

from our viewpoint...

Financing politics; must be a better way

They keep talking about campaign finance reform. They never quite get the issue settled. Anything that comes down the pike is usually a diluted piece of political trash, designed to deceive the American public.

Both Democrats and Republicans are sinners in this regard.

President George W. Bush has a cash box containing \$150 million — you read that right — with which to wage a war against Sen. John Kerry, the Democratic candidate for the White House next November. Kerry's cash box has been greatly reduced by the necessity to ward off several contenders within his own party. He's now out beating the bushes — not the Bush's bushes — for more money. He'll need to just about equal the ever growing Bush bundle to even make a race of it.

So, were did Bush's millions and millions and millions of dollars come from? Beats us. And Sen. Kerry? A lot of his came from his own pocket — he's not your average working American. He's wealthy beyond description.

So, how do we handle this goofy campaign finance reform?

Easy. Very, very easy. But simplicity is not the thing the Washington crowd cuddles. After all if it's too simple the American people will know how it works and that could spell trouble — for those benefiting from the windfalls and whatever else is involved.

So, here's our plan — plain and simple:
There are 50 states.

The candidates for the White House could raise no more than \$1 million from each state.

Math says that totals \$50 million per candidate.

They could then spend those \$50 million as they see fit. In other words if Republicans view our state of Kansas as just another Republican-embedded state there would be no reason to waste their money here. So, they could take the \$1 million raised here and pump it into another state where they feel they need more presence.

Make sense?

No, it doesn't. Too simple. Too easy for Mr. & Mrs. John Q. Public to understand, and after all they are not supposed to understand campaign finance reform legislation. No fun that way.

Something else our plan would do would greatly shorten the campaign season (and we all yell about that). And that would really test the candidates' ability to handle money to make the sum total stretch. It would give us some sense of their awareness of the importance of spending one's money wisely. And it might also give us a clue as to how they would handle the nation's budget, which, we all agree, just isn't being handled.

That's it. Our free advice.

Fifty states, \$50 million. — *Tom A. Dreiling*

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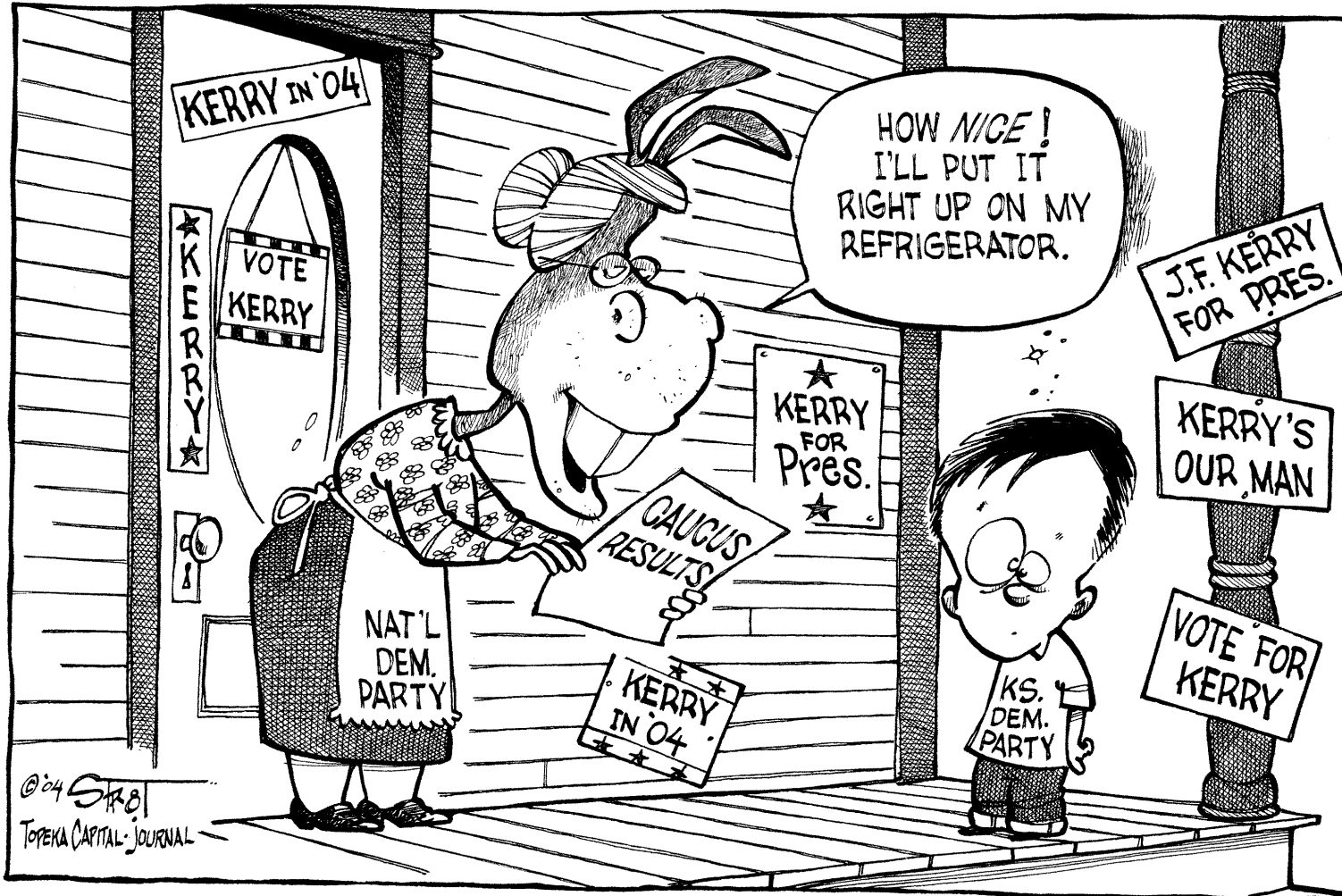
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A new look at 'The Prodigal Son'

