggestions that tend to arouse lust. Some expressions of disgust or anger indecently refer to reproductive acts or to bodily processes of purification or to the private parts of the body involved in these acts.

(Note again that, technically, obscenity is different from cursing and profanity.)

### **Bible Teaching**

Mark 7:20-23; Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 13:13,14 - Lasciviousness, like murder or fornication, etc., is a sin that proceeds from the heart and defiles the man. Those who practice it will not inherit the kingdom of Elohim, so we should avoid making provision to fulfill this lust of the flesh.

"*Lascivious*" means "inclined to lustfulness; wanton; lewd ... arousing or inciting sexual desire ..." (RHCD). Thayer adds: "wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females..." Note that "lascivious" has the same definition as "obscene." Words or jokes are obscene or lascivious when they tend to cause lustful thoughts or take pleasure in improper sexual desires.

Matthew 5:27,28; 18:6,7; 1 Timothy 2:9,10 - Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her in his heart. Women should not tempt men to commit this sin by dressing or acting in a manner that would be suggestive.

Not only are people wrong if they have an unlawful sexual union, but they are also wrong if they *desire* to do such or if they take pleasure in thoughts of such (fantasizing). Not only are women wrong if they indecently expose themselves, but men are also wrong if they take pleasure in thoughts of seeing such.

Furthermore, jokes or expressions are wrong if they tempt people to have such thoughts. (See also Prov. 6:25; 4:23.)

Ephesians 5:4; Colossians 3:8 - Practices we should avoid include "filthiness" and "jesting" (KJV). Other translations for "filthiness" are "obscenity" (New International Version, Vine) and "indecenty" (Goodspeed). Other translations for "jesting" are "coarse jesting" (New American Standard Version, New King James, Vine), "crude joking" (English Standard Version), "suggestive jesting" (Williams). Words, jokes, or expressions are "obscene" when they are sexually suggestive or when they make a joke or expression of disgust by vulgar reference to things should be kept private. Not only are we wrong if we use such speech, but we are also wrong if we "have pleasure in" those who do so. This would include laughing at or enjoying being entertained by people who use such language (Rom. 1:32; 2 John 9-11; 1 Tim. 5:22; Eph. 5:11).

Is your speech pure, or is it characterized by obscenities and filthiness?

A few more verses that touch on this are the following:

***"Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving."***(Ephesians 5:4)

***"But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth."*** (Colossians 3:8)

## **SUBSTITUTION OR ALTERED FORMS (EUPHEMISMS)** **Definitions and Examples**

"*Euphemism* ... the substitution of a mild, indirect or vague expression for one thought to be offensive, harsh, or blunt..." (RHCD).

People who are angry or upset, will sometimes use altered forms of a word in place of the curse, profanity, or obscenity. Yet the substitute means the same, is used the same way, sounds similar, and is obviously an altered form of the objectionable word.

"dem" (found rarely in British literature) - "Is he in heaven or is he in hell, that demmed elusive pimpernel?" (*Scarlet Pimpernel*). The word sounds similar, is used the same, and is obviously an altered form of "damn." If the curse word is wrong, is the substitute right?

"Gosh ... euphemistic alteration of God" (RHCD & AHD).

"Golly ... euphemistic alteration of God" (RHCD & AHD).

"Darn ... to curse; damn" (RHCD). "Alteration of DAMN" (AHD).

(Sometimes combined with "gosh" as "gosh darn")

"Gee ... euphemism for Jesus" (RHCD). "Alteration of Jesus" (AHD).

"Doggone ... to damn" (RHCD & AHD).

"*Heck* ... euphemistic alteration of hell" (RHCD). "Hell" (AHD).  
"OMG ... Initialism of "oh my God" (Wiktionary); "*abbreviation* - oh my God"  
(Merriam Webster online)

## Bible Teaching

The point is not that all expressions of surprise are wrong, nor that all euphemisms are wrong. Not all euphemisms are substitutes for bad words. We often substitute words that mean the same as perfectly good words. We may say someone "passed away" instead of saying he died. If it is not wrong to say he died, why would it be wrong to say he passed away?

