

John Glenn: Faith, Service, Government

John Glenn, the first American to orbit the Earth, died today at the age of 95. Glenn was a U.S. Marine, a pilot, engineer, astronaut and United States senator from Ohio. He was also, at the age of 77, the oldest person to fly in space, serving in NASA's Mercury and Shuttle programs.

In honor of his passing, here are six key quotes from Glenn on faith, service, and government:

On faith and opportunity: "I'm a Presbyterian, a Protestant Presbyterian, and I take my religion seriously, as a matter of fact. I was brought up believing that you are placed on Earth here more or less with a 50-50 proposition, and that is what I still believe. We are placed here with certain talents and capabilities. It is up to each of us to use those talents and capabilities as best you can. If you do that, I think there is a power greater than any of us that will place the opportunities in our way."

On civic participation: "To be a full participant in democracy, everyone should keep up with current events. Don't let your view of government and politics and world events be formed through the filter of other people's biases or ignorance. Develop your own ideas, for you are the government."

On cynicism and democracy: "Don't tune out, cop out or drop out. Don't give in to complacency and cynicism. Don't ignore what is bad, but concentrate on building what is good. Don't take America and the values reflected in our form of government for granted. And never forget that in our democracy, the government is not 'them'—it is 'us.'"

On self-interest: "[T]he happiest and most fulfilled people

I've known are those who devoted themselves to something bigger and more profound than merely their own self-interest."

On fear and government contracts: "People will ask, 'What do you think about when you're afraid, when you're just ready to launch?' The standard answer in the astronaut corps—and I think everyone claims parentage—is, 'How do you think you'd feel if you knew you were on top of two million parts built by the lowest bidder in a government contract?'"

On God and creation: "To look out at this kind of creation out here and not believe in God is to me impossible." (Said on his second flight on space shuttle Discovery in 1998 at the age of 77.) {eoa}

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