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## Swearing: Breaking the Addiction

By Elise L. Moore

During high school, and especially when I went to college, my parents were troubled by my frequent use of profanity. I wanted my acquaintances to know that I wasn't trying to act superior when I refused to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes or marijuana, or experiment with other drugs. I didn't want to appear *too* good.

I believed that profanity made me sound worldly and part of the group. After college, when I was working in offices where I was the only female colleague, swearing seemed an important verbal cue to emphasize that I wasn't just a naive young girl but was able to hold my own in a male-dominated atmosphere.

Imagine my shock when a new boss bluntly told me that my language was unprofessional and inappropriate; that he did not permit any of the men to swear and he was not going to make an exception for me! But the real surprise came when I tried to stop swearing.

Profanity was not a conscious use of language. Words popped out of their own accord when I was angry, startled, frustrated, threatened.

The healing of profanity was not easy. It required persistent effort and came only through spiritualization of thought.

I kept thinking of reasons why swearing was natural or necessary. Self-justification, willfulness, and pride wanted to swear. Lovingkindness and spiritual progress did not. As Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, observes, "The purification of sense and self is a proof of progress."<sup>1</sup>

The immediate need was to turn all my thoughts and desires toward God, divine Mind, the only genuine governor of my being. Only what is Godlike in our nature is worthy of being respected. It must be seen that we are not appreciated for earthy language but for the expression of love, purity, wisdom, joy – for whatever reflects our true selfhood as God's spiritual likeness.

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<sup>1</sup> *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 324

Giving habitual vent to anger or other negative emotions is not a necessary or a healthy outlet but a self-filled thought blind to the activity of Christ, to the divine influence exemplified in the life of Christ Jesus. He taught us in the Golden Rule to love our neighbor as ourselves, to bless our neighbor, not curse him. The desire to humble ourselves before God gentles our thoughts and thus our words. We learn to recognize ourselves and others as worthy of praise and blessing rather than cursing.

In some circles, swearing is an accepted part of everyday conversation. We may find ourselves routinely cursing our children, spouse, or co-workers or being cursed regularly. At one time, a place where I worked seemed overrun with profanity. I felt victimized by others' crude language. Later I found a hymn in the *Christian Science Hymnal* that provided for me the guidelines for responding to abusive language:

Speak gently, it is better far  
To rule by love than fear;  
Speak gently, let no harsh word mar  
The good we may do here.<sup>2</sup>

There is just no room for profanity in the vocabulary of a genuinely thoughtful person. The Bible admonishes, "Let your speech be always with grace."<sup>3</sup> Obedience to this mandate will help to lift this curse off mankind.

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<sup>2</sup> Hymnal, No. 315

<sup>3</sup> Colossians. 4:6