But if the substitute means the same as a **bad** word, is used in the same way, even sounds similar and is obviously just an alteration of a bad word, then how can it be right to use the substitute in place of the bad word? Why wouldn't all the Bible principles that condemn the improper word likewise condemn the substitute?

Someone may respond, "But that's not what I mean when I use those words." Granted, some people may not think about the meaning and so may use them without realizing what they mean. But what about our influence on people who do know what they mean?

Matthew 18:6,7; 1 Timothy 4:12 - Christians must always consider the way our conduct affects others (especially highly impressionable young people and new converts), so we do not tempt them to sin. Many people do know the meaning of these words, and many of the words sound so much like their original meaning that they are easily recognizable with just a little thought.

Example: "I wish you would shut your Freakin mouth!" -Substitute for-

"I wish you would shut your F###kin mouth!"

1 Corinthians 8 - Paul discussed the practice of pagans who used banquets in their temples as a form of worship to their idols. Eating meat that had been sacrificed to the idol was an act of worship. A person who knew the truth may think the idol is just a hunk of metal, but the meat is good food. So he can eat the meat in the temple, and to him it is just food.

But to people who are accustomed to idolatry, that act is worship to the idol. If a person sees a Christian eating that meat in the temple, he reasonably concludes that the Christian is doing the same thing everyone around him is doing: worshipping the idol. So he eats too; but he does it as worship to the idol, which would be sinful. Note vv 9-13 - The Christian has become guilty of sin because he influenced someone else to sin.

Compare this to the use of these substitute words. Like the man eating the meat in the idol's temple, you may think you don't mean it that way. But this is what the words mean, and they are so similar to the bad words that it is quite reasonable to make the connection. So a young person, non-Christian, or weak Christian, may hear you use the words; so he picks up the expression, as people often do.

But he knows what they mean and he concludes it must be OK to use them this way, because you do it. So, because of your influence, he uses them knowing what they mean, or violating his conscience or his parents' authority. The principle is the same as eating the meat in the idol's temple.

Matthew 12:36,37 - Remember, we will be judged even for our idle words - those we think are the least significant.

### **Another Name for this type of cussing is pseudo-swearing...**

Pseudo-swearing occurs when Christians take a well-known obscene phrase and remove the bad word but keep the phrase, so the listener will be able to bring to mind the original obscenity. An example would be "when the yogurt hits the fan"; probably no American has to be told that the original word was not "yogurt."

Let me be frank: I have friends and family who talk this way, and many of them are members of my own church. I think this is skating on thin ice, and it's not becoming of Christian commitment. If your purpose is to bring an obscene phrase to the mind of the listener, while technically saying nothing obscene yourself, you need to check your motives with the Holy Spirit. Twice. Ugly language grieves Him (Eph. 4:29-31).

As temples of the Holy Spirit, it should grieve us to hear a professed Christian who thinks it's ok to use a swear word or say an offensive phrase as long as it's masked with euphemisms? Christians are often guilty of substituting more culturally acceptable words in place of unacceptable words to describe their dissatisfaction with a situation, or even in reference to an individual. These are called euphemisms and cannot be considered justified alternatives.

**Again, a euphemism is where one word is substituted for another.**

For example, using the often heard, "Oh my God!" Is that using Yahweh's secondary name or title in vain? **When people say "gheeze" or jeewiz, they are actually substituting these words as euphemisms. These are euphemisms for Jesus; a name that many commonly believe in their hearts to be the true name of our Lord and Savior Yahshua the Messiah. They might not know that it's not His true name, or even think that they are actually swearing but only a little thought would reveal that these substitutes are referring to the Son of Elohim; and even casually using substitutions as a replacement for what they believe to be His name is irreverent and considered sin.**

