

What Donald Trump Is Actually Like

Those who know Donald Trump personally say that behind the bombastic persona portrayed in the media is a genuinely nice man who cares about people and who generates fierce loyalty from others as a result.

That's what struck me when I interviewed him in August 2016 for *Charisma* magazine. I expected him to be a pompous celebrity who was running for president. Instead, I found him to be soft-spoken and respectful.

When I interviewed President George W. Bush in 2004 with some other journalists, it seemed the president was eager to move on to his next appointment. Not so with Trump. He focused on my interview. He even offered me a bottle of water—something he didn't need to do, but it showed me he was a nice guy.

Jim Garlow, the activist pastor from California, has a similar analysis of Trump's temperament. Even though he is up against the strongest institutions in our culture and attacked ferociously by Democrats who want him impeached or imprisoned, Trump keeps a gentle spirit.

"Hollywood stars mock him," Garlow says. "Academia is stacked against him. They slam him hard, and he doesn't mind pushing back. But quite frankly, the temperament that many people may not like about Trump is the only kind of temperament necessary to survive the constant pounding he takes and to keep marching forward."

Mike Evans, who gave Trump a Friends of Zion Award for his support of the Jewish state, says Trump is the most gracious president of any in our lifetime, including Ronald Reagan, who—despite his warm public persona—was said to be very cold behind the scenes. Trump is just the opposite.

“Donald Trump is Donald Trump 24 hours a day. He’s authentic,” Evans says. “Every other word Trump says is, ‘Thank you.’ Of course, he demands excellence, and if he gets it, he’s happy. If not, then you’re on your way out the door.”

Evans said the president’s love of Israel, evidenced by his decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and recognize the annexation of the Golan Heights, has made him so popular that if Trump ran for prime minister of Israel, he would win by a landslide.

While other presidents wanted to get evangelicals’ support at election time but then kept them at arm’s length the rest of the time, Trump has done the opposite. The president and First Lady Melania Trump recently did something no other president has done—they honored the evangelical community by hosting a state dinner in August 2018 “for all the good work they do,” Religion News Service reported at the time. Calling America a “nation of believers,” President Trump said he hosted the event to “celebrate America’s heritage of faith, family and freedom.”

“As you know, in recent years the government tried to undermine religious freedom, but the attacks on communities of faith are over,” the president said. “We’ve ended it. Unlike some before us, we are protecting your religious liberty.”

Televangelist Kenneth Copeland and his wife, Gloria, were among the 100 or so leaders who donned their formal best that night. He remembers that the president said, “I want to hear from you. I want to hear your heart. I want to hear what you have to say.”

Jim Garlow also attended the event and couldn’t believe it when the president opened up the mic.

“In no political environment is that ever allowed,” Garlow said. “The handlers are always worried that someone will say something embarrassing. But here was Trump, so secure in who

he is that he could turn the microphone over to 95 or more pastors and Christian leaders.”

Once Trump realized he was in a room full of preachers, he quickly reminded them not to take too long. The pastors laughed at Trump’s humor, but the dinner was no joke; Copeland said he could sense the Spirit of God in that place.

Garlow said Trump watched closely and listened intently as the ministers came to the microphone to express their love and appreciation for the president and first lady or commented on something important to evangelicals.

“Some politicians need a 400-page summary to absorb anything,” Garlow said. “Not President Trump. He picks up on things very quickly. High-level leaders are like that. You don’t have to go very far in explanation, and they can kind of look at you and say, ‘I get it.’ He was absorbing it—taking it all in. I saw a teachable spirit.”

Someone close to the president who has seen Trump’s ability is his counsel, attorney Jay Sekulow, whom I’ve known since 1990.

“President Trump is a very quick study, and for a non-lawyer, he has a tremendous understanding of both the legal system and the nuances of the law,” Sekulow said. “He is very astute.”

Sekulow should know because he, along with former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, helped the president navigate the most intense, politically motivated investigation in U.S. history. As high pressure as it was, Sekulow says the president “never lost it,” emotionally or otherwise, which is impressive considering the future of his presidency may have hung in the balance. Sekulow says he can’t say that for most clients in high-stakes cases who do lose it at some point.

“Rudy and I would always have very frank and honest calls with him, and he’d absorb the information [and] ask what the ramifications of a particular move by Mueller or somebody else

meant,” Sekulow explained. “He always wanted to know what we were going to do. I always tried to go into meetings and calls (these were calls taking place multiple times a day) with an answer, not just with a question. He absorbed it. He listened to our legal advice, and we got a good conclusion.”

At the state dinner for evangelical leaders, Garlow marveled at how Trump seemed to know what to say and what policies and Christian principles were important to evangelicals, adding, “He seems to figure it out intuitively. I think he wants to do what’s right.”

Chicago pastor Choco de Jesús, who at the time led the 22,000-member New Life Covenant Church, one of the largest congregations in the Assemblies of God, was seated at the same table as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson and megachurch pastor Robert Morris of Gateway Church outside Dallas.

He told me he felt out of place that night as he watched leaders go to the mic, lavish love on the first couple, and praise the economy and Trump’s other accomplishments. But being Hispanic, Choco had a different perspective.

“Inside of me, I’m saying, ‘I have to say something.’ I heard so much praising, but no one was saying anything from our perspective,” Choco says. “So I get the courage to get up, and I stand in line.”

After the next speaker finished, Choco said: “Mr. President and first lady, thank you for inviting me to this dinner and allowing me to break bread with you. It is biblical to break bread and get to know each other.”

Then he said, “I, unlike my other colleagues, don’t love you the way they appear to because I don’t even know who you are. But I’ve come here tonight because I want to get to know you.”

Pastor Choco added: “One thing that I know for sure about you,

Mr. President, is when you say something, it gets done, which is a rare commodity coming out of the White House. So I look forward to working with you for the situation in our city, Chicago, and I thank you once again for inviting me to break bread with you.”

With that, he moved to return to where he had been seated with his wife. But as he walked past the president’s table, Trump pushed back his chair, stood up, and gave Choco a bear hug. When Choco got to his table, he received a text from Paula White Cain, who had just witnessed what happened.

“POTUS was very moved by your authenticity,” she texted.

I go into more detail about Trump’s character and what he’s really like in my new book, *God, Trump and the 2020 Election*, which you can purchase at .

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