

What Would Lincoln Do? **By Tara Spinelli for Jersey Moms Blog**

Lincoln is inarguably one of the most important people in history, but not until I watched Spielberg's *Lincoln* with my 9-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter did I fully recognize him as a personal hero and role model.

Although *Lincoln* isn't a biography, it gives us a round picture of the president, father, husband, and man that Lincoln was. The movie is an epic but deeply personal portrayal of Lincoln's process of getting the 13th Amendment passed to abolish slavery as the Civil War was ending.

Spielberg's *Lincoln* may not be the first movie you think of for family viewing. Your kids (and you, if you're like me) may be confused by some of the details of the political process and the various players in it. But the significance of Lincoln's words and deeds transcend those details, giving you a gut-level experience of good and right.

It struck me that we were given principles to live by in Lincoln's example, and now we can ask ourselves, what would Lincoln do?

Listen to and fundamentally respect everyone without suffering fools gladly.

While guarding his boundaries, Lincoln gave reasonable time and consideration to all people without regard for differences like status, position, race, and gender.

Don't bend to the will of a group that thinks it knows more than you do but doesn't.

After thoughtful consideration of the opinions of his cabinet, Lincoln appropriately exerted his authority to pursue passage of the 13th Amendment. It never would have happened otherwise.

Don't give up your singleness of purpose even in the face of the seemingly impossible.

The odds were overwhelmingly stacked against convincing Representatives opposed to the 13th Amendment to vote yes. Hired political hands won some with political favors. Lincoln himself quietly converted the rest with a personal moral appeal.

Know when the ends justify the means, and when they don't.

When the possibility of Confederate delegates in Washington there to end the war nearly stopped the vote on the 13th Amendment, Lincoln crafted a note to the House that was technically true (the delegates were not actually in the city) but strategically deceptive (they'd be on their way at his signal). There are only certain times when the ends justify the means, and Lincoln knew how to discern that.

Take time for the story, especially if it's funny.

Lincoln knew how to tell a story for entertainment, but also to redirect the focus and energy in a room when necessary.

Let grief, horror, and fear motivate but not destroy you.

The death of their son Willie drove Mary Todd Lincoln over the brink. Lincoln's grief may have been no less profound, but he seemed to use it to fuel his intentions rather than letting it undermine his sanity. Lincoln didn't shy away from the atrocities of the battlefield either, but instead seemed to harness his horror to strengthen his purpose.

Protect your children fiercely but only as long as it doesn't stop them from pursuing their own dreams and convictions.

Lincoln's son Robert was desperate to enlist in the army. Lincoln sided with Mary who was gravely afraid of losing another child, but ultimately recognized that he couldn't allow their fears to stop their child from doing what he felt called to do.

Make time for you kids no matter how important your job is.

If the President of the United States during a critical moment in history could find time to get on the floor with his kid, what's my excuse?