

A Trial Separation?

By John Jensen

Conservative versus Liberal: Have we reached the stage of irreconcilable differences?

The main difference is how the two sides defines Liberty. Conservatives define liberty as freedom of individual responsibility. Liberals define liberty as freedom from individual responsibility. While grey areas can be found in each camp, the bottom line is the responsibility. Individuals either assume responsibility, or Government assumes responsibility. If individuals assume responsibility, then individuals are at liberty to do what they deem best for them to do. If government assumes responsibility, government is at liberty to do what government deems best to do.

For conservatives ceding individual responsibility is anathema, an existential threat. For liberals not having government ^{take} ~~their~~ to take care of anyone who, for whatever reason, cannot take care of themselves is anathema, an existential threat.

This schism is further exacerbated by how each side defines equality. Conservatives define equality as an opportunity... all have an equal opportunity to live. Liberals define equality as a result... all are entitled a minimum equal result. These different viewpoints are grounded in how each side treats human birth rights. Conservatives see birth as a divine event where each individual is endowed with certain unique gifts. Inequality is a birth right to be celebrated and inevitably shared. Liberals see birth as a random event where no birth merits greater opportunity than another. Equality must be mandated in order for life to be fair.

These differences are evident in many things, but none more than economics. Conservatives view the economy as a voluntary interaction of unequal individuals relying on and sharing each other's different skill sets to attain the greatest opportunity for living life as each individual deems good for them. Liberals view the economy as an interaction of unequal individuals taking advantage of each other's inabilities, where, without government intervention, human existence is nothing more than survival of the fittest.

Conservatives believe that human beings acting in their own self-interest always and inevitably promote sharing and a reliance on their fellow human beings. This self-interest further fosters, among many other nurturing things, morality and the rule of law.

Liberals believe that individuals cannot be trusted to act in their own self-interest. That whenever and wherever they do, inequality exists and individuals are enslaved... the human condition is reduced to master/slave.

As a conservative I do not here propose to defend or destroy, but rather suggest we conservatives and liberals may need a trial separation. A time out to gather our thoughts and consider, perhaps, and before we spill any blood, the advantages of divorce.