

RED PILLAR: PATRIOTISM

CONVERSATION STARTERS from *Stories of George Washington*

*(Principles are from *The 5000 Year Leap*)

p. 51 *“Why did they retreat?” General Washington asked...“For want of ammunition,” the messenger replied. “And did they stand the fire of the British regulars as long as they had ammunition?” Washington asked anxiously. “That they did,” the post-rider cried enthusiastically...*

A look of relief and satisfaction came to Washington’s face. “Then the liberties of the country are safe, gentlemen.”

p. 199 *“...a brave people, who know their rights, are not to be enslaved.”*

p. 202 *“The Americans tell you...they will never submit to be taxed without their own consent. They insist on a repeal of your laws. They do not ask it as a favour. They claim it as a right. They demand it...But bare repeal will not satisfy this enlightened and spirited people.”*

Why are the liberties of a country safe when a brave people know their rights?

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

p. 95 *“...a republic, such as the United States had declared herself, was an experiment in the world and people did not know how the experiment would turn out.”*

How is a Republic different from a democracy? Have there been other republics in the world’s history? Are there Republics in the world today? Do you think we are still a Republic?

What was the ‘experiment’?

#12 The United States of America shall be a republic.

p. 92 *“There was discussion, and wrangling, and dispute and quarreling in Congress and out...just as there has always been, every since men began to act for themselves, and tried to govern themselves. This is what makes what we call political parties...But Washington knew that even those who did not believe as he did might be men of wisdom, with a right to their opinions.”*

p. 291 *“Let me now ...warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party, generally. This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind.”*

How do we discourage and restrain the damaging effect of the spirit of party and yet benefit from the advantages of considering multiple sides of an issue?

(See Washington’s discussion of the issue in his Farewell Address, pp. 291-292)

p. 121 *“...so strong was [Washington’s] belief that upon the boys and girls of the day depended the future success or failure of the nation he had helped to found, that, in his will, he left money for four different educational enterprises.”*

p. 264 *“Treasure up the golden knowledge; and make yourselves the future glory and guardians of your country.”*

p. 294 *“In proportion as the structure gives force to public opinion, it is essential public opinion should be enlightened.”*

p. 345 *“...a republican government, that is a government of the people, can never long subsist where the minds of the people are not enlightened.”*

What “golden knowledge” would be important to possess to make yourself a future guardian of your country? Is that happening in your school? In the interest of having an enlightened citizenry, should the State have the right to mandate a course of study?

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

p. 129 *“The American leads the world in enterprise, energy, invention, prosperity, and patriotism.”*

This statement was made over a hundred years ago. Do you believe it is still true today? If we are no longer a leader, what changed? If it is true that we lead the world, what do we have that other nations are lacking?

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

p. 98 *“It is best for America not to meddle in the struggles between European nations.”*

p. 295 *“The nation which indulges towards another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest.”*

p. 296 *“Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake; since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government.”*

p. 299 *“There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation.”*

What might justify involvement in the affairs of other nations today? What have been the consequences of our involvement?

#25: Peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations—entangling alliances with none.

p. 136 *“...a public character is often an artificial one. It is not...in the glare of the public, but in the shade of private life, that we are to look for the man. Private life, is always real life.”*

Some people say that what an elected official does in his private life is of no concern to the public. Do you agree with that?

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

p. 147 *“...his heart throbbed with the tenderest anxiety to make him acquainted with that great being, whom to know and love, is to possess the surest defence against vice, and the best of all motives to virtue and happiness.”*

p. 270 *“The good sense and virtue of the nation would form a foundation of rock.”*

p. 315 *“...there never was a truly great man without religion.”*

p. 329 *“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to the prosperity of a nation, religion is the indispensable support. Volumes could not trace all its connections with private and public happiness. Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life itself, if there be no fear of God on the minds of those who give their oaths in courts of justice.”*

p. 330 *“Religion and morality, those great pillars of human happiness, those firmest props of the duties of men and citizens...whatever a sense of honour may do on men of refined education,...reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of Religious principles.”*

What would Washington think about the current discussion of separation of church and state as an excuse to remove religion from the public arena, including our schools? What does religion have to do with our ability to govern ourselves?

#4: Without religion the government of a free people cannot be maintained.

p. 150 *“...how can he believe, that chance could have made and put together all those millions and millions of things that are now so exactly fitted to his good!”*

Why is our form of government only successful with a people who believe in a Creator?