**Replacement cussing is another name for this use of euphemisms that attempts to hide or masquerade the sin of cursing, profanity, swearing, or obscenity. A common Example is when someone says, "Darn!" or "Darn it!" they are actually substituting it for "Damn!" or "Damn it!". And the often used so lightly "Oh my God!" is obviously taking Yahweh's title or secondary name which in many cases is believed by many in ignorance to be His personal name in vain. Even if people know that God isn't Yahweh's**

personal name, shouldn't also using His title that refers to Him be done with reverence, honor and respect. In the past, people realized doing this was wrong and attempted to clean up this highly desired and habitual phrase by instead saying "Oh my gosh!" Obviously this is a clear euphemism for "Oh my God!" and there is no difference at all. Even if people try to justify this masking of the word God, what matters is the way that Yahweh looks at the heart that either in ignorance or with knowledge makes a half hearted attempt not to breaking the Third Commandment. Even the person who knows it's not His personal name but thinks by simply mutating the pronunciation of what's obviously a secondary generic name or title in reference to Holy Yahweh, will some how erases the sin of irreverence should repent. No matter the persons understanding, Yahweh hears it as it is. A irreverent substitution for what many in their heart believe to be His personal name; or ascribed title. We who in our hearts, fear Yahweh should be unwilling to risk for any reason, taking either what we believe to be His Name or Title in vain. Taking either His personal name Yahweh or secondary /generic name of God in vain means using it in a careless, useless, or meaningless way. Sometimes people will even irreverently attach the word "damn" after it and this is clearly sinful profanity. Yahshua said in Matthew 12:36 "that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken."

Recognizing that "Oh my Gosh" is easily traced back to "Oh my God" someone tried to hide the reference even more by simply taking away the "Oh my". How about when someone just simple uses the word "Gosh"? This too is a euphemism for the title/ generic or secondary name "God". It is no different than taking Yahweh's title or for many His actually perceived personal name and using it in a useless or vain way. To risk using either the Creator of Heaven and Earths personal or secondary name in vain should cause people to fear when they read "Yahweh will not hold those guiltless who profane His name." Exodus 20:7 is clear on this: ""You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God, for Yahweh will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name." Leviticus 19:12 says, ""Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am Yahweh." Deuteronomy 5:11 records "You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God, for Yahweh will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."

Yahshua is Lord and God and so when you use either one of His secondary names or what you sincerely believe in your heart to be His personal name (Jesus), in a euphemism, you are sinfully taking them in vain.

**Now that we as Christians have discussed what sin is, and have studied the word of Yahweh to defined how cursing, profanity, swearing, or obscenity is sin, it should be a no-brainer that we are clearly approved by the Bible to believe that it's not okay to cuss or use bad language. This is especially**

true when using Yahweh's name or even secondary generic names such as Titles that refer to Him who is Holy, Holy, Holy or the things that are set apart or sanctified for His Holy purposes. This would include we ourselves who as the temples of the Holy Spirit are to be Holy as He is Holy, reflecting Him in all that we say. The apostle Paul is clear about this in Ephesians 4:29: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." This would include telling dirty jokes, making off-color remarks, and making lewd or lascivious gestures. These are all considered sin by biblical standards. These are not gray areas. It is wrong to use profane language, calling someone names, and even using euphemisms. As we repent, what are some of the things we can do to stop our habitually sinful speech?

## TAMING OF THE TONGUE

Everyone has slips of the tongue. Even Christians sometimes say things that they later [regret](#). The Bible is full of stories about people saying things that they regretted saying. A moment of anger gets the best of all of us. Unfortunately, it only takes one moment of anger to wipe out seven years of being a good example. James warns us about the power of the tongue:

**James 1:26** "Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless." James has almost an entire chapter dedicated to the tongue and its power to do both good and to do bad. Remember that James, the half brother of Messiah, is writing to Christians. He speaks of the deadly venom that can be spewed by the tongue in James 1:2-12:

"We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in Elohim's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers

and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”

And James says in 3:6: “The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”

## Guarding Your Tongue

The Master Yahshua understood that our words reflect what is going on inside of our hearts. In Matthew 12:34 He said, “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.” In Matthew 15:1, 17-18 Yahshua says “Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”

The wisdom literature of King David's son King Solomon bids us to watch ourselves closely and regard what we say.

