

Foul Words, Broken Vase

Josiah Wedgwood (1730 – 1795) was an English potter who founded the Wedgwood company and is credited with the industrialization of the manufacture of pottery.

A little-known story about his life reveals his integrity.

One day, Wedgwood was showing a nobleman through the factory. A boy who was an employee of the factory accompanied them. The nobleman was profane and vulgar.

At first, the boy was shocked by the nobleman's irreverence. Then he became fascinated by his coarse jokes and laughed heartily. Wedgwood was distressed at what he was hearing and seeing in the youngster.

At the conclusion of the tour, Wedgwood showed the nobleman a vase of unique design. The nobleman was charmed with its exquisite shape and rare beauty. As he reached for it, Wedgwood purposely let the vase fall to the floor.



The nobleman uttered an angry oath! "I wanted that vase for my collection," he said, "and you have ruined it by your carelessness."

Wedgwood answered, "Sir, there are other ruined things more precious than a vase, however valuable, which can never be restored. You can never give back to that boy, who has just left us, the reverence for sacred things which his parents have tried to teach him for years! You have undone their labor in less than half an hour."

Wedgwood is right. *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines profanity as "an offensive word" or "offensive language." It is also called bad language, coarse language, foul language, vulgar language, cursing or using expletives.

Its use is considered to be strongly impolite, rude or offensive "and can show a debasement of someone or something, or show intense emotion," according to *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia. "In the older, more literal sense, the term profanity refers to offensive words or religious words used in a way that shows the user does not respect God or holy things, or behavior showing similar things."

Use of profanity, then, becomes a measure of a person's character.

The Bible clearly speaks against the use of profanity or even idle words. Jesus said this: *I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give an account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned* (Matthew 12:36-37 ESV).