

PLYMOUTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



2024

“Make Lying Wrong Again” the T-shirt and bumper sticker said. I couldn’t agree more! It’s well past time we stood for speaking truth! (Yep, I’m on the subject of politics in this article and the importance of character.) Our society seems to be devolving; lying and its cousin, cheating, seem to be okay, unless one is under oath and subject to punishments for perjury. What’s more, lying and cheating have become particularly prevalent in politics, where truth and justice are most needed.

Strangely enough, cheating seems to be more anathema in sports than in decisions that affect the lives of millions of people and the future of the world. Take for example, quarterback Tom Brady received a four-game suspension for arranging to have some air removed from Super Bowl footballs (called “deflategate”); and University of Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh received a three-game suspension for allegedly having scouts figure out opposing team’s signs.

These cheating incidents made big news! Yet, we are at the point where lies by politicians hardly make any headlines at all.

Recently, we all viewed the presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump. Both candidates performed horribly. It was President Biden who stumbled with answers, and lost his train of thought. Potential voters, long been concerned about Biden’s age and increasing feebleness, viewed his performance in this debate with great concern. It, in fact, has caused panic in Democratic party officials. I agree with this concern. Many Democratic party members are now suggesting the search for a new nominee to replace Biden.

Yet, I have just as much concern about the other participant in this debate, the former president, Donald Trump. While he demonstrated greater vigor and vitality than Biden, Trump, who is just three years younger than Biden, spewed almost nothing but outrageous lies. Yet no one from the Republican party is calling for him to be replaced with another candidate.

I do not know if there is evidence of dementia for either Biden or Trump. What I do see with Biden are the normal deficits of age; slower cognitive processing, losing train of thought, and word finding difficulties. These are not deficits I would think would affect his ability to perform as president, although they are deficits that likely will affect his ability to gain votes. In my view, neither candidate is qualified for office of the President of the United States for 2024. Character matters!

A key question: What are the qualities and skills necessary for a good president? Intelligence, knowledge (current events, history, political philosophy, science and so much more), emotional maturity and stability, honesty, altruism, empathy, humility, and self-sacrifice (the desire to be a *servant* leader). **Another key question:** What are the worst traits for a president to have? Lust for power, selfishness, willful ignorance, lack of intellectual curiosity, dishonesty, instability, lack of empathy, and lack of a conscience.

Character is important in sports. It is important for teachers, CEOs, doctors, lawyers, judges, pastors and psychologists. It is important for every single one of us. It is particularly important for our leaders, and most certainly the leader of the free world. In fact, I can think of nothing that is more important than character. Neither could Jesus.

Folks, we have a tough election season ahead. Let’s do this together and not lose our own character along the way. It matters.

Keep the faith, (yes, hope and love, too)

Pastor Peter