

Are You Better Off Now Than You Were Under Trump?



by Rolaant McKenzie

November 3, 2024

At a campaign rally in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, on October 19, 2024, presidential candidate Donald Trump posed a question to the American people, echoing another presidential candidate in 1980, Ronald Reagan, whose asking of the same question helped him win the first of two terms as president of the United States.

“Are you better off now than you were four years ago?”

Asking this question is typically meant to get its hearers to consider the state of their economic situation, especially regarding kitchen table issues. Is it easier or more difficult for their incomes to keep up with the rising costs of food, water, energy, and other necessities of life? Should the current leadership remain in office or is new leadership with different economic policies needed?

Like with many things in life, whether one is better or worse off is determined by the criteria applied and the outcomes that follow. An example of this can be seen in an ancient Chinese proverbial tale called “Sāi Wēng Lost His Horse,” found in a second century BC classic work called *The Huainanzi*.

Sāi Wēng was a poor farmer who lived in a northern frontier village with his son. One day he lost his horse when it ran away. Upon hearing of this misfortune, his neighbors felt

sorry for him and came to comfort him, saying how sad this had happened. Sāi Wēng said, "How could we know that perhaps this is a good thing for me?"

After a few months, Sāi Wēng's horse returned accompanied by another one. His neighbors congratulated him on his good fortune. But Sāi Wēng asked, "How could we know that perhaps this is not a good thing for me?"

One day, his son went out for a ride on the new horse, but he was thrown from it and broke his leg. Sāi Wēng's neighbors once again expressed their condolences, but he said, "How could we know that perhaps this is a good thing for me?"

Some time after this, the Xiongnu invaded the frontier, and the emperor's army arrived to recruit all able-bodied men to fight. All the men drafted from the village perished in the war, but Sāi Wēng's son was saved because he could not fight due to his injured leg.

This story, in part, was meant to convey the idea that a seemingly negative event can have an unexpected, positive outcome. Even though Sāi Wēng faced some negative circumstances, he could later look back and affirm that he was better off because his son's life was spared.

Jack Phillips, owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop in Lakewood, Colorado, can relate in some ways to the story of Sāi Wēng. In July 2012, a homosexual couple visited his bakery and requested that Phillips make a custom wedding cake for the celebration of their relationship. He declined their request due to his Christian faith but offered other baked goods in the store. The couple left and filed a complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, starting a lawfare campaign against Phillips that cost his family about 40% of their income and caused more than half of their employees to lose their jobs.



Several years later, the U.S. Supreme Court heard the case and ruled in his favor on June 4, 2018, holding that the Commission violated Phillips' constitutional rights of free

exercise of religion stated in the First Amendment.

But Phillips' ordeal had not ended yet. On the same day the U.S. Supreme Court announced that it would hear his case, a local transgender lawyer sought him out and requested that he make a cake celebrating gender transition. Phillips politely refused as it violated his Christian beliefs, and the lawyer promptly filed a complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, starting another bullying legal effort to get him to submit to the LGBTQ+ religion or lose his business.

This case against Phillips was eventually heard by the Colorado Supreme Court on October 8, 2024. While it was dismissed on technical grounds, it did perhaps pose an insurmountable obstacle to further litigation from his adversaries.

Eight days later, in an interview with Fox News Digital, Phillips, looking back over the 12-year legal battle, threats of harm against him and his family, and facing the possible loss of his livelihood, was thankful to God for sustaining him and his family. He said:

"One of the most important things to come out of this is that it's made my faith much stronger, drawn our family closer

together, and built all of our relationships with Jesus Christ. It's also taught me that God provides everything we need through these last days of not creating the wedding cakes and the income that's involved in that. But He's also given us many other opportunities."

When considering the question of whether he was better off now than during the years of persecution before, Phillips' affirmative answer was determined not by his economic or legal situation but by the measure of his faith in and relationship with Jesus Christ, the most important thing in life.

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Those who believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord can have the confident hope that no matter what favorable or adverse circumstances we face in life, whether our preferred political figures or parties assume government leadership or not, or other unexpected events take place in our lives, we can trust in God who works all things after the counsel of His will for His glory, the culmination of which is His goodness, love, grace, and redemption toward us in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3-12; 2 Timothy 1:7-12).

Are you better off now than you were before? If you are reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ and your relationship with Him has grown closer, then the answer is a resounding yes!

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