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Classical Liberalism

By: Bob Schaffer, LCHS Headmaster

Liberty Common High School's classical curriculum consistently delivers high-level conversation about timeless principles. These discussions, it is hoped, will one day stir our graduates to action.

This is one reason LCHS has become a truly important institution. Indeed, timeless principles, when set in motion, actually expand the frontiers of liberty.

Regardless of how much one thinks about it, all people actually care quite a lot about timeless principles. We care about consistency, predictability and transparency in our leaders, in our personal relationships and business partnerships. The sooner one grasps these important concepts, the better a leader one is likely to become.

Liberty's classical-liberal approach is predicated upon acknowledgement and deference to natural law – the understanding that human nature relates directly to a larger natural order. As such, natural law effects how man behaves, determines what humans need and ultimately helps predict how the majority are likely to react under certain circumstances.

The American Founders actually predicated the entire Declaration of Independence upon this concept. They wrote of the necessity for people to assume the "Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them."

For generations, this seminal concept of man had been parsed by history's most significant philosophers. Chief among them were Montesquieu, St. Thomas Aquinas, and John Locke – who had profound influence on the Founders.

As Liberty educates future leaders, we want them to understand human nature and natural law. For example, in economic leadership, our students should be able to explain why free people are motivated to create jobs.

As business leaders, they should respect the ability of free people to make the wisest and most-logical decisions about their wealth. As leaders for peace, they should understand the essence of liberty and know why rational beings are compelled to defend it when threatened.

As active citizens and voters, we often speculate on how early political leaders acquired stature in civic leadership and how quickly they embraced the basic elements of natural law. Did they always adhere to these principles? Did they ever discard them; and, if so, why?

Sure, leaders can change. Yes, they evolve and mature. They can improve. They can be brought to see things differently. These are not bad qualities.

Nonetheless, the value of consistency escalates according to the importance of the station being sought. We've all been disappointed by leaders who were driven by expedience, or whose beliefs turn out to be a show of cognitive dissonance rather than internalized virtue.

Changing one's philosophy is okay for perhaps a student. However, over the long term, Liberty strives toward consistency – not just for consistency's sake, but because we are genuinely driven by timeless principles anchored in natural law. Indeed, Liberty's philosophy embraces the same classical-liberal ideas that mark civilization's best philosophers.

They are the same principles that moved America's Founding Fathers to action, and which continue to expand the frontiers of liberty. They are the qualities we seek most in our leaders today and in the future.

Timeless principles are, in fact, virtues and ambitions that guide LCHS, that unite us as the Liberty family, and move our students boldly together in every classroom in which they gather.
