

Butt Scratching and Bass Fishing

by Dave Ramsey

A couple of weeks ago, I worked late like I sometimes need to do to run my business. It was a nice Tennessee summer evening, and I was enjoying the drive home. About 7:30, as I pulled to a stop light a few blocks from my office, I noticed a light on in the corner office of a friend's office building. Through the twilight I could make out my friend's silhouette as he bent over his desk. Being a fellow entrepreneur, I knew what he was doing.

He was pouring over some receivables. Some turkey hadn't paid him, and he was trying to make his accounts balance so he would have the cash to make it another day. In that instant, **I had a flashback to some of the ridiculous statements** I've been hearing on the talking-head news channels and from some individuals during this political year. And I'll be honest—I **instantly felt the heat of anger** flow through my body.

Let me tell you why. You see, my friend who I saw working late—we'll call him Henry—is a great guy. He's what you want your son to grow up to be. He loves God, his country, his wife, and his kids. He didn't have the academic advantage of attending a big-name university. Instead, he started installing heating and air systems as a grunt laborer after he graduated from high school. He was and is a very hard and diligent worker, and before long, the boss taught him the trade. But when he was 24, after 6 years of service, the company he was working for got into financial trouble and **laid him off**.

Henry still had his tools, so he bought an old pickup to haul around his materials and tools, and suddenly he was in business. He knew about heating and air-conditioning, but not about business, so he made a lot of mistakes.

He persisted. He took accounting and management at the community college to learn about business. He started reading books on business, HVAC, marriage, kids, God, and anything else someone he respected recommended. Today he is one of the best-read men I know. Soon, because of his fabulous service and fair prices, he developed **a great reputation**, and his little business began to grow.

Henry started 15 years ago, and now he has 17 employees whose families are fed because he does a great job. He is in church on Sunday and seldom misses his kids' Little League games. Sometimes he has to miss a game because some poor soul has their AC go out in the 96-degree Tennessee summer heat, but **Henry makes sure they are served**. He is, by all standards, a good man. He is, by all standards, what makes America great.

Henry and I are friends, and so he asked me some financial questions last year. I learned in the process that his personal taxable income last year was \$328,000. I smiled with pride for this 70-hour a week guy because he is living the dream.

At the stop light that evening, I also thought of another guy I know—and that is **where the anger flash came from**. We will call him John. While John does not have the same drive Henry has, I can say that he, too, is a good man.

John also graduated from high school and did not attend a big-name university. He went to work at a local factory 15 years ago. When 5:00pm comes around, John has probably already made it to his car in the parking lot. He comes in 5 minutes late, takes frequent breaks, and leaves 5 minutes early. However, to his credit, he is steady and works hard.

Over the years, due to his steadiness and seniority, he has worked his way up to about \$75,000 per year in that same factory. He seldom misses his kid's ballgames, but most nights you will find him **in front of the TV** where he has become an expert on "American Idol," "The Biggest Loser," and who got thrown off the island. When he is not in front of the TV, he spends a LOT of time and money bass fishing on our local lake. He never works over 40 hours a week and hasn't read a non-fiction book since high school.

This is America, and there is nothing wrong with either set of choices. Nothing wrong, that is, until the politicians and socialists get involved.

I have seen several elitist people on the talking-head channels make the statement lately that people making over \$250,000 per year have a “moral imperative” to pay more in taxes to take care of the country’s problems. This is not only infuriating—it is **economically, spiritually, and morally crazy!**

Where in the world do these twits get off saying that Henry should be punished for his diligence? If you are John, where do you get off trying to take Henry’s hard-earned money away from him in the name of your misguided “fairness”? If you want to sit on the lake, drink beer, scratch your butt, and bass fish, that is perfectly fine with me. I am not against any of those activities and have engaged in some of them myself at one time or another. But you **HAVE NO RIGHT** to talk about “moral imperatives” about what other people have earned due to their diligence. That money is not yours! **You want some money? Go earn some! Get up, leave the cave, kill something, and drag it home.**

We are in a dangerous place in our country today. A segment of our population has decided that it is the government’s job to provide all of their protection, provision, and prosperity. This segment has figured out that government doesn’t have the money to give them everything they want, so somebody else has to pay for it. That is how the “politics of envy” was born. “Tax the rich” has become the mantra of the left, and this political season it has been falsely dubbed a “moral imperative.”

Ninety percent of America’s millionaires are first-generation rich. They are Henry. To tax them because you think it is a “moral imperative” is legalizing governmental theft from our brightest, most charitable, and most productive citizens.

If I can get a law passed that says you must surrender all your cars to the government because it is the “moral imperative” of anyone who owns cars to support the latest governmental program, that would be a **violation of private property rights and simply morally wrong**. This new “moral imperative” to redistribute wealth is no different from that. It’s the **SAME THING!**

Please, America, re-think the politics of envy! You are sowing the seeds of our destruction when you punish the Henrys of our culture.

If you think taxing the populace to support government programs is the best way—and I don’t—then at least tax every single person the same! There are very few Henrys out here who would squawk much about paying a set percentage of their income—if everyone else did, too. But this idea of some **butt-scratching bass fisherman** saying government should tax his neighbor and not him—just because his neighbor has succeeded—must stop.

So the next time an elitist media talking-head starts telling you it is the moral imperative of our culture to tax my friend Henry, change the channel.

The next time you see someone wealthy who feels guilty and is preaching the politics of envy, change the channel.

The next time you see some celebrity who feels guilt over their income preaching socialism, change the channel.

And the next time you run into a misguided, butt-scratching bass fisherman who says the evil rich people in our culture should have their private property confiscated because that is fair... well just shake your head walk away—and make sure to vote against his candidate. **If he and his type win, God help America.**