



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

So, tell me, *are you better off than you were four years ago?* Some utterances assume what seems to be eternal life; they survive their originators, and become part of the cultural lexicon.

Are you better off than you were four years ago? It was in a presidential debate - just a week before the elections in 1980 - when Ronald Reagan took a final rhetorical punch at Jimmy Carter. He won the debate - and the election - with that line.

People were not happy with their circumstances, and they took it out on the incumbent. We expect our leaders to make our lives better... and if they don't deliver, we - Americans - often choose a new leader, or party, or ideology - to give us what we want. We're getting ready to do it again...

Are you better off than you were four years ago? If you use the Dow Jones Industrial Average, or the national unemployment figures, or the price of commodities like oil or gold, or your home equity or the current value of your retirement accounts as the measuring stick, your answer is probably "no." Someone - other than you, of course - is responsible, and should pay (dearly). **Bail-Out...** or **Kick-Out.** Extreme dissatisfaction leads to extreme reactions. But... are those the real measures of life?



If you start with the **New York Times** as your wisdom source, you'll come to one conclusion. If you begin with a more reliable source of sanity - *like, perhaps, the Scriptures?* - you may consider your status on different terms. What might those measures be? Let me propose four categories that deserve consideration.

First, your personal life. *How are you doing regarding your core capacities?* You are a multidimensional person: body, mind, soul and spirit. During the last four years, have you improved your physical, intellectual, relational and spiritual vitality? No government program will achieve that; it's up to you to exercise discipline that builds your core. Are you better off than you were four years ago?

Second: your family life. Are you married? Do you have children? *Are those roles practiced today - by you - in a way that has enhanced the quality of life for your spouse and your progeny?* Is your family manifesting the Living Lord Jesus' influence, day-by-day?

Third: your professional life. *When God watches what you do for money (your career), and what you do with money (your stewardship), is He pleased? Are you seeing His provisions in those two fronts based on your obedience to Him, which - today - is likely to be countercultural?*

Last: your Kingdom life. *Are you gaining a sense of calling - a confidence that you play a significant role in God's plan to extend His salvation and solutions to our lost and dying world - that is defining your active engagement in things that will matter for Eternity? If not, why not?*

People who participate in **The Master's Program** no longer allow the metrics of the markets to determine their outlooks and attitudes. They have gained a new world view: one that monitors the things that really matter (*personal/family/professional/Kingdom*) and allows them to **thrive** at the same time that people around them **dive**.

So, how are you doing right now?

Thriving or diving? If you aren't better off than you were four years ago, whose fault is that? Are you going to the polls tomorrow to elect a savior, or have you appropriated the valuable assistance of the Savior you already have?

If you're a Christian who is **diving** - and you have not yet found the way to **thrive** - you need to hit "reply" and find out when you can learn a new way of living in a conflicted culture; you need to join **The Master's Program...**

Bob Shank

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