

Not at Home, Not Anywhere

By David Dickson
Church Magazines
(Based on a true story)



What was the
big deal?

ILLUSTRATION BY KATIE PAYNE

"I will not swear or use crude words" (My Gospel Standards).

Carter walked into the kitchen with his friend Devin and opened the fridge. He pulled out two sodas and looked around. Where was Mom? Normally she was home when he got back from school. But her car wasn't in the garage.

He handed a soda to Devin.

"Thanks," Devin said. "I'm so mad about the science project. Only one week to finish the whole thing!"

Carter took a sip. "I know! It's not fair!" The project their teacher had assigned that afternoon was going to take forever.

Devin said, "Now we probably can't go on our bike ride on Saturday."

Suddenly a swear word jumped out of Carter's mouth. He hadn't even thought to say it.

Devin looked surprised, but not upset. They'd both started swearing at school during recess a few weeks ago. But they'd never used bad words in their homes before.

"My thoughts exactly," Devin said. Then he added a swear word of his own. They laughed.

Carter glanced around the empty kitchen. Mom wasn't home, and Dad was still at work.

It felt . . . kind of exciting to say that word in his own kitchen. But he also felt uneasy for some reason.

"It's messed up," Devin said. "He should've given us a month."

"Totally," Carter said. He took another drink of his soda. He drank too quickly and the carbonation burned down his throat. "And you know what else?"

This time Carter strung together a sentence with three swear words in it that made Devin laugh so hard he almost spilled his soda. Carter laughed with him.

"WHAT!?"

Carter felt like a bolt of lightning cut through him as he heard Mom's voice. He turned and saw her standing in the doorway to the garage. He hadn't heard the door open.

Mom's face showed how much his words had hurt her. Carter felt awful inside. He wanted to crawl inside a deep, deep hole.

"Uh, I gotta go." Devin grabbed his backpack and hurried out the front door.

"Carter," Mom finally said. She wasn't yelling. He almost wished she were—that would be better than the disappointment in her voice. "We'll talk about this later."

She set her bags on the table and walked upstairs. Carter cringed. She was too upset to talk.

Carter finished his soda quickly and went out to the backyard. He plopped down on a lawn chair.

A few weeks ago he had decided it wasn't that big a deal to use bad words once in a while—as long as he didn't say them at home or at church. But only a few minutes ago that swear word had popped out before he'd even thought about it.

Carter already knew what he wanted to say to Mom. He wanted to tell her he was sorry and ask for her forgiveness.

Swearing wasn't worth it, Carter decided. Not at home, and not at school. Not if it made him feel like this. Not if it upset Mom that way.

He prayed to Heavenly Father and asked for forgiveness. Carter promised right then and there. He was done swearing. Not ever again.

He felt a little tug of peace in his heart as soon as he made that choice. That was the Holy Ghost, he realized, telling him he was making the right decision. ♦



One time I auditioned for a play. The director said, "The boy in this show swears. Do any of you have a problem with swearing?" I didn't want to say those words. I was nervous, but I raised my hand. I didn't get the part, but I was glad I stood up for what I believed.

Alex H., age 8, Utah, USA