

Hey, from the standpoint of the largest negative impact for political totalitarianism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several people are candidates—for example, Chairman Mao from Communist China; “Uncle Joe” Stalin, the leader of the Communist Soviet Union which starved many millions of its own citizens; and the diabolical Adolf Hitler of National Socialist Germany. There are others, and we could debate that for hours.

But from the standpoint of the most significant *positive* impact worldwide geopolitically for political freedom in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one person clearly stands head and shoulders above the rest—Prime Minister Winston Churchill of the United Kingdom. Before the United States entered the war in 1941, Churchill was about the only linchpin for freedom, forging and holding together the resistance to Hitler’s dominant war machine. How about some Churchill-talk that can and should speak to us clearly and loudly...even today?

Winston Churchill was born near the twilight of the British Empire. That’s why one of his key biographers, William Manchester, labeled his biographical series of Churchill *The Last Lion*. Of course, Churchill became most well-known worldwide for his stepping up as Prime Minister of the U.K. in May, 1940 when all looked lost—Germany had blitzkrieged its way into key parts of Europe and looked undefeatable to virtually everyone. *Except*. Yeah, *except Churchill*, the extraordinary orator with a speech impediment who rallied the English and their allies, who cajoled and readied Franklin D. Roosevelt and the U.S. into joining the fight for freedom. Yes, *Churchill’s voice was the ringing call for perseverance, for freedom, for victory!*

But there *is* a backstory, helpfully sketched by historian Paul Johnson. “In his ninety years, Churchill had spent fifty-five years as a member of Parliament, thirty-one years as a minister, and nearly nine years as prime minister. He had been present at or fought in fifteen battles, and had been awarded fourteen campaign medals, some with multiple clasps. He had been a prominent figure in the First World War, and a dominant one in the Second. He had published nearly 10 million words, more than most professional writers in their lifetime, and painted over five hundred canvases, more than most professional painters.”

But the full, undergirding story goes much deeper than that—Churchill’s life was a fascinating tapestry of almost unreal events in places like South Africa, India, the Middle East, and Europe. So countless words have been spoken and written *about* Churchill. And when one becomes immersed into grasping the public life of Churchill, it’s quite easy to become enamored and then convinced that this amazing individual had a reservoir of mega-doses of important and constantly-deployed character traits that he seemed to call upon at will...yes, not *just one* overriding character trait, but a number of key traits that worked together to forge a life of extremely unusual, concrete impact on many, many millions of people around the globe.

Now...was Churchill a believer in Christ? Well, as one website devoted to Churchill has gone on record: [“Churchill was not a Christian believer in any conventional sense.”](#) But what we’re doing in this episode is asserting some of those key, Churchillian mega-dosed character traits—and we’re doing that because those traits are clearly instructive to us as believers in our role as ambassadors for Christ. Let’s get started.

*Personal sense of destiny.* When Churchill was seventeen years old, a friend reported that he said, “I tell you I shall be in command of the defences (sic) of London...In the high position I shall occupy, it will fall to me to save the Capital and save the Empire.” Fifty years later, Winston Churchill was doing exactly that!

*Ferocious courage.* Churchill had both real physical courage and social courage. Starting his career as a journalist, Churchill launched his reputation by going to a dangerous war front in 1899 and being captured in the Boer War and funneled to a prisoner-of-war camp. And in his later years as a minister for the U.K., he often took what his close advisors considered foolhardy risks by going too near to active battlefields.

But more importantly, Churchill often irritated many powerful, political-establishment figures with his courageous, often far-sighted opinions and actions. He did that in service to a greater priority—and he was exiled from positions of power more than once.

*Vital curiosity.* Churchill had a rich vein of insatiable curiosity vital to a person determined to astutely handle military might—whether of friend *or* foe! Churchill’s life spanned 90 years, from 1874 to 1964, and

he saw innovation and inventions ranging from the telephone to manned space travel! And Churchill was at the forefront of seeking out, advocating for, and deploying the latest in military innovation to defeat the enemy as nations geared up to the modern military we see today, including nuclear capability. But crucially, *Churchill sought out the details* that it required for the innovation to be successful in the dark trenches of war—frankly, the very details that many leaders consider beneath needing their attention.

