

The Spirit of Abraham Lincoln



Today, we are fortunate to have "The Spirit of Abraham Lincoln" still vibrantly present. Let us now join him as we hear some of his own words which still apply to "The Spirit of America" today.

I would like to share with you some of my thoughts that might help you fulfill your life's ambitions and dreams. Although, I never went to school more than 6 months in my life, I always stressed that education was the most important process, that we as a people can pursue. That every man may receive at least a moderate education, and thereby be enabled to read the histories of his own and other countries, by which he may fully appreciate the value of our free institutions. As I reflect on the many worldwide events which have changed the direction of the world since my time, I am taken by the number of ideas which were controversial in the 1800's, which are still major topics of discussion today.

Freedom, is still a controversial topic. During my debates against Judge Stephen A. Douglas, as we competed for the Illinois Senate seat in 1858, I spoke about the injustices of slavery. I said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the union to be dissolved, I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided." The point that I tried to make was that we must work together to solve our problems, a war with weapons does not work. I'm not ashamed to confess that I was a hired laborer, hauling rails at work on a flat boat. Just what might happen to any poor man's son. I want every man to have a chance, and I am always for the man who wishes to work.

I learned to read and write, and studied law next to the fireplace and by candlelight with borrowed books. In 1836, I was admitted to the bar and began my legal practice the next year. The leading rule for the lawyer as for the man of every other calling, is diligence. Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today. Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing. My thoughts have not changed since I made those remarks. I love this blessed land, whose bounty is Brotherhood and Liberty. Our Peace, Prosperity and Progress all stem from Brotherhood and Cooperation. Brotherhood is the keystone in the arch of American Liberty.

This Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and Government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth. In my second inaugural address as the Civil War was coming to a close. I said, "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right. Let us strive on to finish the work we are in."

It was in 1861, that I said, "I now leave, not knowing when, whether ever, I may return with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being whoever attended him I cannot succeed, with that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commend in you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."