**Truth Currents** **10-16-20**

Today on Truth Currents I want to talk to you about a brand-new weapon in the culture wars. It’s the dictionary. Who knew?

When I was a kid, the dictionary was the final arbiter on all things vocabulary. This was what decided whether Scrabble words passed muster. It was what we used when we learned how to do cross-word puzzles. When I was in school and you asked a teacher how to spell a word, inevitably she said, “Go look it up.” When I was a PHD student, the last thing I did before I turned in my doctoral dissertation was I stood for almost an hour in front of the Oxford Unbridged Dictionary and I checked the spelling and the hyphenation on all the big words in a 300-page dissertation. The dictionary was always the one thing you could trust. It stayed the same.

Well, what we’ve learned in recent days is that the language is changing. It’s not changing slow and gradually like it normally does. We know that our English today is very different from say King James English in the 17th Century. We know that language evolves over time with different usages.

But what we’re seeing today is the dictionary is actually becoming a weapon in the culture wars. And the meanings of words are changing with light speed. Just this week for example, last Tuesday in the Supreme Court confirmation hearings of Amy Coney Barrett, she made a statement in answer to a question about Obergefell versus Hodges. This was a Supreme court decision of a few years ago that legalized same-gender marriage. She was asked a question about that. And in her answer, she used the phrase “sexual preference.” Well, the esteemed Democrat Senator from Hawaii, chided Mrs. Barrett for using for what she said was an offensive term. “Sexual preference.”

What happened is, she says that sexual preference is an insult to the LGBTQ community, because it implies that who you are attracted to or who you are choose to romance is somehow based on a preference, a choice rather than some sort of ingrained genetic definition of who you are. Not only was this brilliant Supreme Court nominee chided by a Senator of lesser intelligence, what we saw was social media exploded the same day because they had a new target. The phrase “sexual preference” was now blacklisted. It was phrase that was an insult. It’s interesting that Joe Biden himself and Ruth Bader Ginsburg of all people, in recent months have used the phrase “sexual preference.” But as of this week it’s now a banned term. In fact, as social media exploded with outrage over her use of this idea that sexual choice is in fact a choice, the Merriam Webster’s Dictionary by midnight the same day, had changed the definition of the word “preference.” They included the phrase “sexual preference” as an objectional use of the term.

I’ve never seen language change so rapidly. We know that political correctness has wreaked havoc with our language in recent decades. We know that the 1890’s were referred to as the “Gay 90’s.” But the word gay has a very different meaning today than it used to. I looked up some other words to find out what it is that the thought police don’t want me to say. What I found out is that political correctness is not anything about being polite. It’s not about being concerned for the feelings of others. Political correctness is a weapon. It’s a tool used by the people from the planet “Grievance” to control the way the rest of us communicate.

Let me give you some examples. We are now told that “illegal alien” is a word we can’t use. We can’t use the phrase “Third World.” We can’t even use the word “Thug” because it might hurt someone’s feelings. Not to mention word like “Lame”, or “Man-up”, or “Are you deaf?” These are all now off the table because there is some group somewhere that might be offended. In fact, I found that the University of Michigan a few years ago spent $16,000 advising students that they cannot say, “I want to die,” because it might be offensive to people who are actually suicidal. They are also told not to use phrases such as “that test raped me” because there are people who have actually been raped. Although I suspect not by a Calculus exam.

We’re told that other phrases like, “basket case” can’t be used. A basket case was a word that comes from World War 1 that describes soldiers that were killed in battle and their bodies were damaged to the point that they would be shipped home in baskets. A basket case was somebody who’s just in pieces. But we’re told now that we can’t use the phrase “basket case” because it might conjure up images of war for World War 1 veterans. Do you even know anybody that fought in World War 1, 99 years ago? And yet, the language we’re told is offensive.

We can’t say things like “long time no see,” because that’s offensive to way Native Americans talk. We can’t even say, “no can do,” because that’s a mockery apparently of Chinese immigrants from the 19th Century. I don’t even know any Chinese immigrants from the 19th Century.

What I do know is that all of this tinkering with the language reminds me of two dystopian novels that I read years ago thinking that they were just fiction, never realizing that in my lifetime they would come true. The first one is **1984** by George Orwell. The Ministry of Truth in that book is constantly revising the language changing the definitions of words so that whatever propaganda is being put out by the state party, the words always agree and reinforce the propaganda.

