

Elder Ted E. Brewerton

Which of the Lord's Ten Commandments is probably broken the most frequently? I believe it would be taking the name of God in vain. (See Exodus 20:7.)

Profanity and swearing

Today I should like to treat the important subject of profanity and swearing.

According to *Modern Guide to Synonyms* (p. 469), *profanity, blasphemy, cursing, obscenity, swearing, and vulgarity* all refer to crude or foul language. Profanity and blasphemy usually refer to the irreverent use of the name of Deity.

Socrates said to a young man who was introduced to him, "Talk in order that I may see you" (*Communication of Ideas*, p. 72).

We reveal ourselves with our speech. Shakespeare urged in *King Lear*, "Mend your speech a little, lest it may mar your fortunes" (act 1, sc. 1, line 96). If we err, then remember the words of Confucius: "A man who has committed a mistake and doesn't correct it is committing another mistake" (*Vital Quotations*, sel. Emerson Roy West [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968], p. 228).

I desire to read to you many of the Lord's words given through his prophets over the years so we might understand and think as he does regarding improper words.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (Colossians 3:8).

Result of swearing

Have we ever asked ourselves what is the harm or end result of swear-

ing? Jeremiah expresses one thought about it in this way:

"For because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up" (Jeremiah 23:10).

President McKay speaks clearly regarding profane language: "No parent can consistently teach faith in Christ who profanes the name of Deity. Profanity is never heard in the well-ordered home. Swearing is a vice that bespeaks a low standard of breeding. Blasphemous exclamations drive out all spirit of reverence" (*Gospel Ideals* [Salt Lake City: *Improvement Era*, 1953], p. 420).

Judith Martin of the *Washington Post* writes the article "Miss Manners," which is syndicated in seventy-five other newspapers. She says regarding rudeness of speech:

"How does one deal with a rude person? Politely. I don't believe in answering rudeness with rudeness under any circumstances.

"How is that accomplished? With the stare or smile. I do not recommend the snappy comeback and putdown" (*People Magazine*, Aug. 1982, p. 38).

Politeness achieves much more than answering rudeness with rudeness. "Be patient in afflictions, *revile not against those that revile*" (D&C 31:9; italics added).

The Lord speaks with clarity on this subject through his prophets. President Joseph Fielding Smith states: "Profanity is filthiness. A person is known as much by his language as he is by the company he keeps. . . . Filthiness in any form is degrading and soul-destroying and should be avoided" (*Doctrines of Salvation* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft], 1:13).

If we are not most careful with our thoughts and speech, the words we use will use us. Language has its own ethics, and one who communicates truth is like a bright light in the

darkness. We must nurture language like that.

Words convey messages

How interesting it is to hear non-members of the Church express their feelings about bad language. I like very much the title and comments used by Bob Greene of the Field Newspaper Syndicate who speaks of swearing in these terms. The title he uses is "Hear Pollution."

"Obscenity, the open use of which used to be a mark of lower social strata, has somehow become acceptable in everyday conversation for everyday people.

"And yet, I am offended—not out of a sense of morality or of prudishness—but because foul language used casually in public comes close to the idea of a violation of privacy. I know that there are some around who feel assaulted by hearing it. I chose that word very carefully; certain language is an assault on the senses.

"Those who disagree are probably saying, 'after all, it's only words.' But words are vehicles; they convey messages. And to some people, the message of profanity is a message of ugliness and aggressiveness and a disrespect for civil behavior.

"Bathroom and sexual obscenities can now be heard in certain popular songs on the radio, and even some magazines and newspapers have begun to print language that would have been unthinkable five years ago. This practice is usually defended under the name of 'freedom.' But whose freedom is it? If the language of ugliness becomes so much a part of our society that it is impossible to escape no matter where one turns, then who is free and who isn't?"

These assaults on the senses and the messages they carry do not elevate—they pull people down.

Be incurable optimists

There is no place in this Church or in any of our families for pessimism or negativism. We should be incurable optimists.

Irrespective of the condition of a person, he who is a cynic, a pessimist, or negative has the least progress, happiness, and prosperity.

On the other hand, the Lord's way is that the optimist with faith, who is positive, elevating, and edifying, is the individual in or out of the Church who is the most progressive, happy, and prosperous. The Lord said:

"Therefore, strengthen your brethren in all your conversation, in all your prayers, in all your exhortations, and in all your doings" (D&C 108:7).

We should—
enlighten
edify
lift
motivate
elevate
build and uplift *in all of our conversations and doings.*

Now listen to the prophet's words as I read them, regarding encouraging, lifting, and edifying:

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

"Cease to contend one with another; cease to speak evil one of another.

"... Let your words tend to edifying one another" (D&C 136:23–24).

In the magazine *Success Unlimited*, Dec. 1982, Dwight Chapin draws to our attention a crucial aspect of creating only positive emotions:

"Every time a business in the service industry creates a negative emotion in the mind of a customer or client, that individual will share his dissatisfaction with an average of ten people before the emotion dissipates.