**Proverbs 22:1** reminds us that *“A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.”*

**Proverbs 21:23** *“Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity.”*

## Words of Grace

Whenever possible, we should love to choose words that I call the “Three E’s”; edifying, exhorting, and encouraging. Words have real power: Either for good or for evil. They hold the power of life and [death](#). When given the choice, choose to speak what is good. Not flattery which is insincere and is like being a false witness, but by sincere compliments. Words can be the spice of life or the pall of death.

**Proverbs 31:26** *“She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness.”*

**Proverbs 15:1** *“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”*

**Proverbs 11:9** *“With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous escape.”*

**Proverbs 12:18** *“The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”*

**Proverbs 12:25** *“Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.”*

**Proverbs 16:21** *“The wise in heart are called discerning, and gracious words promote instruction.”*

**Proverbs 16:22-23** *“The hearts of the wise make their mouths prudent, and their lips promote instruction. Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”*

The next time you feel anger boiling up inside of you and you feel you are about to say something out loud like a euphemism, an angry word, or something you might regret, hide this verse in your heart:

**Colossians 4:6** *“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”*

Christians should consider carefully the effect of our words, especially in times of anger, frustration, or surprise. Here are some questions we should ask to help us apply the lessons we have considered:

- 1) Do I have my temper under control? In a calmer moment, after second thoughts, would I think it proper to use this word or joke? (Ephesians 4:26; James 1:19,20)
- 2) Will this hinder my influence for Messiah Yahshua?
- 3) Does it bother my conscience to say this? (Rom. 14:23)
- 4) Will this be beneficial to those who hear, or will it draw them away from Messiah Yahshua? (Eph. 4:29; Colossians 4:5,6)
- 5) Do my words express love for others? Do I truly desire them to receive what is good for them?
- 6) Does my speech show proper respect for the name or titles of Yahweh and all that is holy?
- 7) Are my thoughts and motives pure? Am I causing myself or others to dwell on thoughts a Christian should not take pleasure in? (Phil. 4:8)
- 8) Would Yahshua say this? (1 Peter 2:21-24)

## EXCUSES/LIES

Despite all the principles of Yahweh's word that show us the sinfulness of cussing in all its various forms, despite the help in our repentance to overcome and gain victory in our battle against using it, there are still professed Christians who don't want to repent or change. Instead they give *justification of their use of foul language*. It is one thing to fall into sin unwillingly or to have a bad habit that

is difficult to break. It is another thing entirely to embrace it as acceptable or permissible before Yahweh.

Some Christians do not “stumble” into profanity against their better judgment, but use it freely and then give pseudo-spiritual excuses why it should be permissible. Common to all of them is the same excuses: the Bible’s commandments against filthy speech, cursing, and unwholesome language don’t apply to them, and they have good reasons for swearing. If you should run into this crowd, you should know how to counter these excuses. If you are *part* of this crowd, this study may be in your hands right now by divine appointment or through a concerned friend. Either way, don’t be taken in by Satan’s lies—

**Excuse/lie#1: I swear so I can relate to the people on the street. Swearing shows them that I’m “real” or “authentic” and am not putting on any fronts. They feel more comfortable in relating to me.**

We are called to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20), representing His kingdom and standards. Ambassadors are not truly at liberty to represent themselves or their own “authenticity.” Nowhere in the Bible do we see Yahshua Messiah using foul language, and when we convey His message and character, we must take care not to degrade it by foul talk.

People expect non-Christians to represent themselves, to look out for their own interests, and to bend down if the pressure or the price is great enough. However, both the world and the Lord Yahshua expect (and have a right to expect!) different behavior from Christians. The sheep of Yahshua have been “bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20). They follow not just a Shepherd and Savior, but also a Lord and Master. When nonbelievers hear you swear, they are not hearing Messiah, they are hearing compromise. “My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?” (James 3:10-11).

