

Guiding Principles: Quotes from Great Americans

I want to gratefully acknowledge www.brainyquote.com, the source of nearly all the quotes presented, with the exception of quotes with specific references in the body of the text. My comments are highlighted in red – Dale Ash

Guiding Principles

We need guiding principles.

"Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction." – John F. Kennedy

The Golden Rule is found in some form in most religions. For the text of the Golden Rule from multiple religions throughout the world, including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism, I refer you to <http://www.scarboromissions.ca/>. If every member of these religions throughout the world truly lived their Golden Rule, our world would be a safer, happier, healthier, and better place to live.

America's Children

Without children we have nothing. Our children are our future.

"Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same." – Ronald Reagan

Mothers who teach their children make that future a reality.

"All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother." – Abraham Lincoln

"I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life." – Abraham Lincoln

"My mother was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her." – George Washington

"A child miseducated is a child lost." – John F. Kennedy

"Educate and inform the whole mass of the people... They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty." – Thomas Jefferson

"All great change in America begins at the dinner table." – Ronald Reagan

"In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught." – Baba Dioum

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Freedom and Happiness for Individuals and Families

Freedom is a much better provider for individuals and families than tyranny in any form.

"My dream is of a place and a time where America will once again be seen as the last best hope of earth." – Abraham Lincoln

"Important principles may, and must, be inflexible." – Abraham Lincoln

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."
– Thomas Jefferson

"The Constitution only gives people the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself." – Benjamin Franklin

"Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be." – Abraham Lincoln

Limited Government

"The republican is the only form of government which is not eternally at open or secret war with the rights of mankind." – Thomas Jefferson

"Government is not reason; it is not eloquent; it is force. Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master." – George Washington

"Man is not free unless government is limited." – Ronald Reagan

"My reading of history convinces me that most bad government results from too much government." – Thomas Jefferson

We want limited government and regulated free enterprise calculated to maximize individual and group freedoms. "We the People" set the limits. "We the People" are in charge.

Freedom within common sense parameters is usually the best solution.

Limited government provides the car or truck frame with which a free people can more effectively make things happen. Freedom is the engine that makes everything run. Whenever you put government in front of freedom, it is like asking the car frame to pull the engine. Things just stop. The gasoline that fuels the engine of freedom is our faith in the power of freedom. Freedom allows free people to take responsibility to find solutions and make things happen. Losing faith in freedom is like not putting gas in our vehicle.

"The basis of our political system is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government." – George Washington

"The Constitution is the guide which I never will abandon." – George Washington

"Government's first duty is to protect the people, not run their lives." – Ronald Reagan

"I own that I am not a friend to a very energetic government. It is always oppressive." – Thomas Jefferson

"I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretense of taking care of them." – Thomas Jefferson

"My observation is that whenever one person is found adequate to the discharge of a duty... it is worse executed by two persons, and scarcely done at all if three or more are employed therein." – George Washington

"I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts." – Abraham Lincoln

"Truth will ultimately prevail where there is pains to bring it to light." – George Washington

"For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information or fuller consideration, to change opinions, even on important subjects, which I once thought right but found to be otherwise." – Benjamin Franklin

"A nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people." – John F. Kennedy

"We should measure welfare's success by how many people leave welfare, not by how many are added." – Ronald Reagan

"No government ever voluntarily reduces itself in size. Government programs, once launched, never disappear. Actually, a government bureau is the nearest thing to eternal life we'll ever see on this earth!" – Ronald Reagan

"We must not look to government to solve our problems. Government is the problem." – Ronald Reagan

Property Rights and Taxation

"The problem is not that people are taxed too little, the problem is that government spends too much." – Ronald Reagan

"Government always finds a need for whatever money it gets." – Ronald Reagan

"The marvel of all history is the patience with which men and women submit to burdens unnecessarily laid upon them by their governments." – George Washington

"Government is the people's business and every man, woman, and child becomes a shareholder with the first penny of tax paid." – Ronald Reagan

"It is incumbent on every generation to pay its own debts as it goes. A principle which if acted on would save one-half the wars of the world." – Thomas Jefferson

"It may be laid down as a primary position, and the basis of our system, that every Citizen who enjoys the protection of a Free Government, owes not only a proportion of his property, but even of his personal services to the defense of it." – George Washington

"Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration." – Abraham Lincoln

"A wise and frugal government, which shall leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned - this is the sum of good government." – Thomas Jefferson

*"You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift.
You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong
You cannot help the poor man by destroying the rich.
You cannot further the brotherhood of man by inciting class hatred.
You cannot build character and courage by taking away man's initiative and independence.
You cannot help small men by tearing down big men.
You cannot lift the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer.
You cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than your income.
You cannot establish security on borrowed money.
You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they will not do for themselves."* – William J. H. Boetcker