#5: All things were created by God, therefore upon Him all mankind are equally dependent, and to Him are they equally responsible.

p. 194 *“...a staunch honest Republic—that “equal government,” which, by guarding alike the welfare of all, ought by all to be so heartily beloved as to endure forever.”*

What examples can you cite in history where a government has favored one class over another? What have been the consequences?

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

p. 208 *“...we are to look for brave men...in every country where the people are accustomed to breathe the proud air of liberty, and to rejoice in the sweet fruits of their labours as all their own.”*

Why do you think the right to property is so important to people? If the State provided for all your needs—housing, food, clothes, healthcare, etc.—would you care if you actually owned property or not? Why do you suppose people who have tasted “the sweet fruit of their labours as all their own” aren’t willing to give that up without a fight? Would you? If someone else provides for you, what is usually asked in return?

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

p. 224 *“Such was the effect of Washington’s policy; the divine policy of doing good for evil. It melted down his iron enemies into golden friends.”*

p. 253 “God never intended men to be natural enemies.”

The Hessians were told lies about the Americans to make them hate us and want to kill us. After reading how Washington turned them into our friends, how do you think that policy would play out in today’s world? As you see more and more nations raise their hands in hatred of America, where do you think that is coming from? Do you think there is anything we as individual citizens can do to change that perception? Do you think we make blanket judgments of citizens of other nations?

p. 271 “*We cannot long subsist as a nation, without lodging somewhere a power that may command the full energies of the nation.*”

In the emerging years of our Republic, there was a strong reluctance to give power to a strong central government. The states wanted to keep local governance as much as possible. Why was it necessary to form a strong national government? How do you keep its powers in check?

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

p. 289 “*Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and alter their constitutions of government. But the constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government pre-supposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.*”

Do you see any measures being taken today “for the good of the people” that bypass constitutional mandates? What happens when we don’t use our written Constitution as the guide for making decisions?

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

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

p. 290 “*Liberty itself will find in such a government, with powers properly distributed and adjusted, its surest guardian.*”

History teaches us over and over that it is human nature to move towards consolidating all power in one head. Why do you think that is? Why is it difficult to keep the powers properly distributed? Why does liberty decrease as power shifts to one individual?

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

p. 326 *“The smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained.”*

What do you think the “eternal rules of order and right” are? Is it best to have a lot of laws or few laws? What makes a good law?

#9: To protect man’s rights, God has revealed certain principles of divine law.

p. 367 *“Above all things hold dear our national union. Accustom yourselves to estimate its immense, its infinite value to your individual and national happiness. Look on it as the palladium of your tranquillity at home; of your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; and even of that very liberty which you so highly prize!”*

p. 297 *“If we remain one people, under an efficient government, the period is not far off, when we may defy material injury from external annoyances.”*

p. 44-45 *“They begun to see how strong they were, if they joined together to do anything...the one way for the colonies to be prosperous and successful was to be united and friendly.”*

p. 285 *“Citizens, by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits and political principles. You have, in a common cause, fought and triumphed together.”*

How does a sense of unity make our nation stronger? Do you believe we only have “slight shades of differences” in “religion, manners, habits and political principles” today? What can a diverse group of people unite behind?

p. 368 *“...what a triumph for the advocates of despotism, to find that we are incapable of governing ourselves...”*

p. 369 *“...citizens of the United States, you are certainly responsible for the highest trust ever confided to any people. The eyes of long oppressed humanity are now looking up to you as to her last hope; the whole world are anxious spectators of your trial; and with your behaviour at this crisis, not only your own, but the destiny of unborn millions is involved...Other nations, finding from your example, that men are capable of governing themselves, will aspire to the same honour and felicity.”*

How do you think the American experiment of self-governance has turned out? Do you think we are still the light and hope to the rest of the world and in what specific ways?

#28: The United States has a Manifest Destiny to be an example and a blessing to the entire human race.

WHITE PILLAR: CHARACTER

EXAMPLES OF CHARACTER TRAITS WORTH EMULATING

BRAVE:

p. 32 “The brave man...does not rush blindly into danger; but, if he is brought face to face with it, he acts boldly and quickly.”

COURTEOUS:

p. 385 “His correspondence, both at home and abroad, was immense; yet was it promptly and fully replied to. No letter was unanswered. One of the best bred men of his time, Washington deemed it a grave offence against the rules of good manners and propriety to leave letters unanswered. He wrote with great facility, and it would be a difficult matter to find another who had written so much, who has written so well.”

