

A Bit More On Euphemisms

On the 5th of October (2008) I was thankful for the opportunity to publish an article dealing with Euphemisms. The thoughts presented therein sparked some honorable discussion. As a result of said discussions I thought it beneficial to all to write a line or two more on the matter. Let's recall that a euphemism is "*the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that offends or suggests something unpleasant*" (Webster).

First of all, I obviously should have noted that many euphemisms are used every day across this world that I do not believe endanger the speaker one whit. For example: think about the following statement: "*Tricia and I had Julius (one of our dachshunds) put down.*" What am I doing? I am substituting "put down" (an agreeable expression) for something that is pretty unpleasant – having a cute little dog *killed*. Sometimes people prefer to call someone *plain* rather than *ugly*. Another example may be a wife calling her husband *cuddly* rather than *fat*. Examples like these are, indeed, euphemistic uses of the tongue – but not the kind of euphemistic uses I was trying to expose on October 5th.

Also, I obviously should have noted what I have always understood and to this day hold to; i.e. that context has to be considered when one is speaking. A veterinarian may rightfully say the word "bitch" without sin being involved, while the angry husband need not refer to his wife that way. A man may rightfully call his donkey a dumb ass, but we need not refer to people who cannot do mathematics properly that way. You get the point.

The type of euphemisms I *did* have reference to on Oct. 5th were those in which it is generally (albeit not always) understood that a term is being substituted for either Christ, God, or Jesus, or wherein a term is spoken as simply a watered down curse word – one that truly equates to unwholesome speech; e.g. "*He is a real Mo' Fo*" or "*What's the BFD?*"

The primary context of the article I wrote had to do with some young Christians, here in Michigan, who came out of very dark places in the world (just like I did). They have tried to "tone down" their bad language by saying things like "*BS, God Dang, Freakin', Oh my Gosh, etc.*" I know of no mature Christians who give credence to such euphemistic phrases. They understand such is not proper.

Secondly, I want to say with regard to a few of the items I listed in that article (i.e. golly; Dog Gone; Dog Gone it) that I am not trying to bind my conscience on anyone else. Such would be sinful and wrong as any capable Bible student knows. I, personally, equate the examples just noted to offensive phrases, but after reflecting upon the issue, have concluded that there may be (and likely are) many sincere, pure-hearted people out there who really do not mean some phrases the way I hear them. Thus, with regard to some listed items I admit I went too far; albeit with pure motive

Lest someone out there find themselves in the situation I find myself in from time to time, a useful tool would be to ask the speaker what he means when a questionable (on behalf of the hearer) phrase is uttered. That way, honest avenues of discussion can be opened and if, indeed, the speaker is "politely cussing" he or she can be instructed to stop.

I stand resolved that we need to stand opposed to corrupt speech, but let's first make sure one is setting out to be corrupt.

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11 Oct 2008