

Set the Pace

1 Timothy 4:12 (ESV):

Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

I wish I had a deeper interest in politics than I do. Perhaps I need to invest more time in digging into the in-depth details of our political candidates and representatives. Actually, I SHOULD, and so should you.

Here is what I see, especially in my home state of Oklahoma. Many politicians run as “Christians” because that gets votes in a church-going state. These politicians know how to make a Christian appearance and then fail to live up to God’s standards in their positions. So often a politician, even ones professing faith in Christ, will say one thing to your face and another in their assemblies.

We watched one such case on January 6, 2021. One of our senators told us he would not vote to certify the election because of possible voter fraud. Yet, when the pressure was on, he caved and voted for certification. He went back on his word to his constituents, many of whom are now working hard for his defeat in the next senatorial election.

Too many of our “Christian” political leaders have a skewed worldview. Like many in the public, Jesus is not the Lord over ALL of their lives. He is Lord on Sundays but not the rest of the week. Too many feel comfortable leaving Him out of their families, their morality, their jobs, and their recreation. This is not a Christian example, but a worldly one.

Jesus said in **John 13:15** (ESV):

¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

The apostle Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 11:1** (ESV):

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

These are very rabbinic passages. You see, a rabbi’s disciple wants to be just like his rabbi. He did not merely want to absorb his teachings, he wanted to look and act like his rabbi in every way.

Paul was devoted to being like his rabbi, Jesus. Jesus sets the example and Paul imitated it. He then tells his disciples to imitate him – as he imitates Jesus, the ultimate example. Parents need to remember this for their children; teachers (and preachers) for their students; and politicians for the public.

Our forefathers were aware of their political responsibilities and accountability to the public. John Quincy Adams, one of my favorite presidents, gave his entire life to serving America, beginning as a child training with the Minutemen and then dying in the Speaker of the House’s office as an old man.

Adams was a regular participant in the church that met in the US Capitol along with many other members of Congress. He recorded the following observations in his diary on June 5, 1842:

This morning I attended public worship in the Hall of the House of Representatives. • • • [The] sermon was from 1 John 2:15: “Love not the world; neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of – the Father is not in him.” It was a discourse quite

appropriate to the place in which it was delivered and to the supposed auditory [audience], consisting as it should, chiefly of Members of Congress.¹

He further stated:

I consider it as one of public duties as a representative of the people to give my attendance every Sunday morning when Divine service is performed in the Hall.²

Thomas Jefferson is often bashed by modern historians. They are critical of him on several levels, including his religion. While President, Jefferson attended the same church as Adams in the Capitol. In fact, regardless of the weather, he always rode to services. Note what he said:

No nation has ever existed or been governed without religion - nor can be. The Christian religion is the best religion that has been given to man and I, as Chief Magistrate of this nation, am bound to give it the sanction of my example.³

Maybe Jefferson was just being pragmatic. Maybe he was just going through the motions. One thing he understood was that a nation's leaders have an impact on the people. He tried to set the pace for Americans.

Christianity is more than verbiage to win elections. Rather, it is a lifestyle for every part of our lives. Paul points this out in **Colossians 3:17** (ESV):

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

So, don't take or carry or use the name of Jesus in vain in your life. You are an influence on someone. So are our political and church leaders (that's a whole other lesson).

So, Keep the Light of Godly Influence Burning!

¹ John Quincy Adams. *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincot and Co., 1876), Vol. XI, p. 169, diary entry for June 5, 1842.

² *Ibid.*

³ James Hutson. *Religion and the Founding of the American Republic* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1998), p. 96.