

5 Great Republican Leaders We Called 'Mr. President' – Part 4

Publisher's Note: Today's "Greenelines" is part 4 of a five-part series on Republican presidents noted for their leadership skills. The order of presentation does not reflect a ranking. Read part 1, part 2 and part 3.

Throughout my years as a college student and professor, I had the opportunity to visit many college campuses. Today, I can remember at least one faculty member's office was decorated with Abraham Lincoln memorabilia, framed quotes and even pictures of him hung on the office wall.

What was it about our 16th president that still resonates with leaders and students of leadership?

If you were to ask people today to name three of the best leaders ever to have lived in America, Lincoln would certainly be named by a majority of those asked. But if you were to ask a follow-up question and ask "Why," I think you would hear a wide range of answers.

Perhaps the "why" question best explains Lincoln as a leader. He demonstrated so many textbook qualities of leadership that it is difficult to focus on just one.

I remember visiting Lincoln's Tomb in Springfield, Illinois as a child. Throughout my life, I have recalled seeing a candle stand in a room of an old house in which he lived. I learned he did most of his study for law school by candlelight. Edison was still busy with his own candles.

"If you are resolutely determined to make a lawyer of yourself," he wrote, "the thing is more than half done

already.”

I clearly remember being convicted during that visit to read more. In everything I have read about Lincoln throughout my life, his passion for reading was always noted.

Candlelight reading redefines passionate reading.

Presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin won a Pulitzer Prize for her book, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*. She enumerated his many qualities including one quality worth our focus today.

Lincoln was an active listener. He was noted for his ability to fully hear opposing viewpoints. And he heard significant opposition. In leading our country through what today seems an unimaginable Civil War, he listened in a way few presidents had to endure.

He wrote many letters to families who lost sons in that war. His grief was personal.

“In the untimely loss of your noble son, our affliction here, is scarcely less than your own. So much of promised usefulness to one’s country, and of bright hopes for one’s self and friends, have rarely been so suddenly dashed, as in his fall.”

Lincoln was noted for listening with empathy. It is a rare skill among leaders. An active listener gives no thought about what will be said next. Understanding comes with deep questioning and listening.

My daily goal is to ask more questions and make fewer statements.

I choose to end this brief look at Lincoln with a reflection he offered in his inaugural address in 1865.

“Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that

any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not that we be judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully."

Today's Scripture

"A wise man will hear and will increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel" (Prov. 1:5)

Platform Tip No. 55

Strive to say something worth saying. A good message resonates because it penetrates the heart and mind.

Narrow your focus into a group of people with a specific need. Speak into their need.

Don't try to address all things for all people.

Define your lane and stay in it.

Then do it over and over again.

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