



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

Happy Valentine's Day (*belated*). **Happy Presidents Day**. *Happy happy happy...*

If you're working today, **Happy Working-on-a-Federal-Holiday Day**. For the 10.2% nationally - or, the 12.4% here in California - who don't have a place to work right now, many of them would trade with you. Latest numbers say that only 3% of the "uppers" (*the ones with annual income north of \$250k*) are in a "downer" right now. Good thing: *there's a tax increase waiting for them...*

I hope your Valentine's weekend didn't include a night at the (wrong) movies. Making a date night to see a flick that would have lost yardage in the "happy marriage" Super Bowl contest would have been a bad offensive strategy. Examples: *Valentine's Day* (*opened this weekend; no surprise*) painted the picture of "typical" young adults in Los Angeles who are, for the most part, "losers at love." The close runner-up - for "no way to



run a romance" - is the still-around-since-Christmas, mid lifers' feature: *It's Complicated*.

No surprises with that star-studded "romantic comedy." Meryl Streep. Alec Baldwin. Steve Martin. High-mileage rentals, but they still get out for the "right" script. Streep is the entrepreneur with the bakery / restaurant in Santa Barbara, living in the \$4 million pied-à-terre that needs an architect (Martin) to bring the slummy kitchen up to her standards... and he hangs around for more than the blueprints. Since she was left in the settlement by Baldwin a decade before - when he headed down the road with young Lake Bell as his new "trophy wife" - she had navigated menolife with a carefree confidence.

It becomes “complicated” when Streep and Baldwin reconnect at their son’s graduation... and an “affair” with her “ex” becomes the basis for the plot. It’s complicated...

If I was a young man doing a “single guy night out” movie marathon - skipping from multiplex to multiplex, using one overpriced ticket to get two or three cinema experiences - my view of life and love would be at great risk. Catch *Valentine’s Day*... and finish with *It’s Complicated*. The recruiters for the remote monastery would fill their clipboard at that exit door...

Cheri and I had our 41st Valentine’s Day yesterday, as a “couple.” In June, we’ll have our 39th wedding anniversary. Let me tell you what we’ve discovered, in this brief relationship, over four decades of life in the same Southern California biosphere featured in those movie fantasies.

Two things: every day is Valentine’s Day. There’s no way that a teleflorist - ordered up, on-line - can redeem the last 364 days of relationship between self-absorbed people. Healthy relationships thrive on constant, consistent attention to the details.

And, the capper: it’s *not* Complicated. It’s *Commitment*. In 2010, the debate rages over how many dates precede intimacy (is one too few? are four too many?). In 1971, we made a contract - we called them “wedding vows” - before we cohabited. Now-famous Mark Sanford - governor of South Carolina - edited the “faithful” clause out of his wedding vows, leaving the door open for his hiking trip to Argentina, to be with his “soul mate.” We took the contract as-is, and signed it with a commitment to go from June 5, 1971 to the grave. It’s *Not Complicated*... it’s *Commitment*.

Don’t take your lead from Hollywood; take it from Heaven. With God, every day is Valentine’s Day: He proved His love for us, in offering His Son as our Savior. Better than *flowers*; it’s *forgiveness*.

And, it’s not complicated: people who try to complicate the Gospel are on a fool’s mission that leads to a Lake of Fire. We’re sinners; God is holy. We can’t earn heaven, but we can receive it as a gift. Say “yes,” and say “thanks.” Live in *commitment*, not in *complication*. He figured it out, for us...

Bob Shank

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