Humility is the Antidote for Political Meanness

Democratic presidential candidate Marianne Williamson is shocked at the meanness of her fellow Democrats. Williamson, a spiritual teacher relatively new to politics, complained in an interview in the New Yorker, “I know this sounds naïve but I didn’t think the left was so mean. I didn’t think the left lied like this.”

On the Sinclair show America This Week, she advised her fellow Democrats to expand their base by dropping their “condescending attitudes toward people of faith.” She particularly has trouble understanding why Democrats have “condescending attitudes” toward prayer.

During the same interview, a hot mic caught her musing: “What does it say that Fox News is nicer to me than the lefties are? What does it say that the conservatives are nicer to me?”

But meanness is not limited to the left. Recently, Baptist minister Jonathan Carl of Kentucky was the accidental recipient of one of President Trump’s demeaning tweets, calling Carl a “lightweight reporter.” Trump had misdirected his tweet, intending it for a reporter whose name is the same as the minister’s.

No matter how you feel about President Trump, Carl’s comments in an open letter should bring you to a full stop. Carl wrote to Trump: “Your heart must be in a dangerous place to have such a consistent flow of defamation and disrespect towards so many.”

I can imagine that Marianne Williamson believes that the hearts of many of her fellow Democrats are also in a “dangerous place.”
Carl’s letter to Trump reminds us that we are all lightweights. Carl wrote:

You called an experienced reporter a ‘lightweight.’ Let’s be honest, you are a lightweight too. We all are. God is the only heavyweight who knows it all and gets it right all the time. That should keep things in perspective for all of us. You are not the ultimate Commander-In-Chief. May we all be reminded of our national motto, ‘In God We Trust’ and be more faithful to Him, avoiding the temptation to trust more in a politician, party, or post.

Do we underestimate the power of humility? Have we come to associate humility with weakness? **John Eades writes**, “We have been led to believe that people who are humble are easily bulldozed by others and aren’t willing to stick up for themselves. Many define humility as having a low opinion of oneself.”

Yet, the research is clear; effective leaders are humble. In his seminal book on leadership, **Good to Great**, Jim Collins examined high-performance companies. Collins found that such companies were led by leaders who blended extraordinary “personal humility and professional will.”

In interviews with Collins, great leaders didn’t talk about themselves, while other less-effective leaders were extremely “I-centric.” “I-centric” leaders tended to take all the credit for success in their organizations but shifted all responsibility for failures to malevolent forces external to themselves.

Do any of our candidates exhibit the extraordinary humility Collins found in successful leaders?

**Pastor Rick Warren** in his book **The Purpose Driven Life** explained humility this way: “True humility is not thinking less of yourself, it’s thinking of yourself less.”
Who among us couldn’t benefit by thinking about our self less?

As for Marianne Williamson, her best-selling book *A Return to Love* is based on *A Course in Miracles*. *A Course in Miracles* echoes Carl’s call for kindness:

> When you meet anyone, remember it is a holy encounter. As you see him you will see yourself. As you treat him you will treat yourself. As you think of him you will think of yourself. Never forget this, for in him you will find yourself or lose yourself.

“As you think of him you will think of yourself.” In other words, tossing your psychological trash on the side of the road boomerangs. Our meanness towards others might temporarily soothe us, but our thoughts belittling others can never leave their source – our own arrogant mind.

Carl and Williamson are right — we’ve traveled this rocky road of meanness too long. Most of us could benefit from more humble pie in our diet.

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