

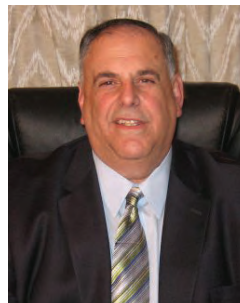


A Search for “What Matters”

“Does it really matter if we are able to probe distant far off galaxies, yet are unable to curb the blind, mindless hatred and disregard for human life, or for those with disabilities and special health care needs right here on our planet?”

Welcome to 2015 and to a world of continuous contradictions, unintended consequences and new realities. Welcome to a world in which war is not a video game or a Hollywood film; in which genocide and ancient hatreds cannot be eliminated simply by hitting the delete button. Welcome to a world in which the answers to global poverty, new puzzling strains of infectious diseases and environmental challenges cannot be adequately addressed by tapping the space bar and hitting the insert button or searching for help in Google.

Surely we must know by now the dangers of becoming too “high tech and low touch”. Just look around you. How often do we see people traveling to work pecking away at their cell phones or playing games on their iPads? People communicate today via text messaging or email when simply picking up the phone or walking down to someone’s office might add a bit of personal touch and be a welcome respite to



the cold unfeeling world of electronic communication. For over 35 years I have taught at some of the largest and finest universities in this nation, as well as some of the smaller ones. I can tell you that while students today are much more facile with technology than those from my generation, they have sacrificed much in terms of the “human touch”. That is a troubling thing to witness. Relying just on a Google search has

taken the place of good old fashioned research and may be rapidly threatening how our youth actually think.

Today we have mapped the DNA Code and, in doing so, have opened the door to potential cures for diseases and conditions heretofore thought to be beyond our reach. Today, we live in a world of personal computers, search engines, email and networks, storage and “clouds,” information retrieval, websites and chat rooms. It’s commerce at your fingertips; entertainment at the touch of a button. We have high-definition TV and can see dozens of sporting events from around the world... simultaneously! We have become adept at “multi-tasking,” as if that is some kind of badge of honor. We are well on our way to becoming masters of a new universe whose boundaries are yet to be determined. Yet on the whole, we remain a nation still searching for ways to support and serve the greatest segment of our society who remain underserved – that is, people with developmental disabilities!

It seems to me that we must answer these questions posed so eloquently by Tom Brokaw: “what does it matter if we are able to wire the entire world yet in the process, short-circuit our souls? Does it really matter if we are able to probe distant far off galaxies, or send a manned mission to Mars, yet are unable to curb the blind, mindless hatred and disregard for human life, or for those with disabilities and special health care needs right here on our planet?” Surely we are better than this. And with all the turmoil we have seen on our city streets and in distant far off lands, are we sure this is the right time to be taking God out of our lives?

The pace of change in this world we live in is, to coin a term from Star Trek, at warp speed. Consider this: We live on a seemingly smaller planet with a growing population, many of whom are on the move searching for economic opportunity and political freedom. Our world has seen a continual diminishment of open spaces and natural resources; sweeping changes in political, economic and cultural power in every corner of the globe. We live at the highest point of Western Civilization yet, all around us, we witness daily the despair of

people whose ancient rivalries and religious fanaticism threaten the very core foundation of all that we hold dear. The danger for us here in the United States is that we ignore this threat, or regard it as someone else’s problem. It seems at times that we have forgotten that we are a nation at war. While our President has said that the “war in Iraq is over,” it seems that he forgets that the people we are fighting against –those that made 9/11 a date we will never forget – haven’t thrown in the towel; and we have not defeated them yet. So the war goes on, whether we like it or not. This means that we can never forget our young men and women in uniform who are in harm’s way.

Whatever your political beliefs are and however you may feel about the decisions

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that placed our young men and women in peril, we cannot forget them or their families—for they have volunteered to risk their lives if necessary to ensure the safety of our nation and to defend all of us, regardless of race, color, creed or religion. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are involved in difficult duty that often exacts a high price as we all have come to learn. Their burden involves deaths in the family, lifelong debil-

itating wounds, and hidden scars of war like PTSD, anxiety, alcoholism; it involves grand policies gone awry and some terrible political mistakes. All this should not be borne by our military families alone. We must continue to honor the personal sacrifices of all those men and women in uniform, to act in a meaningful, respectful manner towards their families. And you can be assured that at EP we will continue to do that as we have done for over 20 years.

The year 2015 also marks the 70th anniversary of an event in our history that we need to remember. In 1945, the guns of the world became silent when World War II ended. The men and women of the Greatest Generation, who came of age during the Great Depression, a period of time when life was about hardships and lack of hope, answered the call of our nation to fight against the two most powerful war machines ever assembled in the history of mankind. It was a war fought on six of seven continents, on all seven seas and in all the skies of the world and, when it was over, some 60 million people had perished. But, the world had been saved from Imperialism and Fascism. And, when it was over, the Greatest Generation came home, not to lay down their arms and turn to their own personal interests, but to help rebuild our nation at home – the country we all know today. And our Nation did something remarkable and unprecedented. We have helped rebuild our enemies, Japan, Italy and Germany, as well as most of Europe – a living, enduring testament to the goodness of America and the compassion of its people.

My most fervent wish for all of us in 2015 is that we reflect on the many blessings we have in our country – and to continue looking to the future with enthusiasm. My wish is that we put aside the foolish notions of hatred and racial division, while continuing to reach out and touch those who have less in life. And my prayers are that our Heavenly Father continues to bless our land, still the great beacon of hope for our world. Have a happy, safe and healthy New Year! •

