

## Teaching and swearing

Contributed by Oshea Davis  
Saturday, 03 February 2007

This is a letter I addressed to John Piper and to Desiring God.

"I know that there was some interest of Piper using some colorful langue at 07 Passion breakout session, which Piper later responded and stated that it was a bit inappropriate.

I wanted to add a little insight to this whole idea of langue that might be of some use to Desiringgod and others.

- I do believe that the langue, which our Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles used, was very offensive at the time. I believe that even most scholars will agree that to call some one a "fool" in bible times had a greater height of offensiveness than it does today, for the most part. And the word which Paul used in Philippians was quite brass in that day in time. Even if you say that the Greek word has several meanings so that Paul could have been referring to the lesser offensive meaning; this still does not help the matter. For if I say "damn" in context to so say "cursed" it will still be offensive to most people, for the shear fact that it is used offensively in other contexts; the offensiveness still hangs on the word no matter how you use it and I believe the Apostle Paul and Christ knew this when the selected the words they said.

- But now comes the complexity or difficultly of this situation in our modern day. Most of the high offensive words used in the bible, especially the word "fool", is offensive but not vulgar. This is the main difficulty of our present day offensive words. They are offensive not because of the content or context but offensive merely because they are vulgar. Words such as: f\*\*k, as\*, sh\*t are offensive merely because they are rude and vulgar. The word for "fool" was offensive because it was calling a person an idiot. For Jesus to call, in the minds of the Jews, a child of Abraham, a respectable person and minister of the most High God, an idiot was offensive not because it was vulgar but because of the content of what was being said. A few hundred years ago the terms of virtue was the staple of society in early Americas and Europe. So much so that questioning a persons virtue or stripping them of it, was extremely offensive. The offensiveness was as great as in our present a day when we use the words of "you mother f\*\*\*er". But that is the problem. Because respect, the High value of being God's children and virtue are not as they once were, attacking them does not carry the same weight of offensiveness as they did in Jesus' time and or even a few hundred years ago.

- Therefore what are we to do if we want to shock people with offensive words so that they might grasp the importance of what is being said, as doubtably was the intentions of Christ and the Apostles? Sadly I have to say we are more limited in our choices than what has been in the past. It seems that the only words, which carry the intensity of offensiveness, which we might wish to use for this pacific intention, are words with extreme vulgar meanings. Which either walks to closely to the line drawn in Romans 14 or crosses the line in Ephesians 4 for example.

- Conclusion: I believe Piper for the most part was right in writing a statement correcting what he said. But this is not to say that it is always wrong to use what Piper said, but that this subject hangs on such a thin line that it is wise not to walk it, if all possible. Words such as "damn" or "damn it" as Piper spoke in a Romans Chapter 5 sermon then he says, "if logic doesn't serve love...then damn it", is appropriate to use. Damn, in and of itself does not have a vulgar or gross meaning and so if used with the right intentions, as our Lord did and Apostles with the same type of words, is acceptable I believe; if not then what shall we say of Christ our Lord?

I hope this helps:

Yours in Christ: Oshea Davis "