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Gleanings

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Will You Vote As a Consumer or Steward?

Tuesday, November 4, is Election Day in the United States (USA). Every four years the USA elects a president. As a democratic republic, the populace votes on the candidates so the winner, to some degree, reflects the wishes of the people.

The presidential election is significant for the workplace because the president is the chief administrator for the USA. Tax, economic, and business policies are critical to the health of the workplace. The president plays a major role in defining and implementing these policies.

If you believe that a healthy workplace contributes to a healthy society, then public policy is important. This election could determine the USA's economic health for years to come, and therefore also determine the workplace's health for many years.

Given the importance of this election for the workplace, do voters have the ability to make wise choices? This begs the question, how do people make choices?

As a starting point to this discussion, consider a previous edition of my newsletter (<http://www.strategieswork.com/publications/gleanings/mk200408.pdf>) in which I presented the findings of two independent research projects. These studies examined the process used by people to make buying decisions. The conclusions of both studies were the same: people make buying decisions based on their emotions and then rationalize those decisions. In other words, we intellectually justify our emotional preferences. Or as my good friend Dennis Peacocke says, "The mind justifies what the heart has chosen." In this context "the heart" is used metaphorically and refers to the seat of human emotions.

Why does emotion drive reason? Most people in today's world pride themselves on being people of reason, so it seems strange that we make buying decisions based on emotion instead of reason.

The testimony of Scripture supports the reality that the heart drives the actions of people.

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." Proverbs 4:23 NIV

"The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks." Luke 6:45 NIV

Since humans speak and act out of their hearts, this suggests that the human will is resident in the heart. "Human will" is another term that describes the root of human actions.

If we concede that the heart is the seat of the will and emotions, what then drives our hearts?

My thesis is that each person's view of God drives his or her heart. Whether consciously or not, everyone makes an assumption about the identity and nature of God that drives everything in a person's life. For example, note what Scripture says about people who worship idols:

"Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them."
Psalm 115:8 NIV

Psalm 115:6–7 tells us that these idols cannot speak, hear, walk, smell, or touch. In other words, the idols are lifeless. Since people who worship idols are like them, this suggests that people who worship idols are lifeless—metaphorically speaking.

Can a lifeless person make wise choices? The Bible says that wise decisions are rooted in worshipping the God of the Bible. Solomon said:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom—" Proverbs 9:10 NIV

Therefore because idolaters—lifeless people—do not fear the Lord, lifeless people cannot be expected to make wise choices. Clearly, this is not a politically correct position in our day and time.

We live in an age of pluralism, which means that all views of God are deemed acceptable. This is not, however, the teaching of Scripture. The prophet Isaiah wrote that the God of the Bible is the only God.

"I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God—" Isaiah 45:5 NIV

If you worship any God other than the God of the Bible, you worship an idol. And for those who worship idols, their ability to make wise decisions is impaired. For example, if a person's view of God is that there is no God (i.e., an atheistic view), then that person, most likely, believes that there are no absolutes—that the values of life are relative. People with that worldview default to self-serving actions—there is nothing higher to serve than themselves, and therefore they are mostly concerned with satisfying their own appetites such as personal comfort and pleasure.

If you worship the God of the Bible, however, you have the opportunity to make wise decisions—decisions that serve a higher purpose than your appetites. The fear of the Lord changes hearts, which enables us to make decisions that go beyond self-serving consumption to selfless stewardship.

Every decision is a stewardship decision. The apostle Paul stated that everything that we have has been given to us (1 Corinthians 4:7); therefore, we are simply stewards charged to make decisions that please our Master who is the God of the Bible (1 Corinthians 4:2).

People being transformed by Christ understand that they are stewards. Those who are not growing in Christ tend to view themselves as consumers whose primary concern is their own personal comfort and pleasure.

So which group, stewards or consumers, has the heart to make wise decisions—decisions for the greater good of the USA and the world? Clearly stewards, with hearts that are being transformed by Christ, are the only ones who can make wise choices.

Since people vote from their hearts either as self-oriented consumers or selfless stewards, this implies that every election is a referendum on theology. The citizens will vote for the candidates that reflect their hearts. It is questionable whether or not most of the voters of the USA have the hearts of stewards. It is highly probable, therefore, that the majority of voters are consumers and will vote for candidates who offer policies of consumption not of stewardship.

I understand from political pundits that democracies end when the people vote themselves so many entitlements that the federal government cannot fund them. People in such cultures lose their will to work. Without a strong work ethic, no people can prosper. The voters of the United States must answer the question that Joshua posed to Israel:

"But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."
Joshua 24:15 NIV

The choice in any election is simple: Do you vote with a heart of a consumer or with the heart of a steward? If you vote as a consumer you are serving a worldview that emanates from idol worship, which will lay the foundation for divine judgment. If you vote as a steward, you are serving a worldview that emanates from the God of the Bible, which will lay the foundation for divine blessings. May the Lord grant the American people the grace and wisdom to vote as stewards.

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Dallas, TX USA

Friday, April 3, 2009