



Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast
 January 8, 2023
 “The Word of the Year - 2022”

Merriam-Webster’s Word of the Year 2022: “Gaslighting”

The Springfield Massachusetts-based dictionary company announced its 2022 word-of-the year pick, “Gaslighting,” late in December 2022.

What is “Gaslighting”? This is a polite euphemism for lying or worse. Currently in social media gaslighting means “the act or practice of grossly misleading someone, especially for a personal advantage.” [Read this: “lying for personal gain.”]

Originally the idea and term came from the 1940’s Hollywood movie “Gaslight,” starring Charles Boyer, Ingrid Bergman, Joseph Cotten and Angela Lansbury. In this movie “gaslighting” revealed its more sinister side as “psychological manipulation of a person, usually over an extended period of time **that causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality...**”

My First Reaction to “Gaslighting” as Word-of-the-Year

I wrote in an email to some close friends: “Wow! Another topic in for my “Future Sermons” folder! We already have good words which are more accurate than “Gaslighting”: lying, slander, perjury, libel, defamation of character, and so forth. These are much less abstract, more specific and concrete. Do we invent polite-sounding words to cover up and obscure reality?”

What Does Scripture Say to People of the Book?

In today’s world gaslighting goes beyond just telling lies. Gaslighting’s intention is to alter another’s judgment of truth and reality, which can erode their beliefs, ethics, and morals. Scripture is clear: “**You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor,**” says Exodus 20:16. This is repeated in Deuteronomy 5:20. We are shocked at how often we hear and read this commandment broken: telling lies to discredit someone who we see as an “enemy” for personal gain – that is “gaslighting” and that is abhorrent to People of the Book.



“Putting off our old Life”: In the 1Q2023 Pastoral Letter we read a portion of Ephesians 4 which talked about making New Year’s Resolutions “putting off our old life.” In Ephesians 4 we see our “old life”:

“So then, putting away falsehood, let each of you speak the truth with your neighbor, for we are members of one another ... do not make room for the devil ... Let no evil talk come out of your mouths but only what is good for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.”

People of the Book are mindful to speak the truth. And use words to build each other up, not tear down.

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Let us keep each other in our prayers:

*May the Peace of the Lord Christ go with us, wherever He may send us;
 May he guide us through the wilderness, protect us through the storm;
 May He bring us home rejoicing at the wonders He has shown us;
 May He bring us rejoicing, once again into our doors. Amen.*

May you have a Blessed New Year!