"The same research shows that a person who is impressed with a service will share that positive emotion with an

average of only three other people at most. Given this situation it's obvious why negative news travels faster and farther than positive news."

That gives us all the more reason to be uplifting and positive. Profane words *never* edify.

Really *listen* to scriptures

There is some value in this expression of an unknown author: "I shall return again, for I like myself more when I am with you."

Peter and the associates of the Savior were greater because of the Savior. He built them, lifted them, and treated them as they were to become.

The associates of Joseph Smith were greater because of Joseph Smith. He raised them and strengthened them. So it has been with all the Presidents of the Church—men are greater because of them.

Church leaders do *not* spend time pulling down people or other institutions. They proclaim their own truths and allow others to express themselves.

The Brethren of the First Presidency have upon their shoulders the heaviest burden and responsibilities of any mortals—yet they are never heavy-hearted; one who enters their offices always leaves a better person than when he entered.

The Lord's counsel is very clear: "Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech" (Isaiah 28:23).

Do we really *listen* as we read the scriptures? Do we really hear his voice, hearken, and do his will? There are many who *do* hear and follow him.

Here are some good examples of hearing and doing the Lord's counsel:

In 1974 there were only about eight or ten Brazilians serving missions. Then President Kimball asked for more missionaries. By mid-1979 Brazil had over five hundred full-time local missionaries serving, and Mexico had over seven hundred.

They heard his counsel, did they not?

When I was a mission president in Central America some years ago, two of the elders brought a Catholic Benedictine monk into my office.

He had noticed the *elevating nature* of the Church due to an in-depth study he and others had been commissioned to do of 243 different churches. This study had been ordered by the Catholic church with honorable intent; they wished to know the similarities of the 243 churches to see the possibilities of more union and brotherhood.

After researching for over five years, they came to at least these two conclusions:

1. There were only two churches that had high moral values; one was The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

2. There was only one church that followed all the prophetic utterances of old—in other words, accepted and followed all the Old and New Testament—that was the Mormons.

This monk accepted the challenge to study the Book of Mormon and prayed to have divine verification of its truthfulness. As a result, he accepted the Savior by being baptized into this, His Church.

He is now an active teacher in a high priests quorum in Central America.

He saw by investigation the edifying, lifting influence of the Church and hearkened unto the voice of the Lord.

Have mastery over tongue and words

A prominent man who had not visited a certain northern Utah high school for some two years attended a sports event and was appalled and offended by the escalation of profanity and crude language he heard.

Parents, do we wonder where our families or children are hearing obscene, crude, and foul words? Certainly *never* in our homes, for our

homes are next to the temple in sacredness. They are an uplifting refuge, in which we instruct our families as to what the Lord expects of us.

Self-control is an effective quality that lifts anyone above the crowd; a memory of a self-controlled person will always be pleasant. We should never lower our dignity by lowering our language. We don't ever repeat a profane comment made by someone else. In the text *Teaching—No Greater Call* we read this regarding self-mastery:

“The height of a man's success is gauged by his self-mastery; the depth of his failure by his self-abandonment. There is no other limitation in either direction. And this law is the expression of eternal justice.

“He who cannot establish a dominion over himself will have no dominion over others, he who masters himself shall be king” (as cited by

Spencer W. Kimball, *Improvement Era*, June 1966, p. 525).

Shouldn't we all have mastery over our tongues and words *all* of the time, and only elevate and edify?

We are in the presence of and being directed by living prophets. This is an absolute truth. The Lord himself directs this, his only true and living church, and I testify to this in the name of Jesus Christ, the Master, amen.

The Choir and congregation sang
“Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

President Benson

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Jacob de Jager, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. We shall then hear from Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Jacob de Jager

I am very pleased and happy and grateful for this opportunity to speak to the Saints in this historic place and to the Saints in other places where I have been assigned to conferences recently—to Hurricane, Utah, and Wendell, Idaho. I have many friends there. It's a real privilege for me to share my testimony this afternoon and give the thoughts that are in my heart.

From balloons to spaceships

Since the beginning of recorded history, man has marveled at the mysteries of the sky and has had a desire to escape the bonds of gravity.

Yet the first recorded balloon ascent was the unmanned flight launched by the Montgolfier brothers in Lyon, France, in the year 1783, which was followed shortly thereafter by the first

known manned flight from the Bois de Boulogne in Paris.

What is the situation in 1983, two hundred years later?

Man has been to the moon and has sent spaceships to distant planets. Close to three hundred satellites have been put into an earth orbit 22,300 miles above the equator to expand television and telex communications and also to study and forecast weather conditions. Yesterday, and last night during the general priesthood meeting, we were able to reach by satellite more than half a million priesthood holders at the same time.

Let's realize that all of these innovations have their origin, however, in ballooning, which gave mankind a first new perspective on his home planet as well as a physical and spiritual uplift in silent flight.