

RED PILLAR: PATRIOTISM
CONVERSATION STARTERS

from *Stories of the Government*

(The numbered principles refer to principles found in *The 5000 Year Leap*.)

p. 11 *"They began to think; and when people begin to think, they soon begin to act."*

p. 247 *"Three millions of people so dead to all feelings of liberty, as to submit voluntarily to be treated as slaves, would be a fit instrument, indeed, to make slaves of."*

What distractions keep us from thinking today and what danger does that present?

p.14 *"...liberty without union is strength without wisdom."*

p. 249 *"...we must see that these colonies are encouraged to keep separate from each other; for should they learn that they can combine they will soon learn to throw off the English government and set up for themselves. Fortunately these colonies have...little in common. Better...to allow them great freedom in home government, each distinct from the other, rather than that they become dissatisfied and so find it necessary to combine."*

p. 313 *"So long as you hold fast together and aid each other, you will prosper, and none can injure you...Only in union could there be strength."*

As Americans, what do we share in common? What brings us together? Do you believe our Union is strong?

p. 15 *"...men...thought that to be free meant free to do as they pleased."*

p. 155 *"Our flag carries...this supreme idea: Divine right of liberty in man...not lawlessness, not license, but organized institutional liberty---liberty through law and laws for liberty!"*

p. 172 *"...freedom is not letting men do as they please; liberty is not the absence of law. It is self-government that makes us free; it is law that gives us liberty."*

p. 301 *"We must each submit to the abridgement of some portion of our liberty, some portion of our privileges in order to secure the rest. ...[There is] the necessity of laying down certain rules, by which the essential rights of each should be preserved and a state of harmony insured."*

What do you think constitutes "good" law? What kind of freedoms might people claim today that may actually harm us?

#1: The only reliable basis for sound government and just human relations is natural law.

#7: The proper role of government is to protect equal rights, not provide equal things.

p. 15 *"...what men have sternly striven for they will not lose if they can help it."*

p. 132 *"...liberty can come only through loss, and progress only through pain."*

p. 135 *"...how great a boon is liberty, and...men have been willing to fight for it and die for it that their children...may live in comfort and security..."*

p. 136 *"By their stripes we are healed; by their deaths we have lived."*

What price have you personally paid for your freedom? How might having America go through a difficult time make it stronger? What can you do to show gratitude for those who sacrificed for your freedom?

p. 25 *"Above all laws, above all officers, above all measures, stands the Constitution...It is a compact between brothers; but by it they must abide."*

p. 308 *"The truth is, my young friends, people cannot live together in society without government."*

p. 315 *"A constitution is the highest law of a country."*

What does it mean to stand by the Constitution? Would our Constitution have the same success as we've seen here in America if it was established in a country such as Iraq or Saudi Arabia? Why or why not?

#18: The unalienable rights of the people are most likely to be preserved if the principles of government are set forth in a written constitution.

#22: A free people should be governed by law and not by the whims of men.

p. 29 *"[The Constitution] is strong because it says so little. It is the root of law, and has lasted because it is so simple."*

What does this say about many of our laws today? How can we get back to simplicity? Why is simplicity so powerful?

p. 40 *"...the president can assume almost unlimited power...[he] must be a wise, safe man upon whom the people can rely."*

p. 48 *"In time of war or in cases of emergency,.., he is more powerful than any king. Then a bad President could be a tyrant."*

p. 181 *"...the selection and election of our rulers—who are also our public servants—...is one of the chief duties of American citizens...Far too many American citizens fail to look upon voting as it should be considered—a sacred duty upon which the peace, the prosperity, and the welfare of our country depend."*

p. 308 *"The absolute monarch is generally a tyrant. Men are too imperfect to be trusted with absolute power."*

Can you think of some instances in our history when a President had to seize complete power into his own hands? Knowing the potential power a President may hold, what specific traits and virtues are important to look for in selecting your leader?

#3: The most promising method of securing a virtuous and morally stable people is to elect virtuous leaders.

#10: The God-given right to govern is vested in the sovereign authority of the whole people.

p. 130 "Agriculture is as necessary to the development of a nation as art."

Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not? Many of our schools are cutting out art programs. How does that affect us as a nation?

p. 150 "We shall never...have a foreign war. Our strength at home is a standing menace to foreign invasions..."

