

MODELS *of* EXCELLENCE



George Washington

We must form perfect models in thought and look at them continually, or we shall never carve them out in grand and noble lives. Let unselfishness, goodness, mercy, justice, health, holiness, love — the kingdom of heaven — reign within us, and sin, disease, and death will diminish until they finally disappear.

Let us accept Science, relinquish all theories based on sense-testimony, give up imperfect models and illusive ideals; and so let us have one God, one Mind, and that one perfect, producing His own models of excellence.

from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by
Mary Baker Eddy, pages 248 to 249

Painting on cover:

The Prayer at Valley Forge by Arnold Friberg



Front of Mount Vernon, George Washington's home

by Edward Savage

(American, 1787-1792, oil on canvas)

“It is impossible to reason without arriving at a Supreme Being.” — George Washington

George Washington was the first president of the United States, and there is only one reason he accomplished so much good in his life: God. Every day he prayed for direction, strength, and support from the Almighty, and this made him a well-respected man of principle, wisdom, determination, and great courage. Not many could have accepted the great purpose and calling to lead our young country through the Revolutionary War, but God had been preparing George Washington to become the Father of the United States of America, and one of our greatest heroes. Only God could have enabled him to endure the battle for freedom.

The Young Man of God

“But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.” Micah 4:4 — George Washington’s favorite Bible verse.

George’s mother, Mary, loved God very much. She taught young George to pray for God’s guidance and to read the Bible, something which he continued every day of his life. Mary also raised her son to be humble, modest, and polite. George Washington once said, “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.” His mother’s parting words when he left for war were “remember that God is our only sure trust. To Him I commend you. ... My Son, neglect not the duty of secret prayer.”

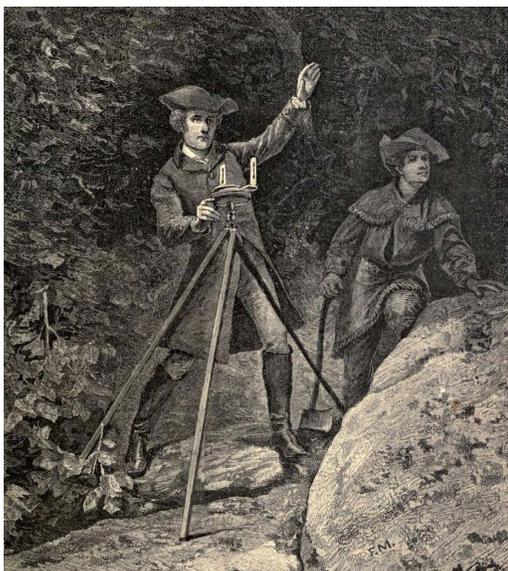
When he was 20, George hand wrote a small book of prayers. Each day he would place his open Bible on a chair, and then he would kneel in front of it and pray for an hour. He did this from 5 to 6 in the morning, and then from 9 to 10 in the evening before he went to bed. When he was away from home, George would go off alone to pray, waiting to hear God’s voice before making any decision. He always gave God all the credit for his protection, provision, and support.

After his father died when he was 11, George started taking charge of his own education, and his library eventually included 700 books. He also loved fishing, hiking, and swimming when he was a boy, but as he grew up, he learned trades such a farming and land surveying.

A Loyal and Valiant Soldier

“Nothing is a greater stranger to my breast, or a sin that my soul more abhors, than that black and detestable one, ingratitude.” — George Washington

George treated everyone he met with respect. He donated money to the poor, and especially for the orphaned children. He was fair and honest in all his dealings. Because of how responsible and educated he



*Young George Washington as a surveyor,
(Illustration 1881)*

by Charles Carleton Coffin

was, in 1753 — at the age of 21 — he was made a Major of the Virginia Militia. The Governor of Virginia sent Major Washington to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to meet with French Leaders and Iroquois Native American Chiefs. Virginia, and Britain as a whole, wanted to continue trading supplies with the Iroquois Nation, which controlled a large area in New York and Ohio. The King of England also really wanted the French to go back to France and leave the New World alone.

These talks failed, and in what became known as “The French and Indian War,” George Washington fought for the British and rose to the rank of Colonel. He and his soldiers went through many battles, losing some, but eventually the French were driven back. George Washington and all of his soldiers had proved their loyalty to the King, and their courage in battle.

