

STANDING UP FOR Clean Language

By Craig Redding

My wife works for a major airline and associates with a new crew of people every month and new passengers every few hours. One day a hardworking and friendly co-worker bombarded her with foul language. With a painful look on her face but a friendly tone in her voice, my wife said, “Are you aware of how much bad language you use? It’s making me want to stay away from you.”

Surprised but not offended, he said, “I didn’t realize how much I was swearing.” And he stopped. Several weeks later he thanked my wife and told her how much his own wife appreciated the change in his language usage.

Sometimes the only way to help others understand our concerns about their use of profanity is to tell them directly, especially when our work regularly brings us into contact with new people who are likely unaware of our standards. If that is the case, we should be respectful and not speak with an air of superiority. If we ask in a spirit of friendship, people are more likely to not take offense and to not use foul language around us, especially if they enjoy our friendship.

There are other ways, however, that we can help co-workers become aware of what we stand for and radiate a commitment to decency and purity. These ways are most

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effective when done in a manner that builds relationships on a foundation of mutual trust and respect.

We can personalize our workspace in tactful, non-offensive ways. Perhaps our computer screensaver or other materials in our work area could share positive, uplifting messages. Often a little humor goes a long way to influence a co-worker’s behavior. For example, many would likely smile—

and carefully consider their words—after seeing the Mormonad that features a young man perched next to a giant parrot under the words, “Foul language is for the birds.”¹

Although not every situation will be resolved as easily as my wife’s, we can find ways to explain our beliefs that let our colleagues see that we are not judging them. Our courage to address the situation increases as we seek guidance through prayer and as we deepen our concern for our fellow brothers and sisters. It is important to address things in a way that can strengthen relationships with our friends and co-workers as we stand for the gospel principle of clean language. ■

Adapted from “Questions and Answers,” Ensign, June 2001, 70.

The author lives in Michigan, USA.

NOTE

1. *New Era*, May 2011, 27.



KEEPING OUR LANGUAGE CLEAN

“The words we use can lift and inspire, or they can harm and demean. In the world today there is a profusion of profanity with which we seem to be surrounded at nearly every turn. It is difficult to avoid hearing the names of Deity being used casually and thoughtlessly. Coarse comments seem to have become a staple of television, movies, books, and music. Bandied about are slanderous remarks and angry rhetoric. Let us speak to others with love and respect, ever keeping our language clean and avoiding words or comments that would wound or offend. May we follow the example of the Savior, who spoke with tolerance and kindness throughout His ministry.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Be an Example and a Light,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 86.

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PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

"Preparation Brings Blessings," *Ensign*, May 2010, 65.