



How Are You Talking?

By Dr. Mark Taylor, Christian School and College/University Representative

We are in the fall sports season, and then we will be turning to winter sports. Those who know me are aware that my favorite sport is basketball. Several of our children played basketball in school. I enjoyed going to the games to watch them play. I played basketball in high school (for those of you who know me, it may be hard for you to imagine). I have played in the city's over-forty league in the past (that is difficult to imagine!). I have also coached basketball at the high school and college levels.

It has always been interesting to observe players, coaches, and fans, noting how they responded verbally to difficult situations. I am concerned these days that we are seeing corrupt language used by those who profess to be Christians. I am concerned that Christians are tolerating corrupt, foul, or abusive language.

Ephesians 4:29 (NLT) states: "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."

A Good Example

I read the former great UCLA coach John Wooden and Jay Carty's book, *Coach Wooden One-On-One*. In the book, Jay Carty defines the word "corrupt," which is used in the New King James Version of Ephesians 4:29 instead of foul or abusive. "Corrupt means rotten, decayed, foul, fetid, putrid, polluting and obscene." John Wooden is recognized as one the greatest basketball

coaches of all time. Coach Wooden did not curse and he did not permit his players to use profanity or to trash talk either. If Coach Wooden caught players using profanity or trash talk, they would be sent home from practice or required to sit on the bench during a game.*

Taking a Stand

When serving as a Christian school administrator, I had to take a stand with an opposing team's language and attitude. It was so bad that when I addressed it, one of their fans wanted to fight me. I had to ask him to leave the game. I contacted the school's administration and the pastor about the team's behavior, but I did not get a response. I made the decision not to schedule this school for athletic competition again. This made it necessary for our school to drop out of the conference due to conference requirements that we play each school in the conference.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about a growing disregard for the use of God's name. Too many Christians have become accepting of saying, "Oh, God" when it isn't being used as a reference to God in prayer. "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, ESV).

It is easy for us to get desensitized and imitate the world by using language and talk that is not glorifying to our Lord. What are you saying? What is coming out of your mouth at a game, at home, or wherever? Are your words good, helpful, and encouraging? The next time you watch an athletic event, observe the conversations around you. The next time you are in the school hallways during class change, listen to the conversations. You can be a model and leader of good and helpful speech.

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*Wooden, J. & Carty, J., (2003). *Coach Wooden One-on-One*. Ventura, California: Regal Books