

Character Counts, by Guinness, Os editor, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1999
(8 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

Introduction
Os Guinness

1. Present Trends in American Society

If President Clinton did not exist, he would have to be invented." Or to express the point more carefully, the recent crisis of America's first postmodern president is not just the sad story of a flawed individual, but the full flowering of a generation of trends in American society. "There but for the grace of God . . ." is always true for all of us as individuals. But today the path toward temptation is rarely lonely. Egged on by pop-prophets and trendsetters of all kinds, we are apt to be lured down it in the company of a cohort of our peers, all stepping out fearlessly to the beat of the drummers of our time. [Page 9]

2. Leadership is Image; We are Reaping the Harvest

In large parts of American life character in leadership has been replaced by image, truth by power and plausibility, and confession and moral changes by spin control and image makeovers. Having sown the seeds, we can begin to survey our harvest. [Page 9]

George Washington A Leader for the Multitude by Alonzo L. McDonald

3. George Washington Rose Above His Peers

From the perspective of history, we follow Washington's journey with awe and admiration. His path was a most unlikely route to greatness. Although plagued by setbacks, outright failures, and circumstances beyond his control, Washington carried on with a level of courage that raised him above his peers. His persistence, dedication to duty, and impeccable integrity make him a model for aspiring leaders in any age. [Page 25]

4. Washington Epitomized Moral Wisdom

Washington's character dictated his actions. A jealous John Adams acknowledged that the distinguished Virginian had the nervous power, demanding style, and personal bearing of a true leader, but consoled himself that he was uneducated and nonintellectual. Washington, however, epitomized moral wisdom even if he was not the conceptual leader of his age. Others, notably Thomas Jefferson and even James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, were intellectually more profound, articulate, and even more forceful in their writings and speeches. Yet none stood as did Washington at the times of crisis as the leader around whom followers gathered. [Page 27]

5. Washington's Physical Hardships

The endless physical hardships Washington endured tested him in every way. He survived only by sheer strength and indomitable willpower, and in the process shaped his body, mind, and character. He also became hardened to ridicule, failure, and paucity of resources in the wilderness, which prepared him for his indispensable role in the struggle for independence. [Page 29]

6. Washington's Experiences Led to Great Self-control

With this train of experiences, Washington was also maturing admirably, showing less of his early rashness while gaining a solid reputation for his attention to method, exactness, and fairness. In spite of a short and sometimes violent temper, he was gaining moderation and measured strength through greater self-control. [Page 30]

William Wilberforce A Man Who Changed His Times by John Pollock

7. Wilberforce—A Driven Man

"So enormous, so dreadful," he told the House of Commons later, "so irremediable did the Trade's wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for Abolition. Let the consequences be what they would, I from this time determined that I would never rest until I had effected its abolition."

That was a key moment in British and world history. For a few months later, on Sunday October 28, 1787, he wrote in his journal the words that have become famous: "God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners"-in modern terms, "habits, attitudes, morals." By achieving his first object-after a long battle-he made possible the second.[Pages 77-78]

8. Father of Wilberforce was Successful in spite of His Time

William Wilberforce was born in 1759, the same year as his great contemporary, William Pitt the Younger, and a decade before his other eminent contemporaries Napoleon Bonaparte and the Duke of Wellington. His father was a rich merchant of Hull, which made his success in politics the more surprising, as a mercantile origin was despised in that era of aristocrats and landed gentry. [Pages 78-79]

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