



## **Radically Moderate**

*By Stephen Lautens*

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To be perfectly honest, I'm a radical. I have been for a long time. I'm passionate about my beliefs and I'll defend them to the end. The difference is, I'm radical about being moderate.

We live in a world of radical nuts, willing to blow themselves and other people up because they believe they have a monopoly on the truth, God or a few square kilometres of dirt. There are people who would happily destroy something in order to "save" it, ban something in the name of freedom or burn books to keep people from reading them.

"Live and let live" is the non-battle cry of moderates. We try to mind our own business and let people do and believe whatever they want, provided they don't hurt others in the process. Keen on Jesus? Good for you. Want to worship a big rock in your back yard? Go ahead. Makes no difference to me, as long as you don't try to force me to wear a funny hat, drink poisoned Kool-Aid or build a spaceship in Kansas so the elders can escape.

Don't be fooled - being moderate isn't easy. It takes real effort to try to understand the world in all its complexities and see it in other than black and white. Everyone wants to simply things from flat tax to miracle diets. Moderates are never certain, and know there are no quick fixes. A change to the tax rate won't end poverty, a dozen new jails won't make the streets safer, nor will shutting down immigration, boot camps for youth, or a gun in or out of every closet.

Then there's the other end of the radical spectrum, where some people think we have to abandon technology, science, modern farming and everything western civilization has stood for. Or being as out to lunch a NDP leader Jack Layton wanting to sit down with the Taliban for a non-fat latte to discuss everything they have in common, just before a villager puts an axe in his head. There has to be a balance.

As a moderate you can support our troops in the terrible, dangerous work they do in the midst of a hostile (and non-moderate) population, but at the same time you can also ask whether it's wise to throw a couple hundred of brave men and women into a situation like Afghanistan that has no resolution. Sure, we're clearly on the side of right and doing good work. That's not the issue. I don't know the answer, and I don't trust anyone who says they do, especially in a place that has swallowed whole armies over the last 200 years.

One of the big problems is that with the world getting crazier by the minute, it's getting more and more difficult to be a moderate. Not just with other people who barking for blood. Maybe it's just old age setting in, but I'm starting to get flashes of being cranky with today's issues myself.

I'll be reading the paper and find myself muttering: "Lock them up, and throw away the key!" Or, "Maybe it's time to bring back the death penalty." Bombing a country flat starts sounding like a good idea when trying to come up with a solution seems futile and just makes your brain hurt. Figuring things out is much harder than doing something – anything – and hoping it works.

I don't know why it is that with more experience about how the world really works, some people start getting impatient with the time it takes for sensible solutions. I don't think it's wisdom and experience talking – it's the opposite. It's frustration over not being able to get things done they way they should be.

The struggle is to not lose the faith, and keep yourself fiercely moderate no matter how nuts the world gets.

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