

On Self-Government

By Anna Von Reitz



While we often speak of self-governance and make it clear that self-governance of a country begins with self-governance of one's own life, there seems to be little conscious knowledge left in the world of what "self-governance" might mean.

[This morning](#) one of our readers who is being inspired to do some research shared these words about self-government from an Icelandic writer who lived at the end of the 12th century:

"Accustom thyself to a busy and wakeful life, but not so as to injure health by over-exertion.

Keep aloof from sadness, for sadness is sickness of the soul.

Be kind and gay, equable and changeable (that is, of easy manners and not stiff) .

Avoid evil speaking, and give your counsel to him who will accept it.

Seek the company of the best men.

Keep thy tongue carefully --- it may honor, it may also condemn thee.

If thou wax angry, speak little, and that little not vehemently.

Men would give gold sometimes to buy back a passionate word; and I know nothing that so destroys unity, as the exchange of evil language, especially in the moment of strife, and there is no nobler, no higher power than that by which a man can keep his own from cursing, slandering, and other foolish prate.

There are other things to be avoided like the fiend himself -- the sensual excesses, gaming wagers, and other improprieties and vices. These are the roots of many worse evils. and, unless great care is taken, will hand thee over to great shame and sin."

These words written in the 1100's are just as true [today](#) as they were 900 years ago. No doubt, the writer would be truly astonished to know that we are still benefiting from his wisdom across so many years and despite so many changes in the world.

The nature of mankind does not change and the internal challenges we face remain the same.

We all have the common need to know the truth, and to face life with courage and honor, which alone gives us lasting satisfaction, and which allows us to be at peace with our lives and our actions and our fellowman.

Repeatedly, our Assemblies have faced challenges because some one of us (or two or three), failed to self-govern, and fell into gossiping and speculating, or lied, or gave into the impulse to bully and serve their own opinions.

In every case, this has led to destruction of unity and peace.

On more rare occasions, lust and theft have entered in, and even greed for such things as money and power over others.

The bad habits and wrong assumptions of the Nanny State have crept in and soured the efforts of many people, as old patterns of autocratic power, dominance, and corporate expediency have reared their ugly heads.

Let the words of this Icelander from 900 years ago sink in. The first hurdle we face in self-governing our country, is first to self-govern ourselves.

Let everyone engaged in assembly work of every kind take this to heart. A self-governing nation can only be formed by self-governing men and women.

Our country can only be as good and as strong as we make ourselves, so we must each turn away from those flaws of character or nature that trip us up and lead us astray from being our best.

We must give up the thoughtless habit of telling petty lies, the selfish leanings, the cowardice that won't even try, our impatience, our impulses to bully, our toxic pride which is based on insecurity.

We must know that entire generations, both prior generations and generations to come, are depending upon us to set things right, but this is a job that requires us to set ourselves right, first and foremost.

Whatever bad habits and issues and baggage that we have been carrying forward, whatever prejudices, whatever fears, we must leave these things behind, so that we are set free as individuals to build a free country and a free world.

Many kingdoms have fallen for lack of men accustomed to the rigors of self-governance, and many losses, both personal and national, have been sustained for the same reason.

Let us all heed the words of a man who never saw an automobile or a jet plane, an escalator, a subway, or a computer.

When we review the history, it is sadly apparent that the Founding Fathers failed to pass on their lessons learned to their sons, and failed to transmit the same vision and discipline that they earned, so that their own grandsons

snubbed their work, betrayed their cause, and reduced their accomplishments to platitudes.

That we are faced with the enormous challenge of rescuing ourselves from deception and criminality is a direct result of the failure of men like Ulysses S Grant and William H. Seward and Salmon P. Chase and yes, Abraham Lincoln, to self-govern.

They were, instead, of two minds, trying to garner the benefits of cronyism and enslavement to a rigid social order, and at the same time, claim the prizes of freedom and social equality.

They failed to master themselves, to be clear about their nature and intent, and so, succumbed to that much lesser and lower estate where they bound themselves to be governed by other men.

We are not their inheritors, though the situation we face **today** landed in our laps because of them and their failure to self-govern.

It lies with us now -- each one of us -- to find within ourselves that grace of character and being, which will not yield to pettiness or cowardice or confusion, which steadfastly pays the quiet tolls of free men, and earns us the right to stand, four-square, the equal of any other.

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