**Excuse/Lie#2: I’m avoiding personal hypocrisy by swearing. Since I really think curse words in my mind, it would be hypocrisy for me not to say them with my mouth. If I spoke “religious” and didn’t swear, I would be a hypocrite, which is a sin according to the Bible.**

Hypocrisy is indeed a sin, but so is cursing (Psa. 10:7, Rom. 3:13-15). Yes, hypocrisy is a species of deception, because though we appear clean on the outside (“whitewashed sepulchers”), inside we are full of corruption and sin. Since Yahshua Messiah calls us to be holy and pure both inside and outside, we are guilty of sin if we only do a halfway job. If you swear in order to avoid the sin of hypocrisy, you are not avoiding one sin but are actually committing a double sin, since you have trespassed in both thought and word together. And it’s worse than that: you have not only polluted your own mind and mouth, but polluted the mind of the listener as well. Open swearing does not help you avoid hypocrisy, it only multiplies your sin.

Bear in mind that *temptation* to sin is not the same as sinning. While one might be tempted to use profanity, even to the point where Satan suggests exactly what to say (and do), the thought itself is not a sin. You have not *already* sinned simply because evil came and presented itself to you in all its four-letter shamelessness. You sin when you embrace the temptation and choose to follow it into trespass.

The problem of hypocrisy isn't solved by allowing your thoughts (which, as we said, are just temptations at the first stage) to be expressed in filthy speech. Rather, we solve the problem by coming to Messiah Yahshua to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). The Lord Yahshua knows this will not be easy for some people, and we must daily seek Him for transformation and renewal.

**Excuse/lie#3: I swear in order to break a "religious spirit" of pretense. People have been indoctrinated into the "externals" of Christianity by an outward show, and swearing disrupts their stereotype of a Christian "image." I want to show that Christians don't have to fit a particular mold.**

This is a variation on #1, above. The solution to pretense is purity. Truly, Christianity is not *merely* externals or an outward show of righteousness. It starts with an inward rebirth by which our minds have been awakened unto faith, and our hearts made new and purified by Yahshua's substitutionary work of Calvary; which justifies us, and imputes to us His righteousness. This work of Yahshua in us continues through the process of sanctification to renew our minds, so that we can subsequently demonstrate (prove, exhibit, display) the perfect will of Elohim before a sinful world (Rom. 12:2).

It is true that swearing disrupts the stereotype of a Christian image. Every act of open sin or faithlessness disrupts what people have come to expect of Christians. Our goal as Christians should be to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29), and thus Christians *do* have to match a certain picture if they are to be Christlike. In some cases, our attempt to break the Christian "image" is actually counter to Elohim's design that we conform to the image of His Son.

**Excuse/lie#4: It's okay for me to swear because I've been under special pressure, suffering, or persecution.**

This is a common excuse: "If I am under pressure from my work/school/family/government/etc., I have a valid reason to swear to express my frustration and pain." This misses the point. One's suffering, from whatever the cause, may indeed be the true reason someone began using profanity (or began using it more often). However, an *explanation* is not an *excuse*, and identifying the cause of someone's outbursts does not imply sanction or consent for their behavior. In other words, knowing the cause of an action doesn't mean the action is lawful.

When the apostle Peter was caught in the temple courtyard after the arrest of Yahshua, "he began to curse and swear" (Mark 14:71) in a lame attempt to deny that he was one of Yahshua's followers. In fear for his life, Peter would curse, lie,

and deny his best friend. But no amount of pressure really made his actions legitimate.

Many people say, "I wouldn't swear if you didn't provoke me to do it," as if other people were to blame for their loss of temper and self control. This doesn't mean that other people don't make life difficult for us sometimes. The book of Proverbs vividly describes the contentious wife, the noisy friend, and the perpetual tease who incite trouble. Though others may provoke us, we are responsible not to react in sinful ways, regardless of how they may provoke or terrify us.