"The tax on capital gains directly affects investment decisions, the mobility and flow of risk capital... the ease or difficulty experienced by new ventures in obtaining capital, and thereby the strength and potential for growth in the economy." – John F. Kennedy

"To compel a man to furnish funds for the propagation of ideas he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical." – Thomas Jefferson

Freedom of Religion and Diversity of Thought

God is the source of our freedom and our inalienable rights. In God we trust. Freedom is our goal. Diversity in all its expressions is evidence that we have achieved our goal. We seek freedom first, freedom last, and freedom always.

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." – Thomas Jefferson

"I never will, by any word or act, bow to the shrine of intolerance or admit a right of inquiry into the religious opinions of others." – Thomas Jefferson

"Tolerance implies no lack of commitment to one's own beliefs. Rather it condemns the oppression or persecution of others." – John F. Kennedy

"Freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged." – Ronald Reagan

"Difference of opinion is advantageous in religion. The several sects perform the office of a Censor - over each other." – Thomas Jefferson

"Our Nation's motto – 'In God We Trust' – was not chosen lightly. It reflects a basic recognition that there is a divine authority in the universe to which this nation owes homage." – Ronald Reagan

"To those who cite the First Amendment as reason for excluding God from more and more of our institutions and everyday life, may I just say: The First Amendment of the Constitution was not written to protect the people of this country from religious values; it was written to protect religious values from government tyranny." – Ronald Reagan

"In 1962, the Supreme Court in the New York prayer case banned the ...saying of prayers. In 1963, the Court banned the reading of the Bible in our public schools. From that point on, the courts pushed the meaning of the ruling ever outward, so that now our children are not allowed voluntary prayer... Cases were started to argue against tax-exempt status for churches. Suits were brought to abolish the words 'Under God' from the Pledge of Allegiance and to remove 'In God We Trust' from public documents and from our currency. Without God there is no virtue because there is no prompting of the conscience..."

without God there is a coarsening of the society; without God democracy will not and cannot long endure.” – Ronald Reagan

“I also believe this blessed land was set apart in a very special way, a country created by men and women who came here not in search of gold, but in search of God. They would be free people, living under the law with faith in their Maker and their future. Sometimes it seems we’ve strayed from that noble beginning, from our conviction that standards of right and wrong do exist and must be lived up to.” – Ronald Reagan

“It’s said that prayer can move mountains. Well, it’s certainly moved the hearts and minds of Americans in their times of trial and helped them to achieve a society that, for all its imperfections, is still the envy of the world and the last, best hope of mankind.” – Ronald Reagan

“The explicit promise in the Declaration that we’re endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights was meant for all of us. It wasn’t meant to be limited or perverted by special privilege or by double standards. ... Trusting in God and helping one another, we can and will preserve the dream of America, the last best hope of man on earth.” – Ronald Reagan

“God had given man free will, and it was up to men to make the proper choices in their lives, choices that would lead them to places in heaven.” – Anne McCaffrey

Second Amendment Right to Bear Arms

I would rather die than let liberty die.

“Every citizen should be a soldier. This was the case with the Greeks and Romans, and must be that of every free state.” – Thomas Jefferson

“Give me liberty or give me death.” – Patrick Henry

“I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.” – Nathan Hale

“Any people anywhere, being inclined and having the power, have the right to rise up, and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable - a most sacred right - a right, which we hope and believe, is to liberate the world.” – Abraham Lincoln

“The constitutions of most of our States assert that all power is inherent in the people; that... it is their right and duty to be at all times armed.” – Thomas Jefferson

“Firearms are second only to the Constitution in importance; they are the peoples' liberty's teeth.” – George Washington

“The very atmosphere of firearms anywhere and everywhere restrains evil interference – they deserve a place of honor with all that's good.” – George Washington

“Rebellion against tyrants is obedience to God.” – Benjamin Franklin

“They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.” – Benjamin Franklin

Need for a Strong Military

"If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace, one of the most powerful instruments of our rising prosperity, it must be known, that we are at all times ready for War."
– George Washington

"It is an unfortunate fact that we can secure peace only by preparing for war." – John F. Kennedy

"To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving peace." – George Washington

"Peace through strength." "Trust, but verify." – Ronald Reagan

"In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility – I welcome it." – John F. Kennedy

Government of the People, by the People, for the People Requires Moral Strength and Purpose

Strength of arms is not enough. We also need strength of spirit and strength of principle.

