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9 December, 2020

Introverts and Extroverts *By Peter Challen*

"My refuge, my fortress, my God in whom I trust." Psalm 91:2

Friends,

Once again, I am beyond happy to write to you. Regardless of how infrequently we see each other, I think of you often.

Since grade school, you've probably heard the terms, extrovert and introvert. You may have even applied those terms to people you know, even to yourself. Usually, we think of extroverts as communicative, socially adept, easy to be with, while introverts are reserved, perhaps shy. Growing up, these definitions seemed to favour the former over the latter. However, I suggest both of these definitions limit all of us.

Later in my career, I learned definitions for these terms that provide an equal value to each, and a constructive path no matter how we see ourselves. Valuing all of us is crucial at a time like this Covid pandemic where all the issues under the sun seem to be magnified. Besides, we all have more time to think; when before have we used the terms: "social-distancing" and "stay-at-home" or "self-quarantine" and "self isolation"? As people who, by and large, tend to be more self-reflective than average, we can be quite hard on ourselves. So we need new definitions for ourselves.

The basis of these new definitions is not how we come across to others, but from where we get our strength. Extroverts tend to get more strength from interaction with others. Introverts tend to get more strength from activities that are more solitary. Both can get strength from the opposite, but not as much. It follows that an extrovert would have a tougher time with solitary confinement, while an introvert could be the life of the party, but would really benefit from some alone time to recharge. There are degrees of each too. We are a complicated lot. If you think of it another way, do you find yourself tired after an event of socializing? If so it may be because all that interaction saps your energy. On the other hand, if these periods of Covid enforced isolation make you tired, it may be because you are wanting some more of that socializing to energize you.

From Psalm 91 above, the introvert might focus on the "refuge" and "fortress". The extrovert might focus on the "trust" in something beyond themselves. Whose to say which is more helpful? Both of these concepts are in one sentence – that's good science as well as good theology. It depends on who we are – how we are wired, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Covid is a challenge for all of us of every stripe. If you get more of your strength from being alone, make sure you get enough of that for your well being – even if you are in a relationship and share the space in which you live. You are not being anti-social; you are being health conscious. Find time on a regular basis, e.g.: read, meditate, fishing is always good. If you are an extrovert, make sure you get enough of that for your own health (safely following the health guidelines) e.g.: calling friends, saying hello to neighbours from your porch, shopping for someone more fragile. The options for each group are limitless. The importance is knowing yourself – love the skin you're in.

Once you've got a handle on what cranks you up, and if you've nothing to do for the next few minutes, ascertain into which group you think I would fit. Call me to let me know; I've been trying to figure that out for years.

Much love and be well.

Peter

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