I don't know about you, but sometimes Bible stories speak to me in a new way.

For instance: The Prodigal Son.

I've always thought it was a story about a lost son, like the lost sheep and the lost coin (and it is). Yet it is about so much more.

For most of my life, I thought "prodigal" was a "Bible" word that meant "lost." Then I decided to look and see if it were in the dictionary. Sure enough!

But it didn't mean what I thought it meant. "Prodigal" means "anyone who spends lavishly and foolishly."

So I thought about that for awhile.

We have a lot of prodigals in America — all with credit cards. Too many of us spend needlessly and foolishly. We are so much like the younger son who wanted to have and do everything — right now!

There is no longer talk of "saving up" for something like Americans did before World War II. (Maybe we didn't really win that war after all. It certainly changed the American way of life.)

It used to be a disgrace to take out bank-



Lorna
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• commentary

ruptcy, but no more. There are even ads on TV about companies who will help you beat the system and overcome your credit card debt.

No recrimination for over-spending. Almost a glorification of it. "Buy everything you want, and then we'll help you cheat your creditors." Of course they don't say it like that, but isn't that what they're really saying?

As I think of the Bible story, the younger son wasn't the only prodigal in the tale. When he "came to his senses" and went home, his father also spent lavishly to throw a party for his lost son. (Much to the chagrin of the older brother.) I suppose some would say the father is the same as the companies who encourage you to be selfish and wayward. He'll always welcome you home and restore you to his good graces.

But think of the heartache the young son experienced — much as devotees to credit cards experience before there is restoration. No parents would wish that on their children.

The father in the story represents God. God gives us free choice as to which road we travel. However, I think, like any good parent, God would like to have his children make wise choices, be good stewards of all the wonderful gifts we've been given, as well as experience joy and peace instead of heartbreak and need. God stands at the door, ready to help, hoping we'll realize our foolishness, turn away from the glitter of the world and come back home where there is peace, calm and contentment.

Oh, and by the way, you can be a prodigal in a good way.

You can spend lavishly to meet the needs of the people around you. You can experience a lot of satisfaction from that kind of spending.

But be prepared, people around you will criticize you for being foolish.

Those who say the Bible is out-dated and not relevant to modern times certainly haven't read it lately, have they?

Time to prepare for severe weather season

To the Editor:

The week of March 15-19, has been designated as Kansas Severe Weather Awareness Week.

Sherman County Emergency Management would like to remind people that Kansas ranks No 1 in the nation for the most powerful tornadoes in our country.

There were a total of 91 tornadoes in the state of Kansas last year, and two of those were in the category of F4. 2003 was a very good year for Sherman County, as we only had three very weak tornadoes reported, with small amounts of damage.

We need to realize that safety during severe weather is everyone's responsibility.

• Do you know where you should go when Sherman County is placed in a tornado warning?

• Have you made arrangements with your family members?

• Do you have a phone number for a family member who lives outside the county, where relatives can call to check in?

No matter where you are, do some advance



from our
readers

• to the editor

planning. Identify protective areas in your home, or nearby where you can get to in a hurry. Get a weather radio that will provide an alarm if a tornado watch or warning is in effect for your area.

The key to tornado survival is to be prepared and to take cover immediately when a warning is issued or when you spot a tornado.

Sherman County will be participating in the statewide tornado drill next Tuesday, in cooperation with the National Weather Service, so you will hear the tornado sirens sounding on a different day and time than we usually test them.

The storm spotters meeting for this year will

be held at the Kansas National Guard Armory at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, March 17. If you are interested in learning about how tornadoes begin, and what to watch for, mark your calendars now to come listen to David Floyd from the National Weather Service, as he instructs us in how to be good storm spotters.

Mary K. Messamore
Sherman County emergency management director

To the Editor:

Thanks to all my friends for taking time to send me all the wonderful cards and letters for my 95th birthday. It really made my day.

Janey and Jack put them all on my door, and every time I leave my room they remind me of your thoughtfulness and my friends in Goodland.

Belle Montgomery
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