The Iroquois Chief’s Prophecy

“Truth will ultimately prevail where there is pains to bring it to light.” — George Washington

From the book *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington* by G. W. P. Curtis:

“In 1755, a young Colonel George Washington fought under British General Edward Braddock against the French at Fort Duquesne. The British suffered a devastating defeat. Fifteen years later, as Washington was surveying lands west of Virginia, he was met by a party of Indians. An Indian chief, upon learning of Washington’s trip, had traveled to speak to him. As the Indian party entered the camp, the chief pointed to Washington. A council fire was lit and the chief told the story of the “great” battle at Fort Duquesne: “I am a chief, and the ruler over many tribes. My influence extends to the waters of the great lakes, and to the far blue mountains. I have traveled a long and weary path, that I might see the young warrior of the great battle. It was on the day, when the white man’s blood mixed with the streams of our forest, that I first beheld this chief: I called to my young men and said, “Mark yon tall and daring warrior? He is not of the red-coat tribe — he hath an Indian’s wisdom, and his warriors fight as we do — himself is alone exposed. Quick, let your aim be certain, and he dies.” Our rifles were leveled, rifles which, but for him, knew not how to miss — ’twas all in vain, a power mightier far than we, shielded him from harm. He cannot die in battle. “I am old, and soon shall be gathered to the great council-fire of my fathers, in the land of shades, but ere I go, there is something, bids me speak, in the voice of prophecy. Listen! The Great Spirit protects that man, and guides his destinies — he will become the chief of nations, and a people yet unborn, will hail him as the founder of a mighty empire!”

The Declaration of Independence

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

During this time the British had started taxing the colonists more and more, making difficult rules for people in the colonies to follow. Until the early 1770's, the colonials had considered themselves loyal subjects of England, and had tried for many years to negotiate for humane treatment; finally, however, the majority felt it was no longer possible to live under a king.

George Washington worked with other leaders to determine the right way to let England know how they felt. In 1776 the Declaration of Independence was written, which let the world know that the 13 colonies were now “United States of America” while also letting the King of England know that they were willing to fight for freedom.

“God is our only sure trust”

“Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth.” — George Washington

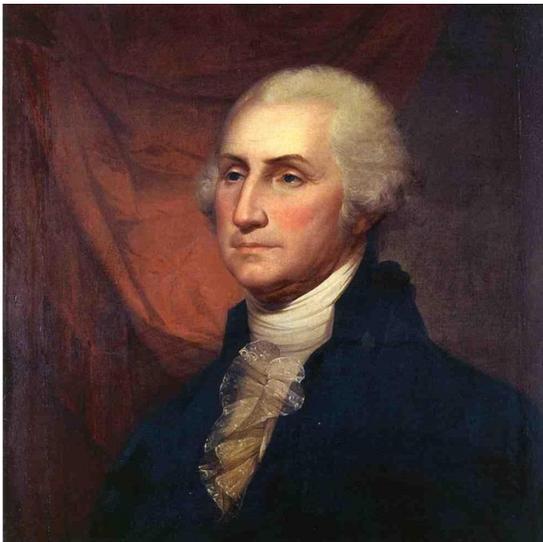
George Washington, now a General, had the humanly impossible task of taking a few thousand untrained volunteers and leading them against the armies of the world's greatest empire, Great Britain, which seemingly had endless amounts of soldiers, canons, sailors, and boats. Adding to these difficulties, some people who lived in America did not agree that they should fight for freedom.

The Continental Congress, which was the American government at the time, had very little money, and did not always find a way to provide the soldiers' food and daily needs. When this would happen, George Washington paid for their supplies and salaries out of his own pocket. Against insurmountable odds, Washington was able to maintain a calm moral courage that few men ever possessed.

“The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army. ... Let us rely upon the goodness of the cause, and the aid of the Supreme Being in whose hands victory is, to animate and encourage us to great and noble actions.” — General George Washington's Address to the Continental Army before the Battle of Long Island, August 27, 1776

Three Examples of how prayer saved Washington's army:

“For we are fighting not only for ourselves, but for all mankind. We are fighting for freedom and human dignity and the right to worship the God of our choice.” — George Washington, written at Valley Forge



General George Washington

by Rembrandt Peale (1800's)

Washington Crossing the Delaware,
by Emanuel Leutze, 1851
(oil on canvas)

*Located at the Metropolitan
Museum of Art, New York City*



George Washington's upbringing gave him complete trust in the divine plan that God had for America. He had never forgotten "the duty of secret prayer" which his mother instilled within him. There are many examples of what some would mistakenly call "incredible coincidences," which were actually signs of divine protection and guidance for those fighting to gain freedom. God created man to be free, as the Bible tells us!

Battle of White Plains

At the end of one of the first battles, in October of 1776, the Americans were protected from sure destruction by a series of events: First, the British suddenly stopped attacking, despite being close to victory. This gave the Americans an opportunity to escape. Next, for two long days and nights it rained very hard, making fighting impossible. Finally on the third night, George Washington issued secret orders to his officers to evacuate, telling them that God has made a way to retreat. Under the cover of fog and darkness, nine thousand men and their equipment were quietly ferried across water. Not one British soldier or spy saw them escape, and some later wrote in their diaries that the "hand of God was against" Britain.