FIRM :

p. 275 “I feel my incompetency of political skill and abilities. Integrity and firmness are all I can promise. These, I know, will never forsake me, although I may be deserted by all men: and of the consolations to be derived from these, under no circumstances can the world ever deprive me.” (at first presidential inauguration)

FRIENDLY:

p. 386 “...while a courteous behavior is due to all, select the most deserving only for your friendship, and before this becomes intimate weigh their dispositions and characters well. True friendship is a plant of slow growth;...”

HAPPY:

p. 267 “...like Washington, seek true happiness in making others happy.”

p. 268 “To be happy in every situation is a proof of wisdom seldom afforded by men. It proves that the heart is set on that which alone can every completely satisfy it, i.e., the imitation of God in benevolent and useful life. This was the happy case with Washington”

HEROIC:

p. 126 "...the man who, knowing what is right, dares to do it..., the man whose work is not for himself, but for the good of others, who is courageous, strong and honest, loving, tender and true, who can command and counsel, but is himself willing to obey and to take advice, who is a leader of men, but a lover of men, also, who is noble because he is good, and great because he is noble—that is the man you can take for your hero."

HONEST:

p. 145 "Truth...is the loveliest quality of youth. I would ride fifty miles, my son, to see the little boy whose heart is so honest...that we may depend on every word he says. O how lovely does such a child appear in the eyes of every body!"

HONORABLE:

p. 39 "...if the command is pressed upon me by the voice of my country, it would be dishonorable of me to refuse it."

HUMBLE:

p. 103 "The greatest is not he who commands, but he who, while able to command, is willing to be commanded."

INDUSTRIOUS:

p. 349 "For whence do all our miseries proceed, but from lack of industry!"

p. 350 "He is the real gentleman, who cheerfully contributes his every exertion to accomplish heaven's favourite designs, the beauty, order and happiness of human life; whose industry appears in a plentiful house and smiling wife; in the decent apparel of his children, and in their good education and virtuous manners; who is not afraid to see any man on earth; but meets his creditors with a smiling countenance, and with the welcome music of gold and silver in his hand; who exerts an honest industry for wealth, that he may become a water-course in a thirsty land, a source of refreshment to a thousand poor."

p. 356 "Oh! Divine Industry! Queen mother, of all our virtues and of all our blessings."

p. 385 "General Henry Lee once observed to the Chief, "We are amazed, sir, at the vast amount of work that you accomplish." Washington replied, "Sir, I rise at four o'clock, and a great deal of my work is done while others are asleep."

LEADER:

p. 64 "...the leader...is the one whom all finally look to when anything is to be done that requires judgment, courage, coolness and decision."

MODEST:

p. 41 “Your modesty equals your valor, and that surpasses the power of any language I possess.”

p. 50 “...I this day declare with the utmost sincerity I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with.”

p. 265 “To see a man voluntarily giving up power, was a spectacle not to be met with every day...with great brevity and modesty observed...he begged to offer them his sincerest congratulations for the glorious result of their united struggles, took no part of the praise to himself; but ascribed all to the blessing of heaven on the exertions of the nation.”

PEACEMAKER:

p. 333 “...great souls, like great ships, are not affected by those little puffs which would upset feeble minds with passion.”

POSITIVE ATTITUDE:

p. 20 “George Washington and George Fairfax started out on their surveying expedition in high spirits, ready to face the hard work and the rough life...prepared to take things as they came and make the best of everything. That is the only way for any boy to “tackle” a piece of work successfully; for fretting makes the work all the harder.”

PURE:

p. 358 “...[Washington] enjoyed that purity of soul, which is rightly called its sunshine; and which impressed a dignity on his character, and gave him a beauty and loveliness in the eyes of men, that contributed more to his rise in the world, than young people can readily conceive.”

RELIABLE:

p. 126 “...what made men respected and obeyed by others was reliability—that is, keeping one’s promises, and promising only what one felt he could do.”

SELF-CONTROL:

p. 12 “...when [Washington] was a small boy, he had learned to control his temper; and this he did throughout his useful life, losing it so seldom and only when there was every excuse for his getting “mad” that we can set this splendid habit of self-control as one of the things that made him great and noble.”

p. 259 “We have had the glory to conquer our enemies; now for the greater glory to conquer ourselves.”

TENDER HEARTED:

p. 384 “He had a tear: for we have seen it shed with parental solicitude over the manifold errors and follies of our unworthy youth. He shed a tear of sorrow for his suffering country in the dark hour of her destiny, and a tear of joy and gratitude to Heaven for her deliverance....”