"Let's have faith that right makes might; and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it." – Abraham Lincoln

"Above all, we must realize that no arsenal, or no weapon in the arsenals of the world, is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women. It is a weapon our adversaries in today's world do not have." – Ronald Reagan

"We are never defeated unless we give up on God." – Ronald Reagan

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." – John Adams

"Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." – George Washington

"It is impossible to rightly govern a nation without God and the Bible." – George Washington

"Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair; the rest is in the hands of God." – George Washington

"America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves." – Abraham Lincoln

"Arbitrary power is most easily established on the ruins of liberty abused to licentiousness." – George Washington

"Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves are its only safe depositories." – Thomas Jefferson

"Happiness and moral duty are inseparably connected." – George Washington

"I hope I shall possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an honest man." – George Washington

"As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy." – Abraham Lincoln

"I can only say that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do to see a plan adopted for the abolition of slavery." – George Washington

"Our defense is in the preservation of the spirit which prizes liberty as a heritage of all men, in all lands, everywhere. Destroy this spirit and you have planted the seeds of despotism around your own doors." – Abraham Lincoln

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty." – John F. Kennedy

"And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." – John F. Kennedy

"I look forward to a great future for America – a future in which our country will match its military strength with our moral restraint, its wealth with our wisdom, its power with our purpose." – John F. Kennedy

"There are no easy answers' but there are simple answers. We must have the courage to do what we know is morally right." – Ronald Reagan

"Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire, called conscience." – George Washington

"Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men." – John F. Kennedy

"Communism has never come to power in a country that was not disrupted by war or corruption, or both." – John F. Kennedy

"Freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged." – Ronald Reagan

Basic American Beliefs

One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

"There are no constraints on the human mind, no walls around the human spirit, no barriers to our progress except those we ourselves erect." – Ronald Reagan

"All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent." – Thomas Jefferson

"If the freedom of speech is taken away then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter." – George Washington

"All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression." – Thomas Jefferson

"Rightful liberty is unobstructed action according to our will within limits drawn around us by the equal rights of others. I do not add 'within the limits of the law' because law is often but the tyrant's will, and always so when it violates the rights of the individual." – Thomas Jefferson

"Laws made by common consent must not be trampled on by individuals." – George Washington

An honest day's work for an honest day's pay.

Honesty is the best policy.

My right to swing my fist ends where your nose begins.

"This nation of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth." – Abraham Lincoln

"Our growing softness, our increasing lack of physical fitness, is a menace to our security." – John F. Kennedy

"Let your heart feel for the afflictions and distress of everyone, and let your hand give in proportion to your purse." – George Washington

"Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth." – George Washington

"Content makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor." – Benjamin Franklin

"Those who govern, having much business on their hands, do not generally like to take the trouble of considering and carrying into execution new projects. The best public measures are therefore seldom adopted from previous wisdom, but forced by the occasion." – Benjamin Franklin

"One picture is worth 1,000 denials." – Ronald Reagan

"Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances." – Thomas Jefferson

Judicial and Bureaucratic Reform

The rights of free Americans, guaranteed by our Constitution and Bill of Rights, must never be allowed to be legislated away by activist judges in our courts, by Congress, or by governmental agencies and bureaucrats falling under the executive branch.

"The administration of justice is the firmest pillar of government." – George Washington

"The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground." – Thomas Jefferson

"We the people are the rightful masters of both Congress and the courts, not to overthrow the Constitution but to overthrow the men who pervert the Constitution." – Abraham Lincoln

"You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time." – Abraham Lincoln

"If the present Congress errs in too much talking, how can it be otherwise in a body to which the people send one hundred and fifty lawyers, whose trade it is to question everything, yield nothing, and talk by the hour?" – Thomas Jefferson

Foreign Relations

"We cannot expect that all nations will adopt like systems, for conformity is the jailer of freedom and the enemy of growth." – John F. Kennedy

"Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all." – George Washington

"There can be no greater error than to expect, or calculate, upon real favors from nation to nation. It is an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard." – George Washington

"War – An act of violence whose object is to constrain the enemy, to accomplish our will." – George Washington

"We should not look back unless it is to derive useful lessons from past errors, and for the purpose of profiting by dearly bought experience." – George Washington

"When we assumed the Soldier, we did not lay aside the Citizen." – George Washington

Global Warming

"Approximately 80% of our air pollution stems from hydrocarbons released by vegetation, so let's not go overboard in setting and enforcing tough emission standards from man-made sources." – Ronald Reagan

Economic Policy

Although this is not an American quote, it is pertinent to our current debates.

"I contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle." – **Winston Churchill**