**Fahrenheit 451** was a book by Ray Bradbury that had about it a culture where books had been banned. They were outlawed. Fahrenheit 451 was the temperature at which paper burned. And so, firemen were engaged in the task of confiscating books whenever they were found. As cash of books would be discovered and firemen would be dispatched and they would pile up the books they would burn them up with flamethrowers.

Those were just images of a world that couldn’t possibly happen. Could it? And yet, what we see today is the language now **literally** changes overnight to bolster the agenda, the propaganda of our politically correct masters.

Why am I making a big deal about this? It’s just words.

Well, let me tell you about words. In **Genesis 1:3** it says, “*Then God said, “Let there be light.””*  We’re told in **John 1:1**, that “*in the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God. And the Word was God*.” It’s interesting because words are the way God made us able to understand who He is. He reveals Himself to us in words. The Bible is a collection of words. In fact, those words matter so much that we have over one hundred different names of God recorded in the Scriptures. It takes all of those words, a composite of all of those different meanings to capture individual aspects of who God is. No single word captures it all. We understand what we know about God, about the human condition, about sin, about creation. We understand reality through words.

The culture wars want to change the definitions of the words because they want control the way we view reality.

In **2 Timothy 3:16** we’re told that all scripture is “*inspired by God*.” In other words, the words that are given to us in scripture are not just randomly assembled. They are divinely inspired. The writers received inspiration and put the words on the page that said what God needed us to understand. That’s why seminary students go to seminary and they take Greek, Biblical Greek. They take Hebrew. They learn the original languages in which scripture was written because the words matter. We learn context, syntax, historical setting. We learn the grammatical structure. All of that is not just an exercise in academia. It matters because the words communicate something to us.

By taking away even simple phrases like “sexual preference” they’re trying to argue that there are certain realities that we cannot even speak about because they are unassailable. They are beyond examination. We have to push back against this. We have to refuse to have the arguments of the culture war, the debates that we have with secularists in our day and time, we have to refuse to allow those arguments to be boxed in, to be shaped into traps by the definitions that are assigned to particular words.

This happened to Jesus all the time. If you want a couple of examples you can look in **Matthew 22** and it tell us that the Pharisees came to Jesus and asked Him a question about taxes. And it says specifically that they meant to “***trap Him*** *by His words*.” “*Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?*” And Jesus, with a brilliant answer, takes a coin and shows them the image of Caesar and says, “*whatever belongs to Caesar, give to Caesar. But remember, whatever belongs to God, give only to God*.”

In **John 8** the same thing happens. They come to Jesus with a woman who has been caught in the act of adultery. And they challenge Jesus on what they should do with this woman according to the Law. And it says in the text that “*they were trying to trap Him by His answer*.” They meant to use words as a trap.

The politically correct thought police in our generation, the secularists of our culture, they mean to use words as a trap. We must not allow that. Be careful that you don’t absorb the predominant vocabulary of contemporary secularists. Be careful that you don’t just take the changed definitions and allow those to go without any challenge or pushback from us because they are attempting to create verbal traps where our ability to debate the issues of the day are limited by the words that we have available to use in the conversation.

If certain words are “verboten,” the German word for forbidden. In fact, maybe I shouldn’t use a German word because somebody’s going to associate that with Nazis and that’s going to be offensive. If there are words we cannot use, or if there are words whose definitions are changed because of an ideological agenda, we are going to be sorely limited in the way in which we can engage the culture in debate. We can’t let that happen.

The primary source of this is the Word of God. And it’s the Word of God ultimately that is the target of the politically correct police. They want words like “homosexual” to mean different things than what it actually means. They want words like “sin” and “repentance” and “salvation,” they want those words to have a different meaning. They want those words to be voided of the wealth of Biblical content that informs the language of scripture. They would steal the meaning of words so that they can steal the conclusions that we draw from scripture.

What’s the answer? The answer is for you and I to know the words of God recorded in the Word of God. We must understand the meanings of the words that we use so that when they attempt to change those meanings, we recognize the trap and like Jesus, we have an answer sufficient to the challenge.

**Do not** let the culture steal the language of debate. **Know** the Word of God.

This is Truth Currents.