

Do Not Change the Words of the Gospel

By Michael M. Kerns

Introduction: Words Matter

America has caught up with George Orwell. In his book *1984*, Orwell creates “Newspeak,” the propagandistic language of the totalitarian region of Oceania that Big Brother “designed to diminish the range of thought.” [11ceranglais.fr/] Orwell warned us about our words. “If thoughts can corrupt language, language can also corrupt thoughts.” [socratic-method.com] Never have we witnessed such intentional and dangerous corruption of our language from the Progressives (Marxists?), who intend to mold America into their soulless self-image. We list some of these corruptions to warn us that many of these newly manufactured words promote a philosophy that opposes God and confuses or manipulates the uniformed. In contrast, we want to ensure an uncorrupted Gospel and uncorrupted approach in our evangelism of the lost. Here is a sampling of these corruptions in the vocabulary of the political left.

New Words Promote Progressive Political Agendas

Justice-impacted person replaces criminal. [howtojustice.org] *Newcomers* replaces migrants that displaced illegal aliens. *Unhoused* replaces homeless. *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion* replaces equal opportunity “as a philosophy and a core business imperative.” [nbc.com] *Food Desert* replaces a lack of grocery stores nearby because of “Having or characterized by limited or uncertain access to adequate food.” [medicalnewstoday.com] Similarly, *economic disadvantaged* replaces poor.

Folks replaces “people” as an inclusive and gender-neutral term. [newdiscourses.com] *Marginalized* characterizes people “who face social, economic, and political disadvantages due to factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or economic status.” [diversity.social] *Privilege* now refers to those who have power over others such as white supremacists. [urbandictionary.com] *Safe place* identifies a room or area designated as a place where those of privilege cannot come. [publicautonomy.org] *Compound* refers to the house of a gun-owning conservative. [talglobal.com]

Words Migrate In Meaning

The change to a recent and popular addition to our English language of *woke* illustrates that. The word *woke*, that gained popularity around 2006, defined it as “conscious of social injustice.” [cnn.com/2022/07/07] Later, instead of inequality, it migrated to also mean anything concerning the politically progressive movement in America.

In my high school, many students worked during prom week to help the local florist, who lived with a man in a homosexual relationship. The students knew that and privately among themselves called him “queer,” a 1960’s pejorative term for a homosexual. The community of the sexually-identifying persons (LGBTQIA+) have now adopted this formerly demeaning word as a “self-affirming umbrella term” for members of their community. [urbandictionary.com] According to the progressives, “...don’t call someone ‘queer’ unless you know they’re cool with it. The best thing to do is ask what labels people prefer,” [plannedparenthood.org] but probably not inquire about their *sexual preference or orientation* unless they broach the subject.

Personal pronouns, as a part of speech, refer to a previously mentioned person without saying their name, such as “he” or “she.” *Gender-neutral pronouns* “refer to a person without specifying that person’s gender.” [Indeed.com] The following samples are some of these new gender-neutral pronouns: *they/them, xe/xem, ze/zim, sie/hir*. Starbucks baristas now list their pronouns on their name tag.

Virtue used to mean “moral excellence.” [merriam-webster.com] Now, to signal one’s virtue means “the practice of conspicuously displaying one’s awareness of and attentiveness to political issues, matters of social and racial justice” with such inane expressions as: “Love is love” and “Believe the science.” [snopes.com] *Signaling* supposedly suggests the moral superiority or high intellect of the bearer of the signal.

New Words Legitimize Immoral Behavior

Sexual orientation or sexual preference replaces heterosexual attraction. *Reproductive rights* replace “right to abortion.” *Gay* replaces homosexual or lesbian. *Cisgender* matches birth assignment with personal gender. *Birth assignment* replaces natal or birth sex. “Sex is a label—male or female—that you’re assigned by a doctor at birth based on...chromosomes you have. It goes on your birth certificate.” [plannedparenthood.com] *Gender*, a well-known grammatical term, “is solely about how you identify yourself, independent of your physical body.” [healthline.com]

Non-binary “means that you do not identify (solely or at all) with the idea of being a man or a woman.” [Health.clevelandclinic.org] It can also “refer to a single person whose gender is intentionally not revealed.” [merriam-webster.com] In contrast, *bisexual* labels a person who has attraction to either sex, whether the other person identifies as male or female.

The prefix *trans* pretty much leads the way in the news right now for those who choose to be identified by their sex. The transman entered the world as a female, or as some now say, “assigned” a female at birth. The transwoman came into the world as a male or “assigned” a male at birth. Tranny has replaced transman or transwoman.

