

Two Sides to Every Story. Especially Now.

Sue exhorts us to make Proverbs 18:17 our filter to find the balance in news stories, analyses, and opinion pieces by asking wise questions and finding trustworthy sources.

Please, please, please, make this powerful Proverb the filter through which you process information, especially during this Corona-Crazy time:

The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.

Proverbs 18:17

We HAVE to remember that there are two sides to every story, particularly now when we have to navigate a slippery slope of opinion, and fake news, and deliberately skewed news, and trustworthy reporting of facts.

Many people are grabbing one compelling-sounding video or article or even just a meme on social media, and they stop thinking there. We need to be asking ourselves the power questions that help us think:

What do they mean by _____? We need to make sure that we understand what others mean by the words and terms they use. Politically- and ideologically-charged rhetoric often uses language that means something very different from what it appears on the surface. For example, the innocuous-sounding “Equality Act” is intended to severely restrict and punish those who hold to a biblical perspective on gender and sexuality—who, it is clear, are not considered equal to those who hold pro-LGBT values.

Where do they get their information? There are extreme-right

and extreme-left sources that pump out nothing but slanted and unbalanced ideas. We need to be aware of the difference between reports from the very conservative Infowars and The Blaze, and the leftist MSNBC and CNN.

How can we know it's true? Much of what appears to be journalism today is analysis and opinion pieces. How are your discernment skills? Can you tell the difference between factual reporting and spin? Probably not if you live in a bubble of only opinions and voices you agree with. "Confirmation bias" is a powerful dynamic that keeps us from considering anything from a different perspective. This is why it's essential to keep in mind, as Proverbs 18:17 reminds us, that there are two sides to every story, and we need to delay clamping down our minds on a position until we have more information and perspective. Do you know about allsides.com? That's a good place to find news from the left, from the center, and the right.

(Please see my article ["Four Killer Questions: Power Tools for Great Question-Asking"](#))

My extremely wise colleague at Probe Ministries, Steve Cable, offered this counsel in his article ["Seeing Through News Media Bias: Exposing Deception and Proclaiming Truth in an Age of Misinformation"](#):

"[W]e need to be on the alert for the warning signs of misinformation. When we recognize the need for discernment, begin by asking God for wisdom in looking for and applying the truth:

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him (James 1:5-6).

"Then we need to ask ourselves some tough questions about the article or news report:

1. Does it begin with truth?
2. Is it logical?
3. Does it consider all of the evidence?
4. Does the conclusion make sense apart from the argument?
5. Does it stand up to close examination?"

These are great questions.

And we need to hang on tight to common sense, not being afraid to ask questions of what we're reading and hearing. Biological viruses will not be transmitted through cell towers. Washing our hands thoroughly will ALWAYS be a good idea. We were told not to wear masks, now we're told to wear masks; maybe there's not a one-size-fit-all rule?

Conspiracy theories abound; is anybody addressing the assertions in them? At this point in time, Google is still our friend in finding the answer to that question.

The bottom line is that we need to always remember that "the first to make his case *seems* right, until the other comes and examines him." If we've only heard the first side, we need to hold our thoughts and judgments loosely until we hear if there is another side.

And be kind the whole time.

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Is it Time to Change Your Filter?

Life doesn't just happen to us; we experience it and interpret it through a filter. That filter, like a pair of glasses, consists of beliefs and values we might not even realize we hold.

The same event could be experienced and interpreted in different ways by different people because of their different filters: for example, getting a flat tire. One person might get out of the car, see the flat, and start to rage: "What the **** is this? Why does this kind of **** always happen to me? You stupid tire!" This response is the result of a filter that believes life should be good and easy, that nothing bad should ever happen to her. This unrealistic expectation is a setup for massive disappointment and anger when life doesn't cooperate.

Another person might see the flat and think, "Oh bummer! Well, Lord, thank You for protecting me from a dangerous high-speed blowout. Please help me here—would You send a road angel to help me change out the spare?" This very different response is the result of a filter that recognizes we live in a fallen world where unfortunate and even bad things happen, but God is still good and we can call on Him to help us at any and every time.

We can't change life or the things that happen to us, but we can change our filter to bring it into alignment with biblical truth.

You might need to change your filter if:

- You consistently see the glass half-empty instead of half-full; if you always put a negative spin on any news you hear. [Check out Philippians 4:8]

- You see any comment other than glowing praise as a personal attack that threatens your well-being, and you aggressively growl back. [Check out Philippians 2:3]
- You dismiss other people's answers to prayers, and blessings they receive, as yet more proof that God loves everybody but you. [Check out Romans 8:38-39]
- You evaluate everything in terms of how you feel about it. You are nice to your spouse or your co-worker only when you feel like being nice; you don't repent if you don't feel repentant; you don't spend time with God if you don't feel like it; you are obedient when you feel like being obedient, etc. [Check out 2 Corinthians 10:5-6]
- You view everything in terms of the here-and-now, temporal, earthly sphere, and ignore the eternal, spiritual dimension. [Check out 2 Corinthians 4:18]
- You get uncomfortable when people bring spiritual conversations into Monday through Saturday because they only belong to Sunday. [Check out all references to the Lord Jesus Christ]

What do you think. . . is it time to change your filter?

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