THOUGHTFUL:

p. 46 “...he was always a silent man...and left the talking to others.”

p. 387 “...let your judgment always balance well before you decide, and even then, where there is no occasion for expressing an opinion, it is best to be silent; for there is nothing more certain than that it is at all times more easy to make enemies than friends. Besides, to speak evil of any one, unless there is unequivocal proofs of their deserving it, is an injury for which there is no adequate reparation. “

p. 103 “...the tongue of the slanderer is sometimes as sharp and hurtful as the dagger of the assassin.”

USEFUL:

p. 268 “The useful citizen is the high character he wishes to act.”

VIRTUOUS:

p. 328 “I ask not gold for Spartans. Virtue is better than all gold.”

BLUE PILLAR: FAITH

EVIDENCES AND EXAMPLES

p. 177 “Washington alone remained unhurt! Horse after horse had been killed under him. Showers of bullets had touched his locks or pierced his regimentals. But still protected by heaven—still supported by a strength not his own, he had continued to fly from quarter to quarter, where his presence was most needed, sometimes animating his rangers; sometimes striving, but in vain, to rally the regulars.”

p. 178 “A famous Indian warrior...was often heard to swear, that ‘Washington was never born to be killed by a bullet! For...I had seventeen fair fires at him with my rifle, and after all could not bring him to the ground!’ And indeed, whoever considers that a good rifle leveled by a proper marksman, hardly ever misses its aim, will readily enough conclude with this unlettered savage, that there was some invisible hand that turned aside the bullets.”

p. 324 “I have often been informed by Colonel B. Temple...that he has frequently known Washington, on the Sabbath, to read scriptures and pray with his regiment, in the absence of the chaplain; and also that, on sudden and unexpected visits into his marquee, he has, more than once, found him on his knees at his devotions.”

p. 324 “The Reverend Mr. Lee Massey...has frequently assured me, that ‘he never knew so constant an attendant on church as Washington. And his behaviour in the house of God...was so deeply reverential, that it produced the happiest effects on my congregation; and greatly assisted me in my moralizing labours. No company ever withheld him from church.”

p. 325 “And while he resided in Philadelphia, as president of the United States, his constant and cheerful attendance on divine service was such as to convince every reflecting mind, that he deemed no levee so honourable as that of his Almighty Maker; no pleasures equal to those of devotion; and no business a sufficient excuse for neglecting his supreme benefactor.”

p. 325 (Isaac Pott’s account of seeing Washington kneeling in prayer.) “If George Washington be not a man of God, I am greatly deceived—and still more shall I be deceived if God do not, through him, work out a great salvation for America!”

p. 326 “The smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained.”

p. 326 “My diffidence in my own abilities was superseded by a confidence in the rectitude of our cause, and the patronage of Heaven.”

p. 326 “When I contemplate the interposition of Providence, as it was visibly manifested in guiding us through the revolution—in preparing us for the reception of a general government—and in conciliating the good will of the people of America towards one another after its adoption; I feel myself oppressed and almost overwhelmed with a sense of the divine munificence. I feel that nothing is due to my personal agency in all those complicated and wonderful events, except what can simply be attributed to the exertions of an honest zeal for the good of my country.”

p. 327 “It would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe; who presides in the councils of nations; and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that his benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States, a government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes; and may enable every instrument employed in its administration to execute with success the functions allotted to his charge. In tendering this homage to the great Author of every public and private good, I assure myself that it expresses your sentiments not less than my own; ...No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.”

p. 328 “I shall take my present leave; but not without resorting once more to the benign Parent of the human race in humble supplication, that, since he has been pleased to favour the American people with opportunities for deliberating with perfect tranquillity,...so his divine blessings may be equally conspicuous in the enlarged views...on which the success of this government must depend.”

p. 329 “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to the prosperity of a nation, religion is the indispensable support. Volumes could not trace all its connections with private and public happiness.”

p. 329 “In vain...would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should do any thing to discountenance Religion and morality, those great pillars of human happiness...”

p. 330 “...whatever a sense of honour may do on men of refined education...reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of Religious principles.”

p. 381 “General Washington was always a strict and decorous observer of the Sabbath. He invariably attended divine service once a day, when within reach of a place of worship.

“It may be asked, and why was the ministry of religion wanting to shed its peaceful and benign lustre upon the last hours of Washington? Why was he, to whom the observances of sacred things were ever primary duties through life, without their consolations in his last moments? We answer, circumstances did not permit...”