



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way..." (*Charles Dickens, from **A Tale of Two Cities**, 1859*)

Talk about timeless insight. It has been exactly 150 years since this novel was written and uniquely delivered by Dickens. Though remembered for his literary humor, this exception to his best-known style stands out. Rather than producing it in book-form, he wrote it in weekly installments, delivered in his literary periodical, **All the Year Round**. Just a century and a half ago, Dickens' version of my **Point of View** was his work-in-progress that became one of his most lasting contributions...

Some words are inane and worthless upon delivery; most of our contemporary press - recounting most of our cultural dialog - fit that description. Do you believe that any comments from the daily talk shows will be quoted by anyone next week, let alone 150 years from now? There are some insights that find their way to print that become an insight that rises to historic dimensions.



Best; worst. Wisdom; foolishness. Belief; incredulity. Light; darkness. Hope; despair. The inexplicable coexistence of stark contrasts was incontrovertible. The circumstances surrounding the French Revolution - the setting for Dickens' **Tale** - were that diverse. If that culture had been a patient, the diagnosis may have been a bi-polar disorder.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Our technology is profoundly different. Our political systems have aged and/or changed. Our cities and climate are markedly modified. But... the people who play their roles in history bear amazing resemblance to the people who came before us.

Allow me to let you in on the purpose of these weekly insertions into your e-mail pile. You are pummeled - on a constant basis - with "news" that paints the picture of the worst, the foolishness, the incredulity, the darkness, the despair... and the feeling that we have nothing before us. A reasoning person would conclude that we - as a society -

are "going direct the other way."

Since 1997, the **Good News Network** - run by Geri Weis-Corbley, from a fishing lodge on a lake near Manassas, Virginia - has been sifting the sludge to find the uplifting elements of the world's events. She used to work for CNN; she tired of the traumas and determined to pass along the positive. At \$24 per year, she has about 1000 subscribers who sip from her spring... as relief from the sordid mainstream. *Apparently, the market for Good News isn't as big or broad as the bad news...*

Here's my point-of-the-day: I'm coast-to-coast, most weeks, and I can tell you from firsthand observation: business may be down for the Marketplace, but it's the best of times for the Kingdom. People are asking the right questions... and the people who are tapped into the Good News from heaven have the right answers. If you're not careful, friend, you'll find yourself believing that you are stuck in the time of worst/foolishness/incredulity/darkness/despair. Don't let that black hole consume you; you were placed in this moment in history to be a Kingdom purveyor of best/wisdom/belief/light/hope. Is there a market for that, right now? Truth be told: the market has never been better! Let's increase our distribution, shall we? The Good News - God calls that the **Gospel** - is the only solution for the times!

Bob Shank

Bob Shank is Founder and Chief Mentoring Officer of The Master's Program (TMP).

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