

Happy Birthday, President Lincoln!

February 12, 1809, in a log cabin on Nolin Creek, three miles south of present-day Hodgenville in Hardin (now Larue) County, Kentucky, the second child of pioneer farmer and carpenter Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks Lincoln was born. He was named Abraham after a paternal grandfather. The impact of this birth 200 years ago made one the strongest investments in America's future as much as any president we have ever had. This young man grew up to say, "I dream of a place and a time where America will once again be seen as the last best hope of earth." In so many ways his dream came true. My prayer is that this great American dream will stay true.

There are so many things I love about Lincoln. I do not know of any president that shaped my formative years more than Lincoln. My first nine years were spent in the Washington D.C. area. I remember well, my dad would drive out of the way when we went downtown to pass by the Lincoln Memorial. I can hear my father's voice lower, with windows rolled down, "Now he belongs to the ages." With every repetition of those words, an indelible impression was made. It became apparent that the man I knew and admired most, i.e., my dad, seemed to admire this man as much as any man who lived, other than of course, Deity in the Person of Jesus Christ, who is never to be compared to mere mortal man. I never crossed these lines. Among us sinning mortals, my dad, although born and reared a Texan, lifted up this man as the best America had to offer.

There are so many things we can learn from Lincoln. He teaches us:

1. To honor our parents.

Although Nancy Hanks lived only until young Abraham was nine, he said, "All that I am or hope to be I owe to my angel mother. I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life."

2. To be a person of character.

Lincoln said, "Character is like a tree and reputation like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing." He also said, "Avoid popularity if you would have peace." And yet again, he said, "Don't worry when you are not recognized, but strive to be worthy of recognition." Perhaps his most famous quote on character came when Lincoln said, "You can fool some of the people all the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all the time."

3. To maintain a sense of humor.

Here is a sampling of pages of quotes we could give you on Lincoln's sense of humor: "No matter how much the cats fight, there always seem to be plenty of kittens." We would serve our own mental condition well if we would learn to laugh in the face of fears and be pleasant.

4. To trust and rely on God in the face of great trials.

This president said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day."

5. To believe in and preserve the rights of "all" men.

On this important subject I commit the rest of this article. It is so important because Mr. Lincoln is being set up as the example to follow by our present President of the United States. Therefore, since President Obama is wanting to allow Lincoln to be his mentor, it is only right that I (among other citizens) hold him to the strictest interpretation of Lincoln's ideals. Some have tried to argue, that Lincoln was a "Johnny come lately" to the abolition stance on the issue of slavery. I know of no other president that has propagated in his own words, just exactly what he believed more than Lincoln. To the serious student of Lincoln history, we cannot deny this. Neither can Lincoln's critics deny that at least he got there...and when he did, think of it...slavery was ended in the United States! The African American believed it so strongly in 1865, and it is documented, that many of the slaves feared that after President Lincoln was assassinated, they would be placed back into slavery.

Allow me to give you some direct quotes from Lincoln and use your own common sense to see where he finally stood on the issue: "A house divided against itself cannot stand -- I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free." "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy." "In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free -- honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve." "Slavery is founded on the selfishness of man's nature -- opposition to it on his love of justice. These principles are in eternal antagonism; and when brought into collision so fiercely as slavery extension brings them, shocks and throes and convulsions must ceaselessly follow." "Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves." "Whenever I hear anyone arguing for slavery, I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally." "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today." "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. We here highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

There is an eerie parallel that abounds with the acceptance of slavery, verses the modern acceptance of abortion. Richard Furman is believed by many to have been the most influential man in the founding of the present Southern Baptist Convention, and one of the most reputable schools of higher learning is named in his honor. To our shame, in an 1822 letter to the Governor of South Carolina, Richard Furman, President of the Baptist State Convention, stated that slavery was clearly "supported by the Holy Scripture" and was beneficial to the slave in that the slave "become(s) part of (a) family" where he is provided all that he truly needs.

Read these words and guess when they were said, "I am now speaking of rights under the Constitution, and not of moral or religious rights. I do not discuss the morals of the people..." If I stop right there, you would say these words sound like many a congressman arguing for abortion rights. The argument is virtually identical. However, these words were said in 1858, by Stephen Douglas when debating Abraham Lincoln. Please observe the entire quote: "I am now speaking of rights under the Constitution, and not of moral or religious rights. I do not discuss the morals of the people of Missouri, but let them settle that matter for themselves. I hold that the people of the slaveholding States are civilized men as well as ourselves, that they bear consciences as well as we, and that they are accountable to God and their posterity and not to us. It is for them to decide therefore the moral and religious right of the slavery question for themselves within their own limits." Douglas went on to scold Lincoln by saying that this issue had no place in a constitutional debate, and we had no right to judge other people in such terms. Douglas actually reprimanded Lincoln for telling the people in the slave states that their institution violated the law of God. And during these heated exchanges Douglas was cheered by the populace. But that did not make his view right.

Even now our nation is divided over the issue of abortion. President Obama did not mention abortion once in his inaugural address despite the issue being the most divisive in our nation, just as President Franklin Pierce did not once mention slavery in his only inaugural address in 1853, less than a decade before the issue plunged the nation to war. President Obama claims inspiration from Lincoln's second inaugural address, even by taking the oath on Lincoln's personal Bible. President Obama called for a healing in this nation and he calls on the words of Lincoln's second inaugural address in which Lincoln concludes - "with malice toward none, with charity for all..." The problem is President Obama lines himself up with Stephen Douglas, not President Abraham Lincoln. So I plead and pray for President Obama to have his eyes open to the truth. The truth that all means all and that's all "**all**" means. "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" (John 8:32).

- Pastor Pope -

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