"...defenses and defenders that might repel a foreign foe are of small avail if the people are not patriots."

p. 211 "Patriotism doesn't consist in making the eagle scream, in flaunting flags and raising a great hullabaloo on holidays. Bragging and boasting are not patriotism; even eloquence is not patriotism any more than are mere promises of devotion or avowals of love and affection for the Union and the flag. Patriotism is performance. It is to do when it costs to do, to assert when plain speaking is dangerous, to stand firm when yielding would be so much easier; it is doing one's duty always. Patriotism is love of country put to a practical end. It is to do our best for our land in whatever direction effort may lie. This alike the lowest and the highest in the land can do, from street-sweeper to President. Patriotism is action; patriotism is thought; patriotism is life. So think and act and live that you may be real patriots and therefore true Americans."

p. 150 "True patriotism means self-government."

If patriots are key to defending our country from foreign invasions, how safe do you think we are?

p. 188 "The Government of the United States is based upon the equality of all men before the law. To prevent this equality from being turned to wrong ends by designing men, or lost through dissension and ignorance, is our chief duty as American citizens."

What measures are taken to ensure equality among our citizens?

#6: All men are created equal.

#7: The role of government is to protect equal rights, not provide equal things.

p. 189 *“Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.”*

p. 212 *“Indifference is the bog in which...we flounder and sink.”*

p. 214 *“The future of America is in your hands...If [you] will but study aright the lesson of liberty and know that it can be held only at the price of eternal vigilance, all will be well.”*

What kinds of things do we need to be “vigilant” about? What happens when we let our guard down?

p. 214 *“Since 1820 eighteen millions of foreigners have found a home in these United States. Millions more will come. They bring hard problems for us to solve, but we can solve them—you will solve them, boys and girls, if you will but teach those newcomers, by your lives and actions, the real meaning of liberty, and show them that the very spirit of unrest they bring and which fills the world today is really the best possible grand-point from which liberty can work, if her sons will but recognize the truth and grandeur of the Golden Rule.”*

What is the “real meaning of liberty” that we need to teach immigrants? How can our lives and actions demonstrate that? Why is a “spirit of unrest” a grand-point from which liberty can work?

p. 225 *“The Company...went ahead with its scheme, sending out pamphlets promising fifty per cent interest upon the money invested. This was, of course, a great temptation to the people; and, as the Company had the backing of the government, the investing public felt perfectly secure.”*

What happens when a people lose confidence and trust in their government? How can we safeguard against private individuals using the government for their own personal interests?

p. 226 *“Now, the slave traffic on the coast of Africa was fast becoming lucrative; and, accordingly, this Company asked George I for royal authority to enter into this slave trade and to retain the monopoly for the colonies; that is, virtually force slave labor upon the colonies.”*

Our founders have been criticized for owning slaves. Does it make a difference to you to know that, in the beginning, slave labor was forced upon the colonies? How would you have handled the slave issue? What problems would the slaves have faced if suddenly freed in the time of our founders?

p. 227 *“Negro workmen, however, will keep our home industries secure, for negroes will never be able to manufacture; therefore through them we shall keep our proper authority over the colonies.”*

This was certainly said by evil designing people. It has been said that an enlightened people can never be enslaved. How does literacy and education empower a people? Why is quality education so important for all our citizens today, regardless of creed or race?

p. 231 *“...the mind of a child is like wax to receive impressions and like marble to retain them. Let us...surround this grandson with conditions which will influence him and train him into our way of thinking.”*

What can we do to prevent our schools from indoctrinating children in a particular ideology? What evidence do you see of specific ideologies being taught in our schools today?

#23: A free society cannot survive as a Republic without a broad program of general education.

p. 243 *“...there are superior legislations and there are inferior legislations; and there are some things which superior legislation cannot do—it cannot take away private property...”*

Why is the right to private property so important to a free people?

#14: Life and liberty are secure only so long as the right to property is secure.

p. 247 *“...in every free country, no man can be taxed without his permission.”*

Do you believe we are being taxed with our permission? What measures do citizens rightfully have if they believe they are being unfairly taxed?

#11: The majority of the people may alter or abolish a government which has become tyrannical.

p. 248 *“The despair of a brave people always turns to hate.”*

Do you see evidence of this in our world today? How can a desperate people effect change without turning to hate?

p. 274 *“This accursed free press,’ as George IV called it, kept steadily at work during his reign, educating the people and teaching them to think. Because of this, and the consequent agitation that was brought about among the people who could now, through their daily paper, know in a few hours what had happened in Parliament or in remote parts of the kingdom, it came about the George IV and his advisors were forced, in the latter part of his reign, to grant many reforms; indeed, as we read English history from this time on, we read more often of laws repealed than of any new laws made.”*

p. 333 *“Freedom of speech...is absolutely essential to good government.”*

Discuss the power of a free press and free speech. What happens when the news being reported is not accurate or is biased in its viewpoint? What happens when a people stop informing themselves?