Do not confuse a *trans* person with an *intersex* person. An intersex person has “chromosomes or reproductive organs that don’t fit into a male/female sex binary.” [my.clevelandclinic.org] *Intersex* has replaced the term *hermaphrodite*, “an outdated term implying that a person is both fully male and fully female.” [my.clevelandclinic.org] Intersex persons may not need surgery or counseling to determine their lifelong sex. “Most advocacy groups estimate that 1.7% percent of people are born intersex—the equivalent of about 5.6 million U.S. residents.” [apnews]

Trans persons “feel” like that they cannot match their gender with their sex, and we seem to have a lot of those trans people today. Bruce Jenner, 1976 Olympic gold medal decathlete, now goes as Caitlyn Marie Jenner. Bailey Anne Kennedy took the crown as Miss Maryland USA 2024 as the first Asian and transgender and sees herself as a leader for other sexually identifying people. “The work that I will do for the remainder of my life is to make sure that children who feel like me will never have to worry about the consequences of being who they are by simply being myself and being a positive contribution to society.” [nbnews.com]

Despite the constant present obsession on traditional news outlets about trans persons, “current data shows that the number of people who identify as transgender is very low: between 0.5% and 1.6% of American adults... Yet when asked, people overestimate the number of trans people, with one survey showing the public thinks as many as 1 in 5 people—or 21% of the population—is transgender.” [Politifact.com] People think that 73 million Americans consider themselves as trans, when the number comes out more like 3 million.

Changing Words Reflect Changed Thinking

Those who author or use these words do not intend to give them up because giving them up would mean giving up their identity or changing their feelings. Americans did not think this way in its origin for hundreds of years. The framers of the Constitution used their minds, not their emotions, in working hard to create a long-lasting document that reflected properly the real world: “We hold these truths to be self-evident...” They acted as men of reason who recognized an authority beyond themselves. The corruption of our language reflects the opposite of the framers: feelings rule over reason and a transcendent authority has no place in morality.

Men have always had these ideas, but they largely lived within academia and were not affective in everyday living until now. Friedrich Nietzsche, proponent of “God is Dead,” saw the self as the origin of morality as “human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves.” [*The Gay Science*, 1887, Friedrich Nietzsche, 266] The Catholic philosopher MacIntyre clarified that kind of thinking “...if there is nothing to morality but expressions of will, my morality can only be what my will creates.” [*After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre, 107] Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), another social influencer, said it this way, “...the true self is not the rational self. We are not our intellect, our mind, but our feelings. The ground of our being is the sentiment of existence, which is a sentiment, a feeling: ‘to exist, for us, is to feel.’” [Arthur Melzer, “Rousseau and the Modern Cult of Sincerity,” *The Harvard Review of Philosophy*, 5, no. 1 (1995):4–21]

Barack Obama pushed, at the national level, the idea of emotion and self-will, when he boldly proclaimed, “Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.” [February 8, 2008, speech]

When Progressives say that they “think,” they really mean that they “feel.” Self-centered and subjective feelings fuel these new words, as illustrated with statements like: “I feel like a woman.” Or “I feel like a man.” Anyone who opposes these expressed feelings will take the label of “phobic” such as homophobic (hating homosexuals) or transphobic (hating trans persons).

Subjective taste, not objective truth, governs the origin of these new words that promote the designs of the Progressive. The label of “Emotivism” fits their designs. An emotivist or expressivist lives by personal preferences that assume “the status of universal moral imperatives.” [*After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre, 107] The corruption of the language reflects the moral imperatives of the Progressive.

The Gospel Comes In the Undeniable Words of Truth

This corruption of long-standing American ideas and ideals ought not to surprise us, as mature Christians, because we know that eventually all nations receive God’s judgment and fail. The surprise comes in the speed at which these ideas have permeated the culture through the corruption of the language at all levels. In this unavoidable and most likely unstoppable corruption, how does this affect the role of the saints? Will saints suffer persecution some day for not using these new words as the culture continues to turn away from God and toward a pagan design?

Progressives change words to justify their changed morality. The Gospel cannot change, as it comes not from us but to us and for us by the Spirit of God.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

However, the means of its delivery may vary. Christians throughout the centuries have created a variety of means to deliver that message: crusades, revivals, tracts, and media. Can that delivery corrupt the words of the Gospel? When does the delivery system corrupt the words of the message or suggest that the message has changed?

