

How This Demoniac ‘Wisdom’ Is Destroying the Nation Before Our Eyes

Let’s Take a Closer Look at Our Condition

Below, you’ll find a series of observations gleaned over the past month alone from various communication outlets to which many Americans listen daily. The phrases reflect verbal assaults that commentators say many believe are unraveling our culture.

Putting them together in a list like this has really sobered me, especially when, as you’ll see in a moment, I drew on the descriptions to help me look closer at Christians in America.

Mind you, these direct quotes are about our words:

- We’ve become addicted to outrage.
- Our smashmouth language peddles hatred.
- There is a lot of fear-mongering going on.
- A tone of incivility has overtaken us.
- Our words are poisoning our public life.
- Toxic words are leading to toxic behaviors.
- Opponents are now addressed as enemies.
- By our words, we are dehumanizing one another.
- In our conversations, we vilify those we consider “the other.”
- Instead of debating, we are demonizing one another.
- Our words exacerbate the growing “tribalization” of our society.

Unfortunately, as we’ve witnessed in our recent political contests, such vitriol carries consequences. One set of hatreds fans other expressions of hatred, as the gap between speech and the violent acting out of hatred closes—until we’re

confronted with pipe bombs mailed to ideological opponents, or massacres of worshippers motivated by loathing and resentment of them, or the murders of people of one race because the killer dwells in a cesspool of racism.

Yes, words have consequences. Scripture tells us in Proverbs 15:4: “The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.” And in Proverbs 18:21a, we read, “The tongue has the power of life and death.”

That is why America faces a true existential threat from the flood of hateful language that is overtaking so much of our public discourse—bringing “death” to relationships with neighbors, distorting our passions, warping our well-being and security and self-respect—and inflaming our politics.

The Bible Reveals the Fountainhead of Hateful Words

Our words don’t materialize out of thin air. There’s a fountainhead. The three sources of our brawling taught in Scripture are: 1) the “wisdom” from below, 2) the flesh and 3) the human heart. Here are three key passages:

The ‘Wisdom’ From Below vs. Wisdom From Above: Thinking that leaves God out is one-dimensional, drawing only from our human, finite, fallen perspectives on life. This mindset is spelled out for us in James 3, where he describes it this way:

“But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic” (James 3:14).

The Flesh vs. the Spirit is contrasted in stark terms in Galatians 5, where “the flesh” is a code word for our fallen, sinful, depraved human nature, and “the Spirit” refers to Christ pouring his nature into those who belong to him.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: ... hatred, discord,

jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy ... I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love ... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:19-24).

The State of the Human Heart was fundamental to Jesus' diagnosis of the origins of vicious language. In Matthew 15 and Matthew 12, we read (emphasis added):

The things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person (Matt. 15:18-20a).

You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of ... For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned (Matt. 12:34, 37).

Our words reveal our hearts, Jesus said. What comes out of our mouths on a regular basis testifies to what really fills our souls.

So, as you look at the American scene from coast to coast—especially in this white-hot political season, but also year-round—what do you think?

Based on the words you hear exchanged every day, what are the controlling forces in the life of the USA? Wisdom from above or from below? Fruits of the Spirit or works of the flesh? Hearts filled with the realities of Christ and his kingdom or filled with the passions of sin and self? Isn't the answer pretty obvious?

Next, gather up all the phrases listed above from well-

informed commentators on U.S. trends. Then compare them with the graphic descriptions from these three Scriptures—bitter envy; selfish ambition; demonic, evil thoughts; false testimony; slander; hatred; fits of rage; dissensions.

Now ask: Across our nation, what does the quality of the prevalent, public discourse tell us about the spiritual desolation and danger threatening America today?

But now I want to press this analysis one step deeper to unpack the most disturbing insight toward which this entire blog has been headed. {eoa}

Click here for Part 1 of this series. Stay tuned for Part 3!

To follow up on this blog post, download my free ebook, Messengers of Hope: Agents of Revival for the 21st Century, here.