

Lessons of War

*Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address,
Leadership at Gettysburg*

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Conflict and Resolution, War and Peace

Lessons of War—Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, Leadership at Gettysburg relates conflict and resolution, war and peace. The Civil War (1861-1865) composed America’s greatest trial since its founding. With the second inauguration of Abraham Lincoln on March 4, 1865 history would show that a little over a month remained until General Robert E. Lee would surrender to Lieutenant-General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9th, essentially bringing the conflict to a close. The war appeared to be ending so the president laid the framework for reconciliation of North and South in his inauguration address.

Many students of war know how conflict should be conducted. Many desire to learn how war should conclude. *Lessons of War—Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, Leadership at Gettysburg* discovers profound leadership lessons embedded in Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, and demonstrates how cessation of a conflict and eternal principles of reconciliation become standards of achievement when a war or a battle comes to a close. While Lincoln articulated these standards in his speech at the start of his second term, they

had already been demonstrated at Gettysburg in 1863 as a part of that famous battle and its aftermath.

The battle of Gettysburg represented the supreme struggle of the Civil War, the turning point toward eventual victory for the Union. Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address represented the president's hope for final resolution of the conflict and a restoration of the country. Lincoln positioned high principles and practices into the national conscience in 1865, proving what had already been lived out at Gettysburg in 1863. Eventually the nation would be restored, though at the time no one could accurately predict when the Civil War would cease or what its final conclusion would be.

Wars are part of human history. While we may understand their causes and how to conduct them, we can learn from Lincoln and the examples of Gettysburg how to conclude them. Leaders, patriots, and peace lovers understand the value of ending conflicts well. These people of principle look to Lincoln's example. These individuals strive *"...to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations."*