



Update

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Vernon & Martha Hedge

Disagreeing Respectfully

We have never seen our nation so divided—or so mean and angry. Families and friends are at odds with each other, including Christians. All seem to agree “it shouldn’t be so.” We’ve been asked how to handle the hot topic of politics with each other. Relationships are far more valuable than differences of opinion, but conversations are turning into uncomfortable, and unnecessary, confrontations.

I’m hearing this from Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. There’s no pat answer but hopefully some of these principles will help you discover ways to protect your relationships while still holding to your values and convictions.

In any conflict resolution situation, we need ground rules. That starts with us. Perhaps the most important one is a mindset of respect. Some cultures call it saving face, others maintaining honor. This is really centered on who we are, not how the other person acts. We only have control of ourselves. Within that self-control are healthy boundaries of what we allow from others and how we behave. Guard your spirit.

So, what’s going on? From what I see, we are in a culture war between socialism and free enterprise. We hear those terms thrown around on the news. Speaking of news, do some research on your own before accepting the conclusions of social media, TV, and politicians. Or me.

This is an emotionally charged topic with more history than is being presented. Misinformation has started more than one war. It is certainly dividing. Because there are so many shades of meaning to these terms, let’s start with definitions and some basic understanding of the Founding Fathers’ intent for America.

Socialism is where a central government controls society with laws and regulations that touch every area of life. Taking it to its end-result, in countries with full-blown socialism, every aspect of a citizen’s life is controlled by the government—sometimes to the extent of where they live, the job they have, their wages, where they travel, their education, and their health care.

While the ideal of equality for all people on all levels of a person’s life sounds good on paper, it is against human nature to live under total control—it kills incentive, kills creativity, destroys liberty, and stagnates an economy.

It has been my privilege to visit

three socialist/communist nations and talk with everyday working people. In one country, a person had to have a written pass to visit a neighboring town. In another, professionally trained people made barely above an untrained person and was assigned where they would work. It was common to have their homes “inspected” at any time to make certain they didn’t own more than “they should.” If the government meets material needs, the government will control when, how and if those needs are met.

In Romania after the revolution, it was discovered that all the money was in the hands of the upper levels of the Communist party members, demonstrating the hypocrisy that everyone had “equal” provision.

Free enterprise is where a central government legislates laws and regulations that govern people so that each citizen has the liberty to pursue their livelihood according to their own choices. Another way to say it, the function of the government is to protect the unalienable rights of her citizens and to protect each individual’s freedom to take advantage of opportunities.

Our nation was built upon the principles of free enterprise. Therein lies its tension with socialism. The Declaration of Independence says *that all men...*

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are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.... The word “unalienable” means that something cannot be separated, given away, or taken away without doing damage to the original purpose. For example, the legs of a table are unalienable to a table. Take the legs off, and it can no longer function in its purpose as a table. Unalienable rights are built into the fabric of human life; our Creator gave them to us. People didn’t invent them, they only discovered them.

An unalienable right doesn't cost you or anyone else any money. It just is!

My research reveals that the Founders were well read in the Scripture and had been raised with the Scripture being a part of their education. They lived by the principles contained in the Ten Commandments, or they knew they ought to be living by them. They referred to God as “Creator” out of respect for His name.

Going deeper, unalienable rights are revealed in the Ten Commandments. For instance: The commandment says, “You shall not steal.” It is an unalienable right to own things and not have them stolen. The commandment says, “You shall not murder.” It is an unalienable right for each person to have his life protected, both the born and unborn. The commandment says, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” It is an unalienable right to have the truth spoken concerning you and your affairs.

True Needs are different than unalienable rights. When people are free to live within their

unalienable rights, “true need” will be met. A true need is something basic to all people. It is the responsibility of Congress to enact laws and policies to protect those true needs and in turn exercise its power to enforce those policies.

“True needs” must be earned in honest labor or management of time and possessions. They are not an unalienable right; the unalienable right is the freedom to seek the job to provide true needs. When a person is not capable of work or able to supply basic needs, it is out of **biblically based compassion** they are helped, not out of an unalienable right for government support.

The Socialist Party of America. There are stark differences between socialism and free enterprise. The liberals want government to control all areas of life. The conservatives are fighting for free enterprise. The principles of free enterprise are the principles in Scripture upon which this nation was built.

When discussing these differences, liberal-leaning people have told me not to worry because America will never accept full socialism. Some have assured me that it will work differently for us.

Rev. Norman Thomas (1884-1968) was a leading American socialist and six-time presidential candidate for the Socialist Party of America. Do a search on the internet. He said in a 1944 speech: ***The American people will never knowingly adopt socialism. But, under the name of 'liberalism,' they will adopt every fragment of the socialist program, until one day America will be a socialist***

nation, without knowing how it happened.

We need to take this struggle seriously.

Going back to the opening question of how to handle this hot topic and maintain relationships. As Believers we must “choose the high road” and not stoop to meanness. Respect is always appropriate. If someone becomes controversial and pushy beyond your comfort, ask them to pause the conversation. You can close it.

If concerned about family gatherings or get-togethers with friends, offer the suggestion that it’s a no politics zone.

We need to have healthy discussions, to hear all sides, and especially people’s concerns. We could discover that we agree on many issues but only disagree on how to resolve them. If the relationship is important, maybe we simply agree to disagree.

Unfortunately, not all strained relationships can be quickly restored. We cannot control outcomes or other people. If all else has failed and we must part, let us do so with grace.

God has a plan and purpose for every person. Let us pray for one another for His grace to heal us and our nation. God hears!

*If My people
who are called by My name
will humble themselves,
and pray and seek My face,
and turn from their wicked ways,
then I will hear from heaven,
and will forgive their sin
and heal their land”*

(2 Chron. 7:14 NKJV).
