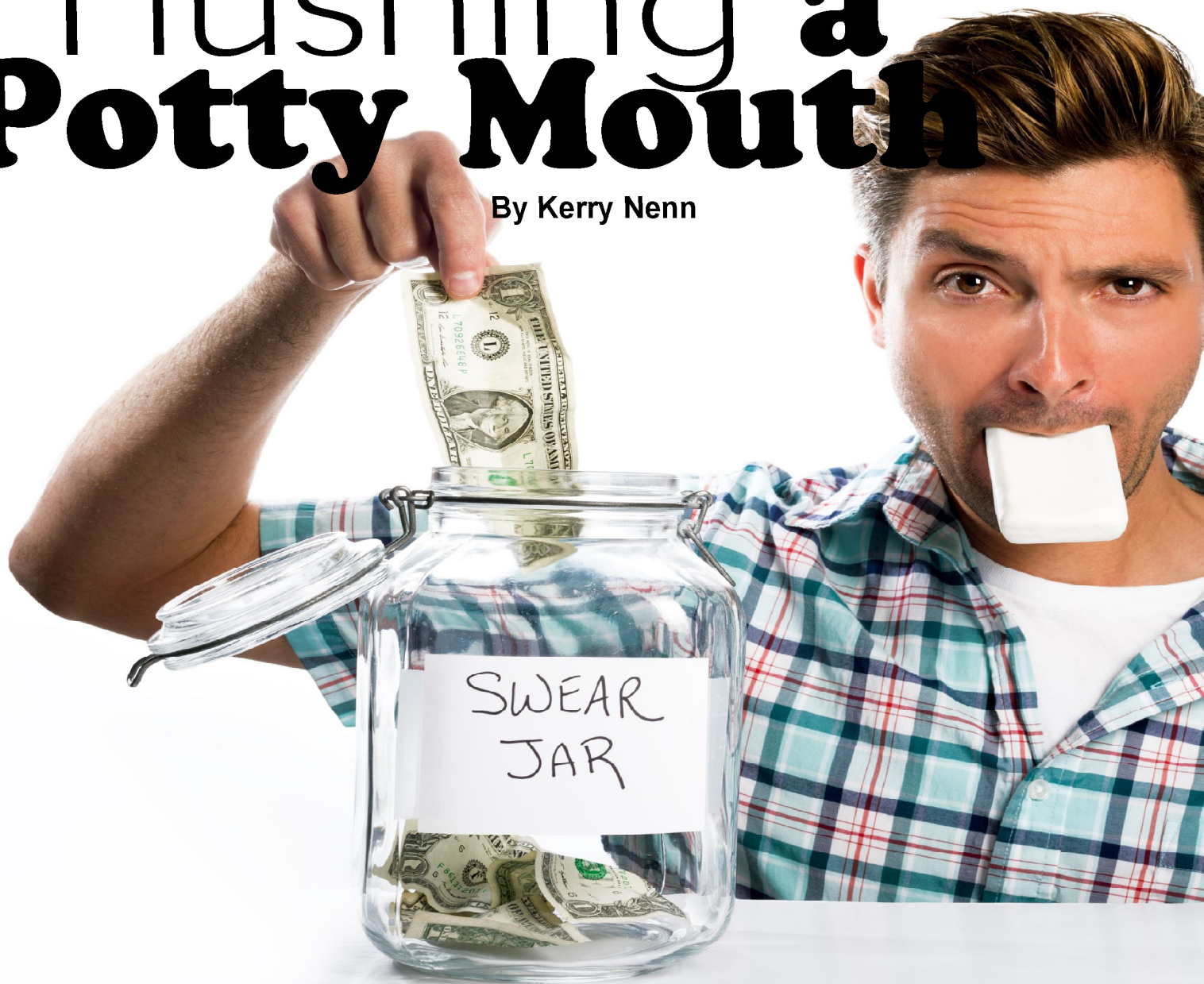


Flushing a Potty Mouth

By Kerry Nenn



Really? God doesn't care what we say? Then why does His word include dozens of scriptures concerning the tongue? We are told over and over again how important our speech is. Verse after verse emphasizes the importance of taming the tongue, guarding the tongue, and using it to praise God.

