

Links Players

WATCH YOUR TONGUE

But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips (Colossians 3:8).

My body starts to tense up as we approach the green. “Don’t do it,” I mutter as my partner parks the cart.

Was I rooting against an opponent’s ball, settling into gimme range? Or hoping to avoid the dreaded “Hammer!” from the other cart? Nope.

I have a new pet peeve, and it has supplanted the well-meaning but often annoying “nice shot” compliment from my unaware playing companions as my tee ball settles into a sand trap or dives into deep rough.

My latest grievance is the cart driver, who has no problem staying on the path while driving but can’t seem to park with all four tires on the pavement.

Sometimes I’ll ask, “Why do you pull off the cart path to park two tires on the course?” The usual response is, “I don’t know.” I don’t think it’s intentional; rather, they are unaware.

Could it be the same for language heard so often on the golf course? I can’t be sure my playing partners know God and Jesus, but it’s usually clear they know of them by using their names after poor shots.

We are told, “let your light shine before others” (Matthew 5:16). What is interesting to me is that in today’s look-at-me culture, I’m noticed more for what I don’t say than what I do say; my lack of cussing has been a door opener to multiple conversations on the course.

The 19th Hole is a different lair. Tales are told with colorful adjectives, but the “below the belt” barbs can leave scars lasting longer than the closing double bogey. What one thinks is “all in fun” can be a dagger masked in sarcasm to the recipient.

Trust me, I’m all about having fun, but now that I know the damage I’ve doled out with hurtful words, I’m trying to “be transformed by the renewing of my mind” (Romans 12:2). How’s that? By memorizing and trying to live out three verses of scripture.

The first is today’s featured verse. Nobody likes to be told what not to do, but like the trenches next to cart paths, the resulting damage is too obvious to ignore.

The second comes from Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus: “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving” (Ephesians 5:4). If the behavior in the 19th isn’t out of place, why are minors not allowed?

Finally, I try to filter my speech through Ephesians 4:29: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

Words matter. Let’s not contribute to the problem; let’s be part of the solution to reduce country club language pollution.

Prayer: Lord, let us honor you with our thoughts and our words. Help us to love others with a speech that benefits those who listen.

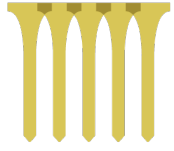
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