As an example, let's look at a recent and prominent delivery system of the Gospel: "He Gets Us!" The campaign began with two commercials during the 2023 Super Bowl LVII that cost \$20 million. "Bill McKendry, founder of Haven, the marketing, messaging, and branding firm behind the campaign, explained its purpose to *Christianity Today*: 'Is the goal that people become Christians? Obviously.'" [texasobserver.org]

The website tells a different story. Unlike the broadsides that Jews for Jesus passes out in cities to arouse interest to follow up to hear the Gospel, "He Gets Us" spends millions on their media broadsides to go to their website for their "sharing the life and love of Jesus in thought-provoking new ways." [hegetsus.org] Well-produced and creative videos about grief, suicide, love of your neighbor, the love of Jesus for sexually identifying people take center stage on the site.

Their site presents a "place where all of us are invited to rediscover the love story of Jesus—Christians, non-Christians, and everybody in between." [hegetsus.org] They welcome all and do not want to offend any. "The LGBTQ+ community, like all people, is invited to explore the story of Jesus and consider his example of unconditional love, grace, and forgiveness of others. Jesus loves gay people and Jesus loves trans people." [hegetsus.org]

The marketing chief wants everyone to become a Christian. How does he define that? According to the "He Gets Us!" website, "you consider the story of a man who created a radical love movement that continues to impact the world thousands of years later.... Whether you consider yourself a Christian, a believer in another faith, a spiritual explorer, or not religious or spiritual in any way, we invite you to hear about Jesus and be inspired by his example." [hegetsus.org]

We must assume that "He Gets Us!" does not intend to be a site for the Gospel because, if it does intend to be that site, then it has corrupted the words of the Gospel. It obviously wants the marginalized people to know the story of Jesus and to practice His love as He did. But how can you be like Jesus and love like Jesus, if you have not placed your faith in Jesus?

Scripture encourages good deeds toward others, but that action does not constitute the Gospel, although it could open the door for the Gospel.

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:10)

However, the website "He Gets Us!" does not contain these Gospel words.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

God has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His Word. "The gospel is inherently a *verbal* thing, and preaching the gospel is inherently a *verbal* behavior. If the gospel is to be preached at all, it must be put into words." [Word versus Deed: Resetting the Scales to a Biblical Balance, Duane Litfin, 19]

Conclusion: Stick to the Words of the Gospel

Over forty years ago, I worked for an evangelistic organization where Christians brought their non-Christian acquaintances as guests into a home for an evening of snacks, dessert, and discussion about life and God. I revised the training booklet for the Christian participants and presented it to a small committee of the organization. A fellow member objected to my choice of the term “lost” or “non-Christian” to describe the guests and suggested the term “pre-Christian.” That exchange generated much discussion—we did not adopt his idea.

As near as possible, especially among us saints, we ought to stick to the Biblical words of our Gospel. We do live in this world, and although “*we are not of this world*” (John 17:16), we recognize that the Progressives have taken the high ground in the so-called culture wars. They push their emotionally-generated words to proclaim their worldview. “...*but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling to Jews and folly to Gentiles*” (1 Corinthians 1:23).

My longtime acquaintance and former college roommate emphatically said to me after he heard the Gospel again from me, “I don’t want your Gospel because my church doesn’t accept gays and my son is gay.” He chose the emotional love of his son over the undying love of Christ. I chose not to use the word “homosexual” with him because that public correction gets in the way of the Gospel message. He must recognize first that he stands condemned before God, trust in Christ, and then learn to speak the Biblical words.

Progressives continue to devour this Judeo-Christian culture as they creatively cover their evil intentions and godless behavior through corrupting the language. Churches slip into corruption of the faith when they define the Gospel as deeds, especially to change the society. Others may want to soften the Gospel, as they define a lost person as a “pre-Christian.” A new generation of “church planters” no longer have “church” on their public marquees but names like Mosaic, Redemption, Reinvention, Mission, Renewal, New Direction, and Life. This supposedly makes their congregations more inviting, but do those names fit a life-changing message that calls the sinner to admit his condemnation before God?

Those who know God through trust in the Lord Jesus must not abandon the Gospel by which they were saved. When people feel and make decisions by their feelings without regard to truth, they could oppose God and even lead others astray in their self-deception.

Our gospel does not rest on what we feel or what we think. Unlike those who corrupt the language to normalize their sinful lifestyle and destroy the foundations of our society by denying differences between male and female, our Gospel rests upon the transcendent One who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our God-authored message lies beyond the emotions in its authority, as it liberates the whole person, not just a person’s confusion about sex, gender, or life itself.