

Lifelines

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Topic:

Who represents you? Whom do you represent?

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When was the last time you read the Declaration of Independence to which seven of Virginia's most famous forefathers (Carter Braxton, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Jefferson, Richard Henry Lee, Francis Lightfoot Lee, Thomas Nelson Jr., and George Wythe) gave their signatures and pledged their lives, and all the resources they had, to support the cause for freedom? These men gave a list of grievances which led to them to write America's Declaration of Independence, and then they ended it with this potent sentence: "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

They wanted "the right to elect our own leaders" to become, and remain, a core value of America, so that every voter's vote would count. They wanted representatives to represent all the people, not just their favorites, and to do what was good for all those that they were elected to represent. Since Americans at that time had no say in the rules established by Britain, they declared independence from Britain's tyranny and taxation without representation.

This is the 250th year of celebrating our new system of government which was designed to be government by all the citizens, for all the citizens, and a government that was a servant of all the citizens. I hope that after you read this column, you will take the time to read "The Declaration of Independence" and note the list of grievances that brought about that terminal declaration. If we fail to learn from history, we will end up losing our unique freedom.

A country, state, county, town, church, or any group, is only as good as its leaders. Humans are power-junkies. In the core of each of us is a fallen nature that tends to undermine others in order to assert ourselves, to tear others down that we might move up. The human drive to survive and thrive is innate in human nature. The drive is not the problem; the misuse of that drive is the problem.

When we use our drive to become exceptional in our thinking, planning, and implementing, by collaborating with others for the benefit of all, the results are wonderful. When we surrender our gifts and abilities to God, and allow Him to use them to accomplish His will, they become a blessing. However, when we abuse or misuse our abilities, those actions become destructive. The key is our motive and manner in which we do things.

Jesus set the example for healthy and effective leadership. Some of Jesus' disciples, or their relatives, were vying to become the top leaders in Jesus' movement, so Jesus set them straight. In Matthew 20:25-28 (CSB) we read: ²⁵Jesus called them over and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles (pagans) lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. ²⁶It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Good leaders don't manipulate others, nor lie to others, nor negate the value of each person they are responsible to lead. Leaders empower those they lead to become all that they can become. They lead by example, valuing the least among them, elevating them and lifting them up so they

become all they can become. Leaders serve others, lead by example, and value each person by being honest with them, modeling humble service, and creating and conveying value and worth to them.

Jesus had all power in Heaven and Earth, yet laid it aside to highlight how much He values each of our lives above His own. He empowers our decision-making ability, and teaches us to set aside our selfish agendas in order to love and serve one another, instead of disdainfully riding roughshod over others, or deceptively abusing those with little power. Jesus gave people “the world,” and trusted us to together become one people, instead of pitting the people against each other.

Are you conveying value into the lives of others, or devaluing others? Are you serving others, or enslaving them? Do you love others, or use others? Our values of love and service will become the measurement of our lives on the day of God’s judgment. No one will escape answering to God for the way we honored, or abused, others through our values, decisions, actions and lives. Who do you represent?

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