

10 Leadership Lessons From George Washington

You may remember Valley Forge from junior high history, but to refresh your memory, it was where the American Revolutionary soldiers wintered in 1777-1778.

Conditions were brutally cold—clothing in tatters, shoes nonexistent. Many wounded soldiers died from exposure. And those left living had to contend with typhoid, jaundice, dysentery, and pneumonia. George Washington wrote, *“To see the soldiers without clothes to cover their nakedness, without blankets to lie upon, without a house or hut to cover them ... and submitting without a murmur... can scarcely be paralleled.”*

Approximately 2,500 American soldiers died in Valley Forge that year. Why? Yes, these men loved freedom. But according to historian David McCollough, it was mainly their love for Washington. They would go anywhere with him and do anything for him. They knew how much Washington cared for them and how he put himself in harm's way.

In earlier battles, Washington's two horses were shot out from under him and four bullets passed through his coat. The American soldiers knew this. And bled for him.

George Washington was the embodiment of a great leader and someone we can all learn from. No one can ever be another Washington. But that's OK, because no one can be another you, either. The question is, who is that “you” going to be?

We can't be George Washington, but we can employ his leadership skills as we fine-tune our own roles as All Pro Dads on President's Day, a day to honor him. Here are 10 Leadership Lessons from George Washington:

1. **He believed in his men.** Belief is a choice before it is an

emotion. Believe in your children. Believe in your wife. Believe in your family.

2. He was a man of exemplary character. Fact – it's a lot easier to take direction from a general, a coach, a CEO, or a dad who also leads from the front in terms of moral character. We can all be that man.

3. He treated others with the utmost respect. Washington treated the lowliest private with the dignity and respect he afforded a visiting dignitary from Philadelphia. How we treat service personnel, subordinates at work, people on the telephone, the guy at the garage, our family members, all impacts the effectiveness of our role as a leader.

4. He held his men accountable. Along with respect came expectation. I believe in you ... therefore I expect you to come through. It's the same thing at home. We demonstrate to our children that we believe in them, and that we respect them—

but if there is no consistent response in terms of guidance and discipline, we will eventually lose our edge as leaders.

5. He loved his men. If you care, it shows. If you don't, then that shows too. People will do a lot for you if they love you. If you love them, then the sky is the limit. How secure is your family in the knowledge of your love for them?

6. He placed the welfare of his men ahead of his own. It's not just that Washington was willing to take a bullet—there's no glory in vain bravado. No, what Washington demonstrated is why he was willing, and it wasn't for his own glory, it was for the cause and for the welfare of those who looked up to him and trusted him.

7. He was personally invested in the cause. The great general put his money where his mouth was. He personally invested in the cause, not only blood, sweat and tears but cold hard cash too. Those who look to us for leadership are always conscious

of the priorities that guide us.

8. He did not waver from his guiding principles. He was against tyranny, so he was not a tyrant. He valued freedom, so he extended it to others. He believed in the principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence, and he lived as if they were worth his own life to secure. Does our family know how deeply we hold our faith and our values?

9. He was a man of deep faith who demonstrated that via his actions. Washington advanced his belief in God by living a godly life. He was not the kind of leader who gave fine speeches and then returned to the comforts of his own tent. Washington was respected as a man of faith more for what he did than what he said.

10. He took his responsibilities seriously. Washington did not want to come out of retirement and the life he enjoyed at his estate and then lead a new nation. What he wanted was peace and quiet. But, he also knew that the mark of a leader is to use the gifts you have and to use them for the betterment of the world. He did not shirk from that, even though he was tempted.

Additional Resource: 10 Ways to Lead Your Family.

All Pro Dad is Family First's innovative and unique program for every father. Their aim is to interlock the hearts of the fathers with their children and, as a by-product, the hearts of the children with their dads. At , dads in any stage of fatherhood can find helpful resources to aid in their parenting. Resources include: daily emails, blogs, Top 10 Lists, articles, printable tools, videos and eBooks. From fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube** and **Instagram**.