

Who Are History's Top 10 Most Influential People?

Most people in our culture today enjoy reading Top 10 lists. *USA Today* regularly publishes them. David Letterman does it nightly. At this time of the year, Barbara Walters always does her *10 Most Fascinating People* television special.

Wikipedia's research and analysis team has now released what they believe is the list of the most significant figures in human history—in other words, those who have had the greatest impact on the world stage.

Take a guess: Who do you think was determined to be the most significant person ever? Let's review the top 10 people and then consider the significance of *numero uno* for us today.

10. Thomas Jefferson
9. Alexander the Great
8. Aristotle
7. Adolf Hitler
6. George Washington
5. Abraham Lincoln
4. Muhammad
3. William Shakespeare
2. Napoleon Bonaparte

For the top spot, did you really think it could be anybody else than ...

1. Jesus Christ

Remember, this list was not done by *Christianity Today*, *The Christian Post* or *Charisma* magazine editors. It was compiled by thoughtful, scholarly and objective individuals simply acknowledging that billions of people throughout the world, past, present and future, adhere to and adore this magnificent

Person more than 2,000 years after He left Planet Earth.

It's worth noting that Jesus is the only one on this list who promised He was going to return. And when He does, as the old hymnal declares, "What a day of rejoicing that will be!"

Yet not for everybody. And here I'm not just citing those who rejected His free gift of forgiveness and eternal life through repentance and faith in Him alone. It will also be a day of deep regret for those who failed to live their lives in a way that also impacted their fellow man. Scripture records that at the end of time, Jesus will have to "wipe away every tear" (Rev. 21:4, NKJV) from the eyes of some who'll realize they fell short of what their lives could have accomplished for God's glory.

Paul the apostle **prophetically** warns us of that day when each person's "work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality [not quantity] of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames" (1 Cor 3:13-15, NIV).

Here's the deal: As you close out another year, are you able to say that you are maximizing your influence to advance the kingdom of God in our culture today? Are you taking advantage of each opportunity that God gives you to engage people with the gospel and the truth of His unchanging Word? After all, you represent the most significant leader who ever lived and who commissioned us to be salt and light amidst a decaying and ever-darkening world.

Yielding our lives to the One who is King of kings and Lord of lords in addition to being the most influential person in all of human history should translate into lives where we demonstrate courage and uncommon valor for the cause of

Christ. People who have truly made an impact for Christianity throughout history have demonstrated these qualities.

Eric Metaxas, author of *New York Times* No. 1 best-seller and the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association's "Christian Book of the Year" *Bonhoeffer* as well as the best-seller *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*, has just released a new book entitled *Seven Men: And the Secret of Their Greatness*. This inspirational book walks the reader through a gallery of greatness to discover the struggles of these men and their resolve to make an impact as ambassadors for Jesus Christ in their generation.

Rather than keep you guessing, I'll reveal the identities of the seven giants of the faith Metaxas profiled: George Washington. William Wilberforce. Eric Liddell. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Jackie Robinson. Pope John Paul II. Charles Colson.

I love to read books like this and encourage others to do likewise so that, as Christians, we will not be timid and silent when God is calling us to speak the truth in a winsome way amidst the deception and lies swirling in America today. This can be the our greatest hour of opportunity to bring transformation to our culture if we will rise up in faith, be equipped with the truth and speak up in the marketplace on the cultural and moral issues of our day.

Recognizing that we are engaged in a titanic struggle with forces of evil, we must choose to be an informed, discerning and courageous people of faith. We must share the conviction that apathy, indifference and ignorance are unacceptable and that retreat is not an option concerning what is at stake: our faith, families in future.

Wherever I go, I try to remember that I am a representative for the most influential Person in the history of mankind. As His missionary ambassador, I have a sacred duty to represent

Him well.

Do you identify with this mindset? Will you increasingly grow in your conviction to stand strong for Him in today's perilous times?

Recently, my wife and I spent three days in Birmingham, Ala.—once labeled America's most racist city. We walked through history at the Civil Rights Institute; the 16th Street Baptist Church, where four little girls were killed and 20 wounded; then Ingram Park, where 1,000 youth were manhandled and arrested in their peaceful march for righteousness and justice in the '60s.

City codes and laws forbade social contact between “Negroes and white persons” at the time, alongside severe segregation in schools, restaurants, housing, buses and theaters. Even the library books forbade depicting black and white rabbits together!

Police brutality and the Ku Klux Klan created a culture of fear. Fire bombs, vicious police dogs, fire hoses and murders abounded to intimidate and eliminate any opposition. They were at a crossroads. This happened in our generation!

Yet something happened in that city that brought about a radical transformation. It was not primarily oratory and organizational skills.

What happened?

The words inscribed on the basement wall where a bomb destroyed the four little girls' lives reveals the answer: “As ministers marched like generals rallying their troops from their pulpits, armed with Bibles, made strong by holy words, flanked by women and children ...”

Led by courageous clergymen, the people came together, determined to see truth proclaimed and a culture changed.

Martin Luther King Jr. challenged them to rise up with these words: "If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity ... and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club."

How apropos for us today.

Robert Graetz, an elderly white pastor who served with King during the successful 381-day Montgomery bus boycott, recounts the experience: "The thing that is often overlooked is that the civil rights movement was a church movement. The leaders were pastors, and the mass meetings were church services, with prayers, hymns, sermons and offerings."

In 1957, when the passionate evangelist Billy Graham invited Martin Luther King Jr. to lead a prayer at his Madison Square Garden crusade, he inquired of MLK how he kept the bus boycott so peaceful.

"Prayer," said King. "Montgomery was a movement of prayer."

You can read more about this "Birmingham revolution" in the book with the same name by brilliant author Edward Gilbreath.

What civil rights was to the '60s and abortion to the '70s (up through today) now is the radical gay agenda. This is the moral issue of our day. Attempts to redefine marriage, promote transgender laws, indoctrinate children through LGBTQ curriculum as well as legitimize homosexuality, polygamy and polyamory in the media—all of these assault marriage, family and decency in our culture. The Grammys just nominated for "Song of the Year" an anthem to gay marriage by rapper Macklemore, "Same Love."

As we celebrate the life of our Lord Jesus Christ as the most influential Person who ever lived on Planet Earth, will we align with Him in speaking the truth charitably yet compellingly to our generation on issues related to the radical gay agenda influencing our families and our future?

He's not coming back for a beat-up bride, but rather for a "radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:27).

May we have no regrets at His coming. When Scripture says that He "will descend from heaven with a shout" (1 Thess. 4:16, NKJV), may that represent His victorious proclamation in receiving to Himself a victorious church that stood strong amidst the compromise and confusion of these last days.

Larry Tomczak is a best-selling author and cultural commentator with over 40 years of trusted ministry experience. His passion is to bring perspective, analysis and insight from a biblical worldview. He loves people and loves awakening them to today's cultural realities and the responses needed for the bride of Christ—His church—to become influential in all spheres of life once again.