

Foster Pure Speech By Taming the Tongue



For being such a small body part, our tongues sure get us into big trouble. As James 3:8 says, "No one can tame the tongue." That doesn't mean we shouldn't try, however. God commands his followers not only to avoid profanity and cursing but also to use our words to uplift and encourage.

Profanity conveys strong emotions, and strong emotions are the norm when you're a teenager. Foul language has become almost mainstream for many kids, who are desensitized to the use of curse words as a social lubricant. Making teenagers aware of their language—and what God thinks about it—is a good first step toward restoring civility and respect. Next, give kids alternative, attention-grabbing,

harmless words that can substitute for expression of joy or anger. Then challenge teenagers to use only "prayer" words; if they wouldn't use a word in conversation with God, it isn't appropriate in other contexts.

Gossip and rumors are other temptations of the tongue we all face. Teenagers, whose world revolves around social relationships, are especially vulnerable to idle talk about others. Gossips thrive on false intimacy and control, using words as weapons to intimidate. Parents shouldn't ignore or make allowances for gossipy behavior. Instead, show how rumors, judgments and verbal jabs inflict real hurt. Most importantly, set an example through your own words and conversations. It will be easier for teenagers to steer clear of profanity and gossip when you do the same. Read on for more helpful ideas.

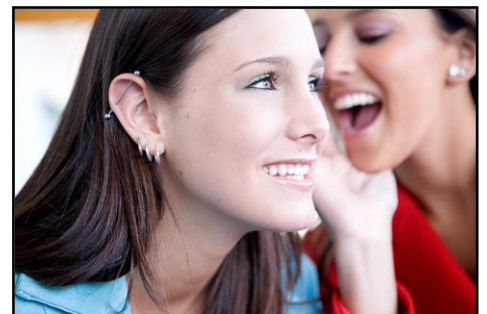
If parents set themselves up as verbal morality police, they'll reap frustration. So go after a deeper change by conveying the impact of language.

1. **Scripture takes a stand.** There isn't much gray area. God makes it clear that obscenity has no place coming out of the mouth of a Christ-follower. (See Ephesians 5:4.)
2. **Unconditional love is impossible with foul language.** Cursing does nothing to communicate grace.
3. **Obscenities are a fake alternative to real power (and real humor).** Challenge kids to true maturity. Any numskull can get a laugh using profanity to shock.
4. **Cursing undermines integrity.** A word that's acceptable only in limited company or location shouldn't be used at all.
5. **Foul language speaks poorly of you.** Consider your impression of kids who cuss. They usually seem rude and uneducated.
6. **Clean language is the ultimate rebellion.** The world notices and respects people who refrain from using profanity.



As profanity and gossip run rampant, that kind of language is losing its stigma among young people.

- In an AP-Ipsos poll, young people acknowledge swearing in conversations at least a few times per week. Eight percent of respondents say they use the "f-word" several times a day.
- When Gallup researchers asked 13- to 17-year-olds to rank a long list of "serious behaviors," kids considered "using profanity in public" to be the least serious offense of all.
- Researcher Robin Dunbar found that as much as 65% of people's everyday conversations could be defined as gossip. (apa.org)



Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Harness the power of speech to touch base with your teenagers about the use of words.

1. Why are words so powerful? What impressions do you form about people by listening to them talk?
2. What effects have gossip and swearing had on your relationships with friends? Do they affect how you choose friends? Why or why not?
3. What do your words say about your character? about your relationship with Jesus?
4. What sins of the tongue do you struggle with the most, and why? How can you avoid future temptations?



Focus on Prayer

PRAY THAT:

1. Your teenagers will realize the power of their words and harness that power for good, not evil.
2. Your teenagers will show love through their words—love for others by not spreading gossip, and love for God by not misusing his name.
3. Your family will speak kindly of each other, with words that affirm, respect, and include.
4. Other people will know that your family and your teenagers are Christians by what comes out of their mouths.

Verse of the Month

“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.” (Ephesians 4:29)

God not only instructs us to avoid coarse language and gossip; he also lets us know what should be pouring out of our mouths instead. Because our words reflect what’s in our hearts, they should be gracious, loving, and uplifting. People should notice our faith just by listening to us.

