

# Abraham Lincoln

Before he was president Lincoln served one term in the U.S. House of Representatives. He was active as an advocate for many causes, but he was very active in opposing slavery. Lincoln said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand' (Mark 3:25). 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. It will become all one thing or all the other."

In 1860, Lincoln was elected as the 16th president of the United States. Despite not being on the ballot in 10 southern states, Lincoln won based upon the *solidarity* [unity] of the North. Lincoln's election caused those who didn't want to "give up" their slavery rights to pull out of the Union. Those southern states formed a new nation, the Confederate States of America. The Confederacy had a president, Jefferson Davis. He even made an attempt to reunite the states by supporting the Corwin Amendment to the Constitution, which protected slavery in those states in which it already existed. Although it did not work, Lincoln believed that a peaceful solution was still possible. His views changed when the Union (North) troops at Fort Sumter were fired upon by the Confederate (South) army. Civil War began on April 12, 1861.

During the Civil War, Lincoln was a major strategist of the war plans. His goal was to protect Washington, D.C., and conduct aggressive war to bring the North a decisive victory. Lincoln monitored the battles and even visited the battle sites with frequency.

While the war continued, the Congress passed, in 1862, the Second Confiscation Act, which freed the slaves of anyone convicted of aiding the rebellion. Lincoln struggled with two objectives, saving the Union and freeing the slaves. Determining that he could not win the war without freeing the slaves, Lincoln wrote:

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was". My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union.



The *Emancipation Proclamation* [document declaring freedom of slaves] was announced in September of 1862 and went into effect on January 1, 1863. As Commander in Chief, Lincoln proclaimed that “all persons held as slaves” in the Confederate states will “thenceforward, and forever, be free.” Later, in the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln affirmed the principles of human equality and cited the Civil War as both a “struggle for the Union and a new birth of freedom,” which would bring equality to all.

Questions:

1. What principles did Lincoln hold to be true?
2. What were Lincoln’s responsibilities during the struggle to save the Union and the struggle to end the Civil War?
3. What consequences did he face if he acted to free the slaves? To retain slavery? To acknowledge the Confederate States of America?
4. In the end, what conclusions did Lincoln draw? How were they true to his principles?

