

Oxford's Word of the Year Says More About Us Than We Realize

The Oxford Dictionary named “rage bait” as its 2025 Word of the Year, a term CNN describes as “content deliberately designed to elicit anger to increase engagement.” Its selection captures a cultural shift in which provocation, hostility and digital outrage have become standard features of life in the West.

CNN noted that “use of the term has increased threefold this year,” with Oxford explaining that people recognize “they are being drawn ever more quickly into polarizing debates and arguments as a response to social media algorithms and the addictive nature of outrage content.” The rise of rage-driven media now shapes not only online behavior but the language people use daily.

Sometimes this material may appear harmless, such as “a recipe that contains disgusting food combinations or someone annoying their pet, partner or sibling.” But CNN reported that rage bait “has also entered political discourse, with outrage used to boost politicians’ profiles and provoke a chain of reaction and counter-reaction.” In other words, outrage is no longer a byproduct of cultural friction; it is a commodity.



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This is more than a linguistic trend. It exposes the moral direction of a society increasingly comfortable with sowing anger rather than pursuing peace. For a culture once shaped by biblical principles, the celebration of “rage bait” as a defining concept reveals how far Western norms have drifted

from the call to restraint, wisdom and self-control.

Scripture consistently warns against elevating anger as a tool for influence. Proverbs teaches that “a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1) and that “an angry man stirs up strife” (Prov. 29:22). When provocation becomes entertainment. Outrage becomes strategy; it mirrors what the Bible calls the work of those who “sow discord among brethren” (Prov. 6:19).

The normalization of rage as engagement also contradicts the New Testament call to live differently. Believers are urged to be “slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:19-20). Yet the digital economy rewards wrath precisely because it fuels attention. Western culture increasingly treats what Scripture warns against as a profitable virtue.

Even more directly, the spirit behind rage bait stands in contrast to the command of Ephesians 4:31: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from you.” Instead of putting these things away, society packages and promotes them.

Oxford’s word choice simply reflects the deeper reality: a world growing more comfortable with outrage than compassion, more animated by provocation than peace. As culture drifts further from the grounding truth of Scripture, the fruit becomes increasingly visible in the habits, values and vocabulary people celebrate.

The Word of the Year is not just a label. It is a mirror. It shows us who we are becoming and why a return to God’s wisdom is not only needed but urgent.

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