

Accepting the Consequences of Our Decisions

Years ago, I read about a father and mother whose young child was killed by a drunk driver. The driver had a history of alcohol abuse, yet, he claimed remorse for his actions. The parents were devout Christians, and decided to forgive the driver and not press charges against him. A short time later, the same man became intoxicated, got behind the wheel again, and hit and killed another person.

For the parents of the child, the decision not to prosecute seemed like the Christian thing to do. No actions on their part could ever bring back their child. They appeared to be taking a higher road. They forgave and did not seek revenge.

The consequence of their decision, and their inaction, was another dead victim.

I nearly forgot about that tragic story, until two current news items brought it back to my memory.

Recently, two murderers escaped from a New York state prison. After weeks of eluding capture, one of the escapees was killed by police, while the other was captured two days later. There is no death penalty in New York – not even for the crime of murder. Opponents of the death penalty believe it is inhumane to kill convicted murderers.

However, if the two men had killed anyone after their escape, would death penalty opponents be culpable for that murder in any measure? Since the convicts remained alive, wouldn't the blood of the escapees' victim be on their hands? Is there a consequence to keeping murders alive?

To be fair, those who support capital punishment may also face consequences. If it is discovered after an inmate is executed that they were innocent, death penalty supporters could be considered culpable for the inmate's death.

In America, there are "sanctuary cities" for illegal immigrants. Recently, an illegal immigrant with a history of crime was turned over to authorities in San Francisco – a sanctuary city. San Francisco refused to hold the prisoner for the federal authorities, and released him. Later, he was arrested for shooting and murdering a 32-year old woman.

San Francisco politicians and residents believe they are acting justly in their handling of illegal immigrants. They disagree with federal

law, and welcome anyone who is not a citizen into their city. Ironically, if the prisoner had been an American citizen, San Francisco would have kept him in custody. I urge you to ponder that irony. Yet, because of their actions, a woman was murdered by a released wanted criminal.

There seems to be a common premise that runs through many of the decisions policymakers make today. We are a nation that is increasingly trapped in first stage thinking. We no longer seem capable of understanding that there are consequences to every decision. Usually, those consequences are minor. But in the examples above they are more serious, as lives were either lost or could easily have been lost.

There is no doubt that the people who are responsible for these policies believe that their ideals are superior, and they consider themselves to be wonderful human beings. Nonetheless, when ideals conflict with reality, it is time to reconsider those ideals.

There is a reason that people become less idealistic over time. As we age, we recognize that much of what we believe about life is simply wrong. Often, there are real consequences to those naïve, erroneous beliefs. When the average person disregards them, they simply choose to live in a world of make-believe. But when public officials impose those naïve ideals on the rest of society, the results can be almost criminal.

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