**Excuse/lie#5: These words aren't really bad anyway. Words don't mean anything in themselves except what we think they mean. All words are neutral sounds which mean different things depending on the language and culture of the listener. If I curse in Japanese, you won't be offended if you don't understand the language. I'm not letting society tell me which words are "good" and "bad," and I don't think these words are "bad."**

This pseudointellectual argument might appeal to some people, but its major fallacy is that it leaves Yahweh Almighty out of the equation.

First, words *do* mean something to Elohim. Yahshua said that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34), which clearly implies that our speech will display our heart condition. If that wasn't enough, Messiah Yahshua reinforces it more strongly: "Every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matt. 12:36-37).

Our words can convey truth or falsehood, love or hatred, blessing or cursing. Even on the natural level, people are held accountable for perjury, false advertising, or failure to fulfill verbal agreements. The phone-sex business wouldn't be a multimillion dollar industry if words didn't really convey anything meaningful.

Second, we can grant that terms can convey different meanings depending on the culture, and that meanings can change over time. For instance, *zounds* is considered an archaic interjection of surprise and no longer conveys its origin as a contraction of "Elohim's wounds" (referring to the blood of Yahshua). However, most profanity of four hundred years ago remains profanity today, and the fact that some youth or ethnic subcultures use the N-word or the F-word without shame doesn't necessarily mean that the meaning of these words has now changed. You'll find those very same subcultures refraining from those terms or apologizing for them around priests or obvious members of the clergy. They know the difference between "golly" and "[expletive deleted]", even if some people don't admit there is one.

Third, the fact that I'm not offended by a curse word in another language has no bearing on the matter. For example, some people will replace an English obscenity with a German or European obscenity that means the same thing.

Since Americans aren't sensitive to foreign swear words, they think it's no real problem.

However, Father Yahweh knows every language that has ever existed, and someone's ability to conceal an insult from me in no way justifies his action before Yahweh, who sees and knows every hidden sin and thought. "I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them," says Yahweh (Ezek. 11:5 KJV). Whether I understand obscenities spoken in another language is beside the point. The point is, both the speaker and Yahweh understand what is said, however cleverly it might be disguised from me; and we are accountable for *all* our words.

**Excuse/lie#6: The Bible doesn't really prohibit "bad" words—it only speaks against slander, blaspheming God, or unbelief. The commandment not to take God's name in vain only means not to make false vows.**

The Bible's teaching about the misuse of the tongue is actually much broader than just slander and blasphemy. Certainly, the Bible warns against these sins. Yet it also provides general principles for us to follow.

Our goal should be to let the Bible inform our speech and conversation. In other words, Christians should read the Bible to determine first how it addresses the use of the tongue, and in what manner we should converse with one another, and then seek to follow its model. We should *not* ask how we can find biblical verses to justify what we're already doing.

On the one hand, we are given negative examples to avoid. Christians are to lay aside "evil speaking" because "he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit" (1 Peter 2:1, 3:10, quoting Ps. 34:12-16). We are to shun "profane" and vain babblings (2 Tim. 2:16).

On the other hand, there are positive examples of the mark for Christians to reach. Timothy was to "set an example for the believers in speech, in life . . . and in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12 NIV). Church leaders are to be "sober-minded, just, holy, and temperate." Christians must "speak evil of no one," but be "gentle, showing all humility to all men," displaying "sound speech that cannot be condemned, [so] that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of us" (Titus 1:8, 3:2, 2:8). Furthermore, we are told, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29-30).

