



"It is the mind that maketh good or ill, that maketh wretch or happy, rich or poor."

—Edmund Spenser

04-Apr-03

Always an Angle

One of the most conspicuous features of the now-two-week-old war in Iraq is the flood of information that has poured from Baghdad, Washington, London, Qatar, New York City, and various points in between. Some news outlets are still providing 24-hour war coverage. We get updates on the radio and television if anything new occurs—and even sometimes when nothing new occurs.

Also conspicuous are the many ways all this information is filtered before it is presented to the public. Every agency has its angle from which it views this war. No two angles are the same, and thus the watchword for this event and for all others is "consider the source."

Take, for example, the rescue of 19-year-old Pfc. Jessica Lynch from the hospital in Nasiriyah. None of the major players reporting on this heroic endeavor tell the story the same way. Central Command in Dohar uses it as an example of soldierly bravery, special-operations expertise, its humane execution of the campaign, and its leave-no-soldier-behind tradition. The White House, however, trumpets her rescue as proof of the Iraqi regime's cruelty and barbarism even toward women and of the tenacity and resoluteness of the American character.

The television networks approach it differently altogether. They are in the business of attracting and retaining viewers and thus advertising dollars. To them, the rescue of this pretty, blonde-haired teenager is a heartwarming human-interest story. They delve into her background, her family, her desires. She is the girl next door who wants to be a

kindergarten teacher and joined the army to get an education toward achieving that goal. They tell us what her favorite foods are and what kind of music she listens to. Because they support feminism, they consciously avoid the uncomfortable question, "What are our young women doing anywhere near Iraq?"

The Iraqi regime's spokesmen make no comment on the story—they will not even admit that American forces are sitting on Baghdad's doorstep. United Nations' spokesmen barely acknowledge it before hurrying on to their fears of a looming humanitarian crisis and criticism of the U.S. and Britain for freezing the UN out of post-war Iraq. The British kindly applaud the rescue while worrying about their own POWs and casualties.

This kind of storytelling has over the last few years been termed "spin." It also goes by an older name, linked forever to the mad genius of Nazi Joseph Goebbels: "propaganda." This word actually goes back to New Latin, meaning "propagation," or spreading or increasing a thing, such as an idea or a belief. The Roman Catholic Church under Pope Gregory XV even established the *Congregatio de propaganda fide* (Congregation for propagating the [faith](#)) in 1623 to organize and oversee missionary territories and activities. However, propaganda has come to mean "the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person."

The fact is that everyone uses propaganda or spin; it seems to be a trait of deceptive human nature to paint every picture from one's own perspective and toward one's own ends. Granted, it is difficult to see events from another's perspective, but with a little effort one can usually come to a greater understanding of another's point of view and speak and act accordingly. We just have to get in the habit of, as the old saying goes, walking in the other person's shoes.

Though [God](#) does not spew propaganda or use spin, He does have His own—and totally accurate—angle or perspective. To most of humanity, it is entirely alien to them, but to Christians it should be growing more familiar and more comfortable daily. In fact, the overriding reason for our existence once we are called is to acquire this godly perspective, the mind of Christ. In one sense, we have it—or in actually, a small measure of it—already by the indwelling of the [Holy Spirit](#) ([I Corinthians 2:16](#); [Ephesians 1:13-14](#)). However, we are also commanded to grow in it ([II Peter 3:18](#)) and "be transformed by the renewing of [our] mind, that [we] may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" ([Romans 12:2](#)).

As we go through our day, it would be a good exercise to ask ourselves, "How does God see this?" It is not as catchy as "What would [Jesus](#) do?" but it will help us greatly to

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see things from God's angle. And that, frankly, is the only angle that matters!

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Sin of Self-Deception](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh warns us that in our relationship with God, we must emphasize principle over pragmatism, because pragmatism inevitably leads to idolatry. Jeroboam, in setting idolatrous shrines and festivals at Dan and Bethel, appealed to the carnal desire for practical convenience (I Kings 12:26-33). These practical compromises eventually led to the desecration of the Sabbath and the holy days, ending in the captivity of Israel. When doctrine is diluted, it turns into outright idolatry. Like ancient Israel, we have to guard against the tendency to gravitate toward ministers speaking smooth and pleasant things at the expense of turning from the truth. If we are led into deception, it is because our carnal nature wanted it that way (Jeremiah 17:9).

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Time for Self-Evaluation](#)

by John O. Reid

Prior to the Days of Unleavened Bread, we are told to examine ourselves. How can we do that? John Reid gives a few pointers on doing a thorough, honest once over.

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