

Extricating Ourselves from the Crossfire

There are many types of war beyond the armed conflicts between countries: family battles, wars of words, corporate struggles, ideological struggles, political fights . . . all seeking to grab our attention and emotions, and draw us in, to take sides and use our time and other resources to battle and make their adversaries our rivals.

There is an obvious, seemingly increasing and never-ending, current conflict in the U.S. and other Western countries over the direction of morals and the role government should play in this struggle. And as governments increase in size (as they have dramatically done over the last century), the conflicts, and associated stakes, escalate correspondingly.

If we look around at other countries, and back over history, we see a very interesting phenomenon. And since it is much the same in the various countries and time periods, we would likely have to explain it as DNA- (not culturally-) based. And this intriguing reality? That there is an almost $1/3^{\text{rd}} \cdot 1/3^{\text{rd}} \cdot 1/3^{\text{rd}}$ split between left-, right- and indecisive-leaning citizens in each country no matter the period of time we observe.

Yes, the trajectory, at any one period of time, is to liberal or conservative (between infrequent and temporary stalemates between them). The view as to what constitutes being liberal or conservative will shift, but the conflict over the deciding factor (the trajectory) remains. To explain further by example: no one would credibly deny (whatever their leaning) that the moral course, over the last 60 or so years, has been significantly to the left. And while this has not been without its minor conservative reversals and victories, the track is still to the left, meaning the liberal of today would have been considered a radical a number of years ago and the typical conservative of today a liberal 25 – 30 years ago.

And, just as interesting, we now have tangible “mouthpieces” and labels we can assign these two groups:

1. CNN viewpoint – “Yes, all this greater ‘personal freedom’ is a good thing – you respect my right to ‘whatever’ and I will not express any fault or disagreement with your lifestyle choices. Only we need to accelerate these ‘progressive’ changes even more and faster!”
2. Fox philosophy – “These liberals are horrible and the cause of our decline and weakening . . .” while as just said, in many ways, simply following the liberals by 25 years or so. Today’s Foxers would, for the most part, feel very comfortable as CNNers of 25 years ago (in fact, there was no need of Fox until 24 years ago!).

And it is not just political parties at war: churches, universities and, more recently even companies are taking sides as CNNers or Foxers!

Yet, if we give it any thought, we will certainly be disappointed with both the CNN and Fox viewpoints because it is clear they equally devalue and disregard historical wisdom and precedent. Instead they make it up as they go versus seeking to apply positive, constructive, historically-known tried and proven truths and principles to today – building on them to Better rather than arrogantly considering themselves wiser than those who have proceeded us in spite of the fact that in most ways many earlier folks achieved far more with less because they had to think better and more rationally just to get by.

We see virtually exact equivalents today to what we read about in the *Bible*, 2,500 years ago in Israel’s liberal/conservative conflict, with the prevailing liberal/conservative mantras stated more clearly and succinctly than we have achieved in all our current “wisdom:”

“All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD, and he is pleased with them” or “Where is the God of justice?” Mal 2:17

The “anything goes” liberals versus the self-righteous conservatives proving some things apparently never change.

So, the premise is that our left, right or indecisive leanings are written in our DNA and, like other aspects of our DNA, should cause us to understand we are not totally “naturally” objective, so we are wise to routinely:

- question ourselves and,
- when needed, exercise “gene” control to (instead of simply following our left, right or indecisive inclinations) seek Better versus Worse based on truth (a novel idea!), not party platforms.

And it is not just political issues that generally define liberal and conservative personalities (although they play themselves out most visibly politically): liberals, in general, see more value in the new and novel (and as a result are our “builders”) while conservatives consider maintenance/security as their first and highest responsibility. Both can be beneficial while both, likewise, can limit (conservative) progress or overstep the capabilities of change for good (liberals) and, in the end, set us back rather than move us forward as they claim they will “for sure!” Unfortunately, we are today experiencing the downside of both – the liberal naiveté and conservative cynicism and the almost child-like obstinacy of both.