I think the commandment against taking Yahweh's name in vain (Ex. 20:7, Deut. 5:11) encompasses not just false oaths and the blasphemous "God" curses among worldly people, but also the "Christ" curses. Even though Jesus is not our Saviors true name, it is the name people most commonly use when referring to Yahshua (The Holy Word of Elohim become flesh), and should not be taken lightly or used in an irreverent way. Years ago Christian artist Barry McGuire pointed out that Satan seeks to degrade the name of Jesus, dragging it into the mud, and so has turned Jesus' name into a worldwide term of cursing. Even in

India when people swear they curse by the name of Jesus—in reference to our God, not theirs. Hindus don't say "Oh, Krishna" or "Oh, Buddha" when they swear: they curse using the name of Jesus Christ. Barry saw it as an ironic testimony to the truth of Christianity and the reality of the spiritual conflict it represents. If Jesus was just another religious prophet, why would other countries and even other religions use His name in their words of profanity?

**Excuse/lie#7: I can use certain words if they're listed in the Bible. Are you saying the Holy Bible is wrong to use words like *piss*, *whore*, and *bastard*? Besides, if I'm calling her a whore, it's because she really is, and aren't we supposed to tell the truth?**

This excuse sinks pretty low, and if I hadn't heard it said by unspiritual people, I wouldn't bother to recite it. Yes, those words do appear in the King James Version of the Bible. However, I don't believe it's proper to use such language under most circumstances. We did note earlier (see [objection #5](#)) that words can change their meaning or connotation over time, and this is one of those instances. In the nearly four hundred years since the publication of the KJV, some words used then have become vulgar in our time and thus should be avoided.

Here, the connotation has changed. For example, *bastard* and *illegitimate* both denote one born out of wedlock. While the denotation is the same, we need to recognize that the former term is more crass and less palatable than the second.

"Telling the truth" or "telling it like it is" should not become a rationale for rudeness.

Proverbs 15:1, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."

No doubt, Christians should have the candor to call a spade a spade, but they should not choose terms which also convey intolerance, bigotry, or reactionary hatred—which is why "whore" is unacceptable today, regardless of its usage in the A.D. 1611 version of the King James Bible.

Can the same be said for *hell* and *damn*? It hardly needs to be argued that these words are used *far* more as curse words than in theological discourse. Taken outside their biblical setting, they are "curses" in the literal sense, whether spoken with emotion or with carelessness monotony. In either case, I submit that Christians should avoid using these words except in a biblical context.

As we've shown, Christians are not immune from stumbling themselves or others by loose habits of speaking. It may occur with vulgar words or in other ways. I know of a much-loved minister who cannot resist making sexual or scatological innuendos in private conversation, even though "technically" he has never said anything obscene. At some point, he needs to be reminded that "coarse joking" is out of place in the life of the believer (Eph. 5:4, NIV). Not knowing what he's doing, he loses more esteem by his off-color remarks than he gains from having a new joke to tell.

## Conclusion

As we've seen, the Bible is chalk full of verses that deal with cursing and swearing. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in all of us. Every time an [angry thought](#) enters our mind, we should rebuke Satan and choose kindness. If we lack self control when anger stirs up inside of us, it will eventually come out in or words and can really damage our witness to other people. Yahweh wants us to control our tongue because it will always be the best choice. *The tongue of the wise commends knowledge.* (Proverbs 15:2a) *A gentle tongue is a tree of life.* (Proverbs 15:4a) Our point was summarized long ago in James 1:26: "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless." Swearing does not show "realness" or gutsy emotion. Rather, it betrays a flaw in our ability to communicate sensitively and tastefully, not unlike the woman who dumps four spoonful of sugar in her coffee and imagines she really likes coffee. She likes the buzz, not the coffee. As Christians, we must go "against the tide" of the world in many instances, and if we do not want our testimony nullified by our own actions, we will pray this prayer with the Psalmist: "Set a guard, O Yahweh, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3). Keeping habitually bad responses to [anger](#) in check is a hard thing to do because we battle the flesh constantly we need the Holy Spirits help. Like the Psalmist in Psalms 19:14, pray: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Yahweh, my strength, and my redeemer." Is Yahshua pleased with your speech? Is He pleased with your life? Yahweh bless you as you live a life worthy of the calling!