*Fruitful aloneness—but with key colleagues, disciples, and supporters to successfully carry on.* This is such a key characteristic of Churchill's that biographer Manchester gave his second book the title "*Alone: 1932-1940.*" Only an anchored, all-encompassing sense of personal destiny could sustain being banished from the decades-long limelight in one of the leading countries of the world at the age of 58 into what historians commonly call a *political wilderness*. But Churchill and a merry band of fellow patriots soldiered on anyway, gathering data about Germany's military buildup as contrasted with the Allies' political and military neglect on the eve of what would become World War Two. In fact, it's effectively argued by some that the Allies' weak approach to military and defense matters effectively invited Germany's aggression.

*Persevering overcomer.* Winston did not do well in school and had a speech impediment—yet decades later he was known as one the greatest writers and orators in history. And Churchill had lots of vocational setbacks, being declared politically dead or least comatose many a time. But, as we know, he rallied and led the charge to save the U.K. and Europe from totalitarian rule. As Churchill famously said, "Never give up! Never, never, never give up!" Yeah, Winston Churchill was definitely an overcomer...in word and deed!

*Sustaining confidence without debilitating perfectionism.* Nobody was more rightly confident in himself than Churchill. But he did have some very public failures in professional judgment. That didn't stop Winston! Yes, very few people legitimately have sustaining confidence without debilitating perfectionism.

*Enduring fidelity.* First, in the modern era of rather common *infidelity* in many publicly-prominent families, Winston's complete fidelity to his wife Clementine was and is universally acclaimed. Second, Churchill was unfailingly faithful to a country and a people who were not particularly faithful to him! When Churchill learned that he and his Conservative Party had gone down to significant electoral defeat in 1945 after he led Britain *from* complete despair *to* victory in World War Two, well, here's Winston detailing that journey:

"On the night of 10 May 1940, at the outset of the mighty Battle of Britain, I acquired the chief power in the State, which henceforth I wielded in ever-growing measure for five years and three months of world war, at the end of which time, all our enemies having surrendered unconditionally or being about to do so, I was immediately dismissed by the British electorate from all further conduct of their affairs."

His wife's comment to that? "Perhaps it is a blessing in disguise." And Winston replied, "It appears to be very effectively disguised." But in 1951, the British people came back around and elected Winston Prime Minister again. And ever faithful, Churchill, coining the phrase *iron curtain*, served with a prophetic voice once more as the Socialist/Communist Soviet Union aggressively worked to dominate the world.

*Extraordinary stewardship.* Above all, Churchill was a uniquely effective steward of the freedom of his country...and beyond! Wow, who else can even venture to qualify for that—a *steward of freedom for all!*

Hey, people love to *talk* about leadership traits. But Churchill *actually did cultivate, integrate, and act upon* his special traits...forging a unique bundle that helps to instruct every serious Christian. Yeah...

*Personal sense of destiny. Ferocious courage. Vital curiosity. Fruitful aloneness—but done with key colleagues, disciples, and supporters to successfully carry on. Persevering overcomer. Sustaining confidence without debilitating perfectionism. Enduring fidelity. Extraordinary stewardship.* Wow. Stop and take a moment to reflect on that stunning list!

Winston Churchill showed that timeless, effective traits are not just for long ago—and are not limited to being famous. Whatever our vocations, we can and should expect that our walk in service to God and to neighbors, near and far, would reflect a persevering manifestation of such a glorious tapestry of key traits!

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. What current American political leader do you think best reflects the character traits of Winston Churchill? Describe the multiple publicly-identifiable traits of that leader. If there is no leader coming to mind, why do you think that is? Discuss.
2. Do you believe that the world-class delivery of specific character traits like those of Winston Churchill are out of reach for you? If yes, which ones, and why? If not, how do you cultivate, integrate, and act upon each specific trait?
3. Think of Churchill. Now can you personally name two or three Christians the past few decades—famous or not—who in your personal observation is similar in the depth of impact for both the workplace and Kingdom spheres that God has appointed them to? Discuss.