#8: Men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.

p. 282 *“With a proper Federal Government we ought to be one of the most happy, the most wealthy, respectable and powerful governments in the face of the globe.”*

p. 284 *“...there must be a strong Central Government.”*

What makes a “proper Federal Government”? What specific actions, if any, is the government taking today that you think are outside its proper role?

#15: The highest level of prosperity occurs when there is a Free-market economy and a minimum of government regulations.

#19: Only limited and carefully defined powers should be delegated to government, all others being retained in the people.

p. 287 *“The people can never be trusted to elect important officers...Let us not have an excess of democracy.”*

Do you think it’s possible to have an “excess of democracy”? Senators were originally selected by our State Legislatures. The Seventeenth Amendment placed their selection in the hands of the voters.

What effect has that had?

Why was an electoral vote established in presidential elections? (p. 346)

p. 299 *“...had he been compelled to serve the fisherman he would have hated and resisted the work, but because he was doing it of his own free will and accord he found pleasure in it.”*

What applications of this principle can you see demonstrated today? Why are freedom and happiness connected?

p. 311 *“A republic is that form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people, or delegated to representatives elected by the people. A republic binds men together by strong ties of fellowship, as in a bond of affection and brotherly love. It is the grandest of all forms of government.”*

p. 314 *“I am bold to assert that it is the best form of government which has ever been offered to the world.”*

Do you agree a Republic is the best form of government? Why or why not? Is there a difference between a democracy and a Republic? There are other republics in the world today; are we all the same?

#12: The United States of America shall be a Republic.

p. 330 *“...no...proposed law shall be passed without being read before the house three times, and, furthermore, the three readings shall not take place on the same day.”*

Is this still being done today? What is the wisdom of this policy? Can you think of laws today that would not have passed if this had happened?

p. 356 *“The rights of the people...depend more upon the ability and honesty of the judges than upon any other department of the government. There can be no prosperity in a government where justice is not to be had.”*

How are our judges selected? What can we as citizens do to insure honest and able judges are selected?

#17: A system of checks and balances should be adopted to prevent the abuse of power.

p. 372 *“Will you see to it that only honest, upright men are placed in office? If so, you will hold the Union where you find it, the best government in the world.”*

In the coming election, what qualifications are you going to be looking for in the candidates? If you are not yet old enough to vote, what can you do to ensure only “honest, upright men are placed in office”?

Thoughts from our Founding Fathers

These thoughts are loaded with important ideas to discuss. Talking about them one at a time will shed a lot of light on the principles of liberty we need to understand to remain a free people.

(*Note: Specific ideas presented in the discussion of the Constitution are not highlighted here in this study guide, but are certainly important to go over with our children.)

WHITE PILLAR: CHARACTER CHARACTER TRAITS WORTH EMULATING

“Ye shall know a plant by its flower, a vine by its fruit, and a man by his acts.” (p. 101)

LOVELY: “‘Uncle Tom’ was Mr. Dunlap’s brother. He knew everything, so the children believed. He had been everywhere. He was thirty-five; ‘as lovely as he was learned.’” (p. 5)

SIMPLE: “With all our riches we should be simple, and with all our greatness we should be modest.” (p. 35)

“Simplicity is often the strongest speech and the most dignified.” (p. 38)

UNSELFISH: “You can’t be a good patriot and be selfish.” (p. 162)

“The man whom I call deserving the name [of a true man] is one whose thoughts and exertions are for others rather than himself. “ (p. 308)

SELF-CONTROLLED: “Slang, extravagance in talk, recklessness in speculation, and a tendency to rush to extremes, alike in effort and action, are...the things that need the brake here in America....” (p. 211)

BLUE PILLAR: FAITH EVIDENCES AND EXAMPLES

(Referring to our flag): “Stars are symbols of light and heavenly protection. Every star should...remind us that Heaven is above us ... and that in the darkest hour of the Nation’s peril God’s eye is upon us.” (p. 217)

“Let us raise a standard to which the wise and the honest may repair. The result is in God’s hands.” (George Washington) p. 287

“...how has it happened...that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings? . . . When we were sensible of danger we had daily

prayer in this room for Divine Protection. -- Our prayers...were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending providence in our favor. To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? or do we imagine that we no longer need His assistance.

“I have lived...a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured...in the sacred writings that ‘except the Lord build they labor in vain that build it.’ I firmly believe this...

“I therefore beg leave to move—that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business...”

(Benjamin Franklin at the framing of the Constitution) (pp. 291-292)

(Many of the founders’ thoughts on faith and religion are found in the “Thoughts From Our Founding Fathers” section.)