The Crossing of the Delaware River

George Washington wrote Congress from Trenton Falls shortly before the Christmas of 1776, telling them that in ten days the soldiers' contracts would expire. This would allow all of General Washington's soldiers to leave. After time in prayer, he went to his men and told them that he did not expect any more from them, but that their country was at stake. One by one the men stepped forward and said they would serve. It was his words of encouragement that kept the men enlisted and willing to continue to fight for freedom despite knowing the next battle might be their last. Many said they never saw Washington so purposeful as when he knew the Battle of Trenton was their last opportunity. Many things happened that allowed his comparatively weak army to succeed.

The day after Christmas, in the middle of the night, George Washington led his troops across the icy Delaware river during a blizzard. Once they were on the New Jersey side, it took 5 hours to march the 9 miles to Trenton, where the Hessian troops were stationed. These Hessian soldiers were hired to fight for the British. Some of Washington's soldiers were simple farmers and merchants who were now without shoes and food — while the Hessians were highly trained and well-equipped professional soldiers — but Washington's men knew God would protect them. They surprised the Hessians, who felt certain no one would travel in such a storm. Washington's troops took one thousand prisoners and much needed supplies. This was the turning point which raised the hopes of the patriots.

Winter at Valley Forge

In December of 1777, the troops retreated and set up an encampment in Valley Forge, which turned out to be the most difficult, bitter winter they had faced so far. The picture on the cover shows George Washington kneeling in prayer in the snow-covered woods. A farmer happened upon him that day in Valley Forge and told the story. The situation was desperate. Morale was at its lowest because the men were hungry, cold, and once again with no supplies. General Washington looked to God constantly and was determined to see the struggle through.

After prayer, God brought many blessings to Washington and his troops. First, the Oneida Native American Indian tribe sent food, help, and encouragement to the soldiers. The Oneida came all the way from New York state in the winter, going around the British troops and traveling for 6 weeks to reach the soldiers. Next, the nation had a day of thanksgiving prayer to God for their country. The country of France sent help, and a man named Lafayette, who became Washington's aide and close friend. Then, in February of 1778, an excellent military officer named Baron Friedrich von Steuben, from Prussia (which is now part of Germany), volunteered to help organize the American troops. He taught them military skills, organization, order and unified the soldiers. During this time, even more troops arrived for Baron von Steuben to train. Finally, right next to the camp, an extraordinary amount of fish came down the Schuylkill River far earlier than in previous years, and the famine was over.

Victory Achieved

“My first wish is to see this plague of mankind, war, banished from the earth.” — George Washington

Despite fighting in many battles, George Washington was never injured, although he was shot at many times and lost two horses. In September of 1783, after nearly eight and a half years of fighting, he led the colonial forces to victory, becoming the father of our country, and was unanimously chosen as our first President. The people admired George Washington so much they wanted to make him king, but he said, “No, we did not fight a war for to have a monarchy.” He set the course for what was to become history's greatest free nation.

A Change of Heart

“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

After a lifetime of witnessing all the ways that men tried to exert their supposed power over one another,



Winter at Valley Forge

by Arnold Friberg



*Washington Delivering His Inaugural
April 1789*

Painting by T.H. Matteson

attempting to intimidate and dominate each other, George Washington saw the godlessness of slavery and its evil effect on all nations. He stated privately how he greatly regretted his part in slavery, and stated that he no longer wanted to be a slave owner. George Washington now refused to separate slaves from their families, as was common practice at that time.

He supported a plan for gradual abolition of slavery in the United States. As soon as he became President, one of the first pieces of legislation he signed into law, in August of 1789, was called the Northwest Ordinance. The ordinance was designed for new states entering the Union in an area northwest of the Ohio River. Article 6 stated, “There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory.” George Washington made his most public antislavery statement after his death when his will freed his 123 slaves, and later after his wife’s death, freed her slaves, and provided money for the education of 300 children of former slaves. Since slavery was still legal in the state of Virginia, George Washington arranged for their continued freedoms and ongoing needs for dozens of years after his death.

Thank God for freedom!

“Happiness and moral duty are inseparably connected.” — George Washington

We can see George Washington’s selfless devotion to his country, his faithfulness at the front line of many battles, and willingness to devote 40 years of his life to the cause of freedom we all enjoy today. These freedoms did not just happen, but came from years of hard work and suffering, with a great many patriots sacrificing their lives for the cause. At this point in history the United States was the last free country in the world. He was, without any reasonable doubt, chosen by God for that particular time, and for that singular purpose, and we can clearly see that God guided, guarded, and governed him all the way to victory!

For citing the sources:

We are grateful to the following authors for providing inspired accounts of George Washington’s life and recommend these sources for those interested in reading more:

The Spiritual Journey of George Washington by Janice T. Connell

In GOD We Trust: George Washington and the Spiritual Destiny of the United States of America by Michael A. Shea

Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington by G. W. P. Curtis

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