What’s Up With Kids

The small-group study guide *Guy Talk, Girl Talk* contains a chapter on gossip called “Can You Keep a Secret?” Use the insights from this excerpt to overcome a destructive habit.



Gossip isn’t only a modern-day problem. It was occurring in the early church, too. So many people have been hurt by gossip. But Scripture offers advice and hope for silencing this sin. For example, Proverbs 20:19 tells us how to choose friends, saying the quality of a friendship will be determined by how much a person talks. And Matthew 5:23-26 instructs us about the correct way to handle conflict. Instead of gossiping, we should go directly to the person and work out our problem. Here are three Bible-based tips for learning to keep a secret:

- 1. Realize the root of gossip is about your character.** The very act of gossip goes deeper than the surface; it describes the heart of the person sharing it. When we share secrets that friends have confided in us or talk about what we “heard,” it’s often because we know that attention will be diverted away from us. We need to examine our hearts before anyone will be able to keep a secret.
- 2. Understand that gossip always leads to pain.** Gossip never...EVER...leads to good, even when it comes in the form of a prayer request! Whether the pain is minor or deep, gossip hurts those it’s about and those who are spreading it.
- 3. Acknowledge that great friendships can come out of making a commitment to stay gossip-free.** Finding a friend you can trust is one of the best joys in life. We all need close friends, and close friendships can develop only in the safety of knowing that what you share in private will stay private.

MUSICSPOTLIGHT



Mainstream Artist

Background: This Grammy-winning musician, producer, and entrepreneur (born Shawn Carter) grew up in the Brooklyn projects. His father abandoned the family, and Jay-Z sold drugs for a while. After Jay-Z became interested in hip-hop, he worked his way up to become one of the industry's most powerful and influential figures.

Albums: *The Blueprint 3* (2009), *Reasonable Doubt* (1996), *The Black Album* (2003)

What Parents Should Know: Jay-Z, who's married to Beyoncé Knowles, is a philanthropist. But his lyrics are filled with anger and profanity, and he seems to revel in feuds with other rappers.

What Jay-Z Says: "At my age [39], I can't relate to a 15-year-old. I deal with mature and relevant topics for my age group; it has to all be based on true emotions. The more...mature we make hip-hop, the bigger the net you cast."

Discussion Questions: Are maturity and spiritual maturity tied to age? Why or why not? Does using "adult" language make someone more mature? Read 1 Samuel 17:17-51. How did David show maturity? How are you a leader in your family and among your peers? Read Matthew 4:18-20. What kind of "net" do you cast to reach people for Jesus?

Christian Artist

Background: In 1995, Crowder was frustrated that so many students at his Christian university weren't attending church. So he started his own and provided the worship music. The six-piece David Crowder Band now produces award-winning, top-selling worship songs.

Albums: *Church Music* (2009), *Remedy* (2007), *Can You Hear Us?* (2002)

What Parents Should Know: Crowder has also written two books—one about the church and one about worship. He has a strong heart for teenagers and college students. Crowder's latest album is an effort to redefine "church music."

What David Crowder Says: "I hope this album serves as a reminder of [church music's] richness and its broadness, and the tension that exists in using elements of cultural language to express our collective experience."

Discussion Questions: What comes to mind when you think of "church music"? Should worship songs be updated to include cultural language? Why or why not? Read Mark 2:23-3:6. Why was Jesus going against tradition here? How can we discern when change is really necessary? What are some church traditions that seem outdated or irrelevant to you?

FILMWATCH

Movie: 9 (releases Sept. 9, 2009, or 9/9/09)

Genre: Science-fiction action-adventure

Rating: PG-13 (for violence and scary images)

Synopsis: A homunculus (miniature, fully formed adult theorized to inhabit a cell) known as 9 is implanted with the life essence of its creator. He awakens to a post-apocalyptic world in which all humans are gone. Nine discovers eight others like him, hiding from the machines that seem to have caused the humans' demise. Nine argues that they must fight to survive.

Discussion Questions: If you woke up to find that you were alone on the planet, how would you feel? What would you say are the biggest threats to the human race? Read aloud Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. When, if ever, is fighting justified? How can we know whether it's time for war or time for peace? Explain.

