



Respect

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I was recently talking to a friend of mine and I told him I was not sure if I was sad or scared at what seems to be happening in our country. I do really love this country but it seems that we have somewhat come "off the rails" and we have lost our focus. It seems to me that freedom can be abused for the detriment of those that are free.

You see, I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God indivisible with liberty and justice for all. I do not know where to start to try and pinpoint where we went wrong, but I can tell you a good starting point would be the loss of respect, not only for each other, but for our creator, God.

We were a country that was founded by Christians. This is a fact and it is not disputable. Men and women came to America to escape an oppressive government telling them what they could and could not do. They sought opportunity to "choose" their destiny. Our founding fathers wanted the ability to worship free of government involvement/intervention/restriction. Freedom of religion was not about not having religion in government, but rather not having government in religion.

Success in life is real simple to understand but very difficult to achieve. If we love with all our heart and all our minds, we will have success. I did not say we would have a lot of material possession but I did say we would be able to achieve success because we will be happy. This is spelled out for us in the bible. If you would like another venue to learn more about this concept, just listen to country music. Yes, you read that right!

It is funny how my life has been/is being influenced by my daughter. Today is June 21st and Lizzie is 18! Wow, where has time gone? I must say, it has been a wild ride the past 18 years with many ups and downs. We all face these, some more than others but as I always say, it is not what happens to us it is how we react to what happens to us. In the moment, when life happens, we do the best we can. We do not always do the best in retrospect, but we do the best we can at the time. As Elizabeth has aged, she has had an influence that has taken me back to my roots.

Growing up, I lived in the country, drove pickup trucks and sported some facial hair. As I approach 50, I find myself driving a pickup truck, sporting facial hair and listening to country music! It is amazing how we come full circle in life. I know I would not have gotten here without the influence of my daughter. By the way, I like this return to my roots A LOT! Listening to country music and driving around in my big ole four wheel drive truck has been a fun time together for Liz and I the past nine months. It has deepened our bond. Lizzie has been driving the truck and always wants me to cart her to school in the truck.

As many parents know and remember, car time gives us a captive audience with our kids. We learn so much about them as well as ourselves during that precious time. As we cruise around listening to

country music, we often hear the messages that reinforce what is important in life – God, country, family and love. We are obviously listening to new country! In the song ‘Love Like Crazy’ by my Clemson brother Lee Brice, the words of the song’s main character, an older successful gentleman go like this, ‘Be a best friend, tell the truth and overuse I love you. Go to work, do your best, don’t outsmart your common sense, never let your praying knees get lazy and love like crazy!’

No matter how we look at this and no matter how we try to define success, it always comes back to love. But, from a more practical perspective in the success of our country, it comes back to respect. People do not like the way things are going, so they feel justified to burn the flag or sit on one knee during the national anthem. They do not quite get that the pursuit of liberty and justice for all requires us have to respect for other Americans and their beliefs and opinions, no matter how different they are from our own. This might be really hard to do now as the country becomes more polarizing and people are heading to one end of the spectrum or the other. But as our divide widens, this respect becomes more and more important.

At the end of the day, in order for us to be successful as individuals and for the country to be successful, we must all learn to compromise. None of us can ever always get our way. It is not the way life works and it is not fair to the other side. The problem is that if we do not get our way, we tend to go into a temper tantrum. This is not love. The cornerstone of compromise is the respect we have for the opinions of others and having love for something or someone more than ourselves. When we achieve this, we will all be much better off.