# What One Word Describes 2018? What One Word Will You Strive to Embody in 2019?

*Rise & Shine, January 6th*

**Proverbs 18:21**

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue,*
*and those who love it will eat its fruits.*

The Bible is full of language that talks about the power of words. Words have power both to describe and to ascribe. It is an annual tradition for Dictionary websites to pronounce a "word of the year" around New Year's Day each year, describing the preceding year. It is also in vogue for individuals to choose a word of the year in lieu of a resolution at the beginning of the year in attempt to live the coming year in a certain way and with certain goals.

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*In the News*

## 2018 Words of the Year: 'Toxic,' 'Misinformation,' 'Justice;' and Words for 2019

As 2018 draws to a close, publishers of various dictionaries have revealed words they consider significant enough to warrant the title "Word of the Year" (WOTY) because of increased usage, a rise in online searches for the terms and cultural importance.

Merriam-Webster chose "justice" as its WOTY for 2018, because the subject took a central role in civil discourse in the country regarding race, equitable pay for equal work, income disparities, and the criminal justice system. Many 2018 news stories revolved around the U.S. Department of Justice, the Senate confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh and the question of what constitutes obstruction of justice. The group said people searched the term "justice" on its website 74 percent more often than in 2017.

The iconic Oxford Dictionary selected "toxic" for the honor of 2018 WOTY. The publisher found the word best reflects "the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of the passing year," likely to have lasting "cultural significance."

Researchers found that there was a 45 percent increase in the search for the term on its site during 2018. People also used "toxic" to describe a wide scope of "things, situations, concerns and events," including physical poisons found in toxic chemicals and pollution, and non-physical toxins found in some work environments, schools, cultures, relationships, masculinity and stress.

Dictionary.com's 2018 WOTY is "misinformation," chosen because the publishers observe that misinformation increasingly guides people's decisions and deeds.

People who share misinformation may well believe what they share is true, even though the misinformation may have been deliberately created and spread as disinformation or propaganda with the intent to mislead.

Whether information is deliberately manipulated to achieve a malevolent agenda, or shared as misinformation by people who believe and spread the disinformation, serious and even violent consequences may result.

"Nomophobia," which means the separation anxiety people feel when they are unable to have or use their mobile phones, was selected as Cambridge Dictionary's first-ever People's WOTY. The term, which combines syllables from "no mobile phone" was coined in 2008.

Collins Dictionary chose "single-use" as its WOTY, reflecting a four-fold increase in usage since 2013. The term refers to objects, often plastic, with "planned obsolescence" after only one use prior to disposal.

Another use of the “Word of the Year” concept is as a substitute for a New Year’s resolution, looking forward instead of looking back. According to Dan Britton, Jimmy Page, and Jon Gordon, co-authors of “One Word That Will Change Your Life”, 87 percent of adults make New Year's resolutions. However, half of them give up on those resolutions even before the end of January.

For this reason the trend of choosing a word for the whole year is becoming popular. It reduces the burden of expectations and can be easily followed throughout the year. The difference between a New Year’s Resolution and the word for the year is that there are no concrete goals involving either success or failure, but a theme that guides you through the year and through life.

Jon Gordon wrote in his blog: “My wife’s first word was INTENTIONAL. My daughter’s word was MOTIVATION. A great word for her. She needed it back then. My son chose FOCUS to the delight of his teachers. I chose PURPOSE because I knew my purpose had to be greater than my challenges. It wasn’t at the time and I was struggling. But once I remembered my purpose everything changed. Each year since I have chosen a new word. SURRENDER. SERVE. PRAY. RISE. Each word has molded and shaped me to become a better person, father, husband, writer and communicator.”

Melinda Gates has also embraced the One Word concept. She explained that the tradition "encapsulates her aspirations for the year ahead." Past words have included "gentle," helping her fight perfectionism, and "spacious," prompting her to make room for the things in life that truly matter.

In 2018, she picked "grace." For her, "grace" alludes to a transcendent or beautiful moment that shows we are part of something bigger than ourselves. "It's a word that has served me well. I've called on it during difficult conversations, long days at the office, busy trips with our foundation—and especially during a jam-packed December as we worked to close out the year at home and at work," Gates said. "It even helped me find a beam of peace through the sadness of a friend's funeral. When I was upset or distressed, I whispered it to myself: '*Grace*.'"

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Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

**James 3:2-6, 8**

*... Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. ... no one can tame the tongue -- a restless evil, full of deadly poison.* (For context, read 3:1-12.)

The metaphors James uses in this passage (a bridle, a bit in a horse's mouth, a rudder, a spark) have this in common: their small size relative to what they impact (a horse, a ship, a forest). All the metaphors are pictures of the tongue, which is small compared to the body, but which may have an impact extending far beyond the individual's body, to positively or negatively affect an entire family, community, nation and even the planet.

**Questions:** What can toxic words kill? What can life-giving words birth, heal and restore to life?

**Hebrews 4:12**

*Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* (For context, read 4:1-12.)

God spoke the world into existence. Jesus is described as "The Word of God made flesh." In Hebrews, the author argues that God's word is the pinnacle of all that exists.

**Questions:** What word or words have you leaned on as a core component of the way you live?

**A New Year's Prayer** (*Celtic Daily Prayer p. 238-39)*
This is a new day that has never been before.
This year is a new year, the opening door.
Enter, Lord Christ – we have joy in your coming.
You have given us life; and we welcome Your coming.
I turn now to face You, I lift up my eyes.
Be blessing my face, Lord; be blessing my eyes.
May all my eye looks on be blessed and be bright,
My neighbors, my loved ones be blessed in your sight.
You have given us life and we welcome Your coming.
Be with us, Lord, we have joy, we have joy.
This year is a new year, the opening door.
Be with us, Lord, we have joy, we have joy. *Amen*.