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A Lesson from Liz Cheney's Loss

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

People know when their leaders no longer like them

In this episode, Kevin reads from an article he wrote for WORLD reflecting on one lesson from Liz Cheney's 37-point defeat in Wyoming's Republican primary.

Transcript

Welcome back to Life and Books and Everything! I'm Kevin DeYoung. Today I'm reading from my piece on the world opinions page entitled A Lesson from Liz Cheney's Loss. People know when their leaders no longer like them.

This is not going to be a deep dive into electoral politics. That's not my lane. But I do want to reflect on one lesson from Liz Cheney's 37-point defeat in Wyoming's Republican primary.

I don't say THE lesson because there are many, but A lesson. Because I believe this is one cautionary tale that many of us in leadership would do well to consider. Here's the lesson I have in mind.

Don't expect to be a leader among people you no longer consider. You're no longer consider your people. Perhaps Cheney, as a Trump critic, was bound to lose in Wyoming.

A state that voted 70% for Trump in the 2020 election. But by 37 points. In SAS, the Republican senator from Nebraska is an up for re-election this cycle.

Maybe his impeachment vote would have done him in as well. SAS has long been outspoken in his criticism of Trump. And yet, he won easily in 2020 in a deep red state, even outperforming Trump himself.

Whatever you think of his politics, I think it's fair to say that SAS has managed to still give every impression that he is a down-to-earth Nebraskan. That he's eager to talk about all sorts of things that concern conservative Nebraskans and that he respects and

appreciates Nebraskans even when they disagree with some of his political convictions. In politics as well as in life, there is a fine line between speaking with courage, hoping to lead the people you love, and speaking with contempt, holding in derision the people you now find exasperating.

As a father, I can rebuke my children from time to time because they know that I love them and that rebuke is not mainly what I do. They can hear the hard things, I hope, because the dominant note for my mouth is not denunciation but laughter, warmth, and joy. Likewise, if I have to say something hard to my church, I believe they would be open to hearing it because they know I am with them.

I am for them, and I am one of them. One of the major problems I've seen over the past several years, and the problem cuts across institutions and networks on both the left and the right, is that the "prophetic voice" of rebuke, perhaps rightly needed at certain times when delivered in a thoughtful manner, can devolve from "I love you so much, I need to speak up" into a constant harping on the same thing and not thinly veiled disgust for the people you are ostensibly trying to correct. There comes a point when the "family" or the "tribe" or the "team" or whatever you want to call it, senses that you don't actually like the family, that you are constantly embarrassed by the tribe, and that you seem much more at home among some other team.

The "profit" may still insist that he believes all the same things the family does, but when he can rarely see past the family's faults, almost never celebrates the family's gifts, and almost always talks negatively about his family to others, often to those who are eager to put the family in a bad light, then it is fair to wonder whether he really wants to be a part of the family anymore. It's not automatically wrong to switch teams. Sometimes you change.

Sometimes the team changes. Sometimes both. But then honesty demands that the change is acknowledged.

I'm not thinking here so much about political parties as I am about voices in the church whose platform is predicated upon being an insider to something they are well on their way to stepping out of. There's nothing noteworthy about a PCUSA minister espousing progressive views on homosexuality or an ordained woman wailing against patriarchy. But swap a PCUSA for PCA and the ordained woman for a self-described complementarian, and then the story has legs.

That's when the "profits" need to decide if they want to influence their people or if those people are not really their people any longer. If all this sounds quite complicated, it doesn't have to be. We just need to be honest enough to ask ourselves some frank questions.

What am I quick to celebrate? What sort of people am I quick to criticize? What would I

publicly defend? What would I only privately critique? Who do I care to impress? Who do I find most impressive? Answer those questions and others like them, and the picture will come into focus. Identifying the official party registration or the official statement of faith often matters less than recognizing what things someone won't dare to utter and what things they won't stop talking about. In the end, you may choose to critique your former tribe from the outside.

You decided you wanted to exert influence among a different constituency fair enough. Just don't expect to lead people when you and they know you are no longer one of them. That's my piece in "Ladies' Peace" and "World Opinions".

I encourage you to check it out. Just so you know, all of these pieces end up eventually. There's a bit of a delay on the world pieces.

Just so folks can go to the world and find them there initially. Even these pieces end up later on KevinDyoung.org, which is a storing house for all of the content sermons, articles, talks, messages, interviews and other places that you can get. You can sign up and get a weekly digest of the new material there or just visit KevinDyoung.org. In a few weeks' time, you will find this article there as well.

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