**FOR EVERY IDLE WORD (#3)**

***Euphemisms***

During World War 2 pilots in the Army Air Corps or the Navy would return from a mission and do a head count. Word would quickly spread through the barracks as a bunk would be empty and questions asked about Lt. Jones. His wingman in the next bunk would lift his head, with tears flowing down his cheeks, and sadly announce, “Rusty bought the farm in France today.” Saying he was killed is too blunt and adds to the pain, so you soften the blow with a euphemism. At funerals, depending on the situation, you will often hear phrases like: “The dearly departed” (from the preacher), “she passed away” (from a mate), “he kicked the bucket” (from a lifelong fishing buddy), “she had a negative patient outcome” (from the coroner’s report), “she just croaked” (from a craggy Aunt Matilda), “he wore cement shoes” (from his Mafia pals). Euphemisms take the edge off what everyone in the room knows is the real meaning. It’s the polite way to say what otherwise might be harsh or blunt.

We all use euphemisms. For instance, I teach the Bible in a “Correctional Facility.” Sounds better than saying those guys are in the slammer (i.e. jail). If you’ve just been fired others will downplay that by saying “the company was downsizing and had to let you go.” When at a restaurant I might hear a lady say, “I need to go powder my nose” (guys, if you don’t know what that means, don’t use that one). Overweight and obese people are just “big boned.” Short people are “vertically challenged.” C-grade students hear “his elevator doesn’t go to the top floor” (boy did I hear that one a lot!). Mom says to dad, “It’s time for Junior to hear about the birds and the bees.”

Euphemisms can be face-saving, or even funny, depending on the situation and how it’s used. But in our study in Matthew 12:36-37, we take euphemisms to another level. The Lord said,

*But I say to you that for 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.”*

Many years ago on the Phil Donahue show he had a guest who had been divorced seven times.  Donahue, trying to be funny, asked her, “So are you committing fornication with anyone right now?”  She looked confused and said, “Fornication? What’s fornication?” Donahue replied, “You know, like in the Bible.”  Then with a look of recognition she smiled and said, “Oh, I see what you’re saying now, but I don’t like to call it that.”  Well I don’t suppose she did, and for that matter, neither does any sinner.

Idle words can and will be recalled at Judgment and can damn us. These idle words we call euphemisms are neither face-saving or funny. Let me tell you what I’m talking about. While we often substitute words that mean the same thing, but which softens the impact in a good way (“passed away” for died, “let go” for fired), there are euphemisms which supposedly are used in conversations which our culture accepts, but which God does not. Just grab your dictionary and look up the following words:

Gosh. “alteration of God” (American Heritage Dictionary)  
Golly. “alteration of God” (AHD)  
Darn. “alteration of Damn” (AHD) “sometimes combined with gosh … God damn”  
Gee. “alteration of Jesus” (AHD) “euphemism for Jesus” (Random House Dictionary)  
Heck. “euphemistic alteration of hell” (RHD) “hell” (AHD)  
OMG. “abbreviation for O My God” (Wiktionary; Merriam Webster Dictionary)

Newer euphemisms are now surfacing big time into our culture’s vocabulary. More and more we see kids, even very young kids, exclaim things like “what the *freakin’* business is it of yours?!” I don’t have to translate that from Wiktionary for you to know the meaning of it. The F-bomb has become front and center the go-to word in almost all heated arguments these days. Many simply use the curse word out right to say what they mean. Others, wanting to be a little more sensitive, use frickin’ or friggin’ or other slang words that mean the same thing.

Sadly, very sadly, I see and hear parents using such words around their children when they are angry. They think that because they don’t use the vulgar expression for the curse word then they are justified by alternating euphemisms instead. The children will soon know exactly what dad or mom meant and will imitate their parent’s vocabulary. But, since the student will almost always take what they learn to the next level, you can be sure that the euphemism will be dropped by the child for the real thing. We are now seeing that played out in real time on the internet and social media. There are no filters used anymore. Euphemisms are no longer part of the next generations jargon. All pretense is abandoned. Language has degenerated into gutter talk. Parents are now reaping what they have sown.

If the substitute means the same thing as the curse word, then how can it be right to use the euphemism in the first place? All the Biblical principles that condemn cursing would necessarily infer that the euphemisms that replace them are sinful as well. If not, why not? Read again these God-ordained principles:

Col. 3:8; 4:6 “*But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.” “Let your speech be with grace, seasoned with salt*”

Eph. 4:29-31 *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers…  Let all … evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.*

When Jesus said “*for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*” (Matt. 12:34) He very likely was thinking of what He told Solomon to write 1,000 years earlier: “*Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you”* (Prov. 4:23-24). In other words, **filter your mouth with a pure heart. That will eliminate all curse words, and all their cousins that are related to them.**

**Speak well today. – Rick**