So, what can we personally do to largely extricate ourselves from the liberal • CNN – conservative • Fox battles and crossfire and, in the process, become significantly better personally in spite of major macro decline? We will go a long way in this effort when we:

1. Understand life is far more (90+%) “micro” than macro so that a 10% improvement in our micro life, for example, will result in personal progress even if the surrounding macro decline is 80% to 90% – and we can largely control the micro while the macro we do not.

Those grasping this truth and, as a result, redirecting a majority of the time currently wasted listening to or participating in irrational, divisive, negative and destructive dialogue to personal improvement (and seeking over time to be more and more effective in this effort) will dramatically revolutionize and improve their lives by:

- filtering out the negative and harmful junk they are now ingesting, replacing it with
- personal positive development in the key areas of life: Mental, Physical, Spiritual, Emotional, Relational, Work, Rest, Financial, Cleaning & Upkeep, Leisure & Entertainment and Personal Grooming & Hygiene.

Each of these areas, if we are to improve in them, take time – time we cannot afford to needlessly waste on macro issues we are not going to impact!

And if enough people made this change it would result in greater rational behavior on the part of those seeking our votes or money for their causes and products. In short, we have few (and should not expect – since we do not deserve) political, business, educational, religious . . . “leaders” today. Rather those from whom we should expect leadership generally and ultimately lead us down, not up, by looking and talking down to where we have declined rather than attempting to guide us to higher and better.

2. Focus on the correct perspective that “time is short” and very limited – we simply do not have the time to devote to the greater and more important personal and micro issues of life when an inappropriate and inordinate amount of time is wasted on macro issues. As just

one of many possible examples: spending hours listening to silly political crossfire after, for example, a voting decision has been made. Or worse and more destructive yet, foolishly debating macro issues with others without the chance of doing anything other than creating hard feelings.

3. Seek to be more rational in our thinking versus taking part in or failing to filter out the increasingly cliché-driven irrational, misleading and, too often, outright dishonest dialogues of today.

In short, to seek first and foremost real progress to personal Better which we can reasonably expect with enough time, attention and God's supporting Grace devoted to this goal versus participating, with our valuable time, in the left/right, too often, radical/rabid propaganda.

So, is the current macro-focused environment Good News or Bad News? It depends on what we personally do in remembering or forgetting life IS 90+% personal and micro and well less than 10% macro, heeding Jesus' warning to those not making the right decision:

You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. ^{Mt 23:24}

We too often ignore and strain out positive efforts in the important micro issues of life (those that, in the end, with God's Grace, we can measurably affect) while actively focusing on and seeking to swallow the great macro matters over which we have no control. While it is counter-intuitive, if either liberals or conservatives decided to focus more, as a group and individually, on their micro lives they would, in a short time, become more powerful on a macro basis! But this, short of a miracle, is not going to happen. But a miracle can be achieved on a personal basis!

So, is the current trajectory to better or worse? The answer depends on our viewpoint. But what is consistently true is that individuals and societies invariably decline if they do not value and, as a result, stop seeking to apply the great wisdom of the past to today as a foundation for progress and better.

Many people have suffered personal decline in periods of great macro improvement just as great macro decays are no excuse for personal decline! The choice is ours based on focusing (and devoting our best time, thinking and emotions) majoring on the minor and micro and minoring on the macro.

We can extricate ourselves from the current foolish liberal/conservative, CNN/Fox, crossfire and get personally Better – but will we?

We will if we start better and more thoughtfully valuing and actively using our precious time (our life) to improve

Mentally, Physically, Spiritually, Emotionally, Relationally, Financially, in Work, Rest, Cleaning & Upkeep, Leisure & Entertainment and Personal Grooming & Hygiene.

Who would not greatly benefit from these redirected efforts (or suffer from not doing so)?