We are told in God's word that our speech:

•Reveals what's in our heart:

"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Matthew 12:34

•Will be judged: "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12:36-37

•Can save or destroy us: "Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin." Proverbs 13:3

•Can deceive us: "Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless." James 1:26

Surely, this does not mean we are free to spew forth whatever words we want. Scripture indicates just the opposite. We are to choose words carefully, being slow to speak (James 9:11) and quick to praise. (Psalm 34:1)



told should not be escaping our lips.

Again, when addressing the Colossians, Paul's letter tackles this issue. "But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth." Colossians 3:8

"Putting away" obscene talk sounds like a very different approach than "I can say what I want." Clearly, we are to refrain from this language as something that God does not want us to use.

"But everyone else is doing it!"

God help us if this is our standard. How many other evils occur every day in our world that shock and appall us? Are we going to accept all of them simply because they are prolific? The world around us is not to be our standard. We are to be in the world but not of it. We are to be light in a dark world, (Matthew 5:14) not part of the darkness.

How can people see Jesus in us if we are no different? We are called to be different than the world. That is why we are told in Romans 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." If the pattern of this world is to "swear all I want" our transformation should be a holy tongue, free of foul language.

"But we have freedom in Christ!"

Yes, we are forgiven. No, we should not be legalistic. How-

ever, simply because God loves us and accepts us how we are does not mean He has no parameters for us to follow. This excuse of continuing to swear because all is forgiven is dealt with in Romans 6. Paul asks in verse one, "What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!" He concludes in verse 12, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires."

If we allow ourselves to utter foul language, we are letting sin reign in our mouths. We are giving in to our evil desires to use language that is not uplifting and God-honoring.

What shall we say then?

Rather than conforming to the world, we can use our language as we are instructed to in scripture. Instead of swearing, we should praise, bless, encourage, and thank.

We can praise and honor Him in word and song to each other and to the Lord, as described in Ephesians 5:19, "speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord." We can use our breath to praise Him. "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." Psalm 150:6

This praise is how He desires us to use our words and His name, not cursing. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Exodus 20:7

Our language can be used to

In fact, Paul's letter to the Ephesians contains explicit instructions on this matter.

"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." Ephesians 4:29

Can one soundly argue that swearing builds others up or gives grace? No, it is this corrupting talk that we are clearly

bless, not curse. "From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so." James 3:10 Rather than put others down, or offend them with our words, our speech can encourage others in the Lord, just as the Thessalonians did, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Our words can be used for thanksgiving. We have so much to be thankful for in Christ. Why would we fill our words with offensive language instead of gratitude?

"Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thankgiving."

ing." Ephesians 5:4

Yes, it can be harder to praise God and thank Him rather than slip into bitter language and foul words. Yes, it may be hard to keep our speech free from cursing. Yes, it is hard to keep high standards with our tongue when others around us use words we should not. Yes, it is easy to accept society's standards instead of God's.

Yes, we may slip on occasion. Yes, God will still love us. Yes, we should continue to strive to follow God's commands for holy living. Yes, this means dismissing the lies society tells us and relying instead on God's word of truth. Yes, this can be difficult. No, Jesus never said following Him wouldn't be hard. Christian-

ity is simple, not easy. Then he said to them all:

"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." Luke 9:23

Author bio:

Kerry Nenn's passion for writing (since old enough to wield a pen) has led her to publications in magazines, newsletters, books, and websites. Her desire is to share what God teaches her, to help equip others with tools to work on the struggles and relationships in their own lives. As a freelance writer, she seeks challenging assignments that use her God-given talents to make a positive impact on her community.

