

George Washington set a lot of examples as president. In addition to his example, his experience made his advice very valuable. He offered a lot of advice to the American people and the politicians who would lead. One particularly important piece of advice he gave was in regards to morality—or how to make decisions about right and wrong behavior.

Washington felt that love of the United States was only possible by people who could tell the difference between right and wrong. He wrote, “religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens.” Washington says that patriotism, the feeling of wanting to support and sacrifice for a person's country, is built upon the foundation of religion and morality. Washington probably recognized religion as the basis of morality for many people, as religion supplied people with rules for proper conduct with one another. So, according to Washington to truly love your country, you had to be a morally upright person, since people who make bad decisions do not have true knowledge of goodness and therefore cannot love the good.

To love your country, a person must recognize what is good. Washington believes that religion helps people see what is good. To know what is good and actively choose the good over the bad: to choose generosity over selfishness is patriotism. This is the most important advice Washington gave posterity.