

# Just one man

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“ Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal,” Abraham Lincoln argued in his famous Gettysburg Address. Keep in mind that he gave this speech while his country was in torn apart by slavery. Even worse, he was on the battlefield of his dead soldiers. Lincoln was motivated and dedicated to what he believed and was able to voice his belief in less than ideal conditions. He is one of the greatest leaders of the United States. For starters, he won the Civil War.

When Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated in March of 1861, a few states had already left the Union. Just a month after that, the Civil War broke loose at Fort Sumter. In my opinion, that’s a very rough way to start a term of office. Even worse, half of his country just left the nation. If he didn’t find a solution to reunite the country, we still could’ve been separated to this day.

The South was prepared for the war with guns, men, and leaders ready for battle. The North wanted peace and was at a clear disadvantage. According to Allan Farmer in his discussion of the Civil War, “ The Union was at a disadvantage in the war because they were poorly trained and disorganized.” Also, Lincoln’s commanders were hesitant and inexperienced. As a result, the Union suffered many defeats. However, this began to change when General Grant brought a victory at Fort Donelson.

This gave the Union confidence and Grant was noticed by President Lincoln. General Grant was well respected by both troops and civilians. Lincoln trusted him, and Grant eventually forced the South to surrender in 1865.

Lincoln's term in office was a difficult one. He had to run a country that was falling apart and bring it back together.

Even though he had to face this huge challenge, he had the will and power deep down to help him and his fellow leaders. One good quality was that he was wise and would listen to other people's point of view because he knew he didn't have all the answers. Even when cabinet members were against him, he still listened. He actually went into the field and met his soldiers. He was an amazing speaker and communicator, " He had a remarkable ability to communicate his goals to his countrymen" says Kearns Goodwin. But most of all, he was confident.

He stood up out of the goodness of his heart for the slaves. He saw their pain and suffering. He knew no one deserved that cruelty. That's why he proposed the 13th amendment and gave his all to pass it. I can't imagine how much strength it took to stand up to all the people against the amendment.

I sure couldn't do it. Also he believed, " if slavery is not wrong, then nothing is wrong." He used his gift of confidence to pass the amendment. Obviously, not everyone agreed with him. But, he didn't take the criticism in a mean way, but a way to improve.

Now I don't know about you, but it's very hard for me to take criticism nonchalantly like he did. He also used self deprecating humor to disarm his opponents. He wasn't afraid to joke around and have a good laugh. He tried to keep his life happy, and make other people happy as well. He never looked at people's bad side, but what they were capable of doing.

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He knew how to appeal to all types of people and this made him accepting and understanding. One of his greatest personal battles was with depression. In 1861, there was no such thing as anti-depressants. Considering he had to run a country and war, there is no doubt that he had depression. His oldest son, Robert, went into the Civil War only a few years after his older son, William, died in the White House.

How would you feel if your son died, then the other one wanted to risk his life? I would be devastated and broken if that happened to me. It takes a lot of courage and strength to deal with that kind of weight on your shoulders. He dealt with this depression by looking at the good side of things and being close to the people he loved. Abraham Lincoln wanted one thing: slavery abolished. On the first vote, the amendment got 56% of the vote, when it needed 67%.

That's a large margin to bridge. Through his power of persuasion, he did his best to change people's minds. He even went to people's houses to express his point. Eventually, the 13th amendment was ratified on December 6th, 1865. With the passage of this amendment, a great change occurred in our country.

After this day, slavery became illegal because of Abraham Lincoln. Some historians think he passed this amendment to gain popularity. In a historical account of a conversation between President Lincoln and Illinois attorney Leonard Swett, this subject was brought up. Abraham replied, " I have never done an official act with a view to promote my own personal aggrandizement, and I won't begin now." (Herndon's Informants; letters,

interviews, and statements about Abraham Lincoln by Douglas Wilson and Rodney Davis) Didn't people say Abraham Lincoln never lied? I'll let you answer that question.

I'm not saying he is the greatest person that ever lived. All I'm saying is that our country would still be divided if it wasn't for Abraham Lincoln. It took one man to stand up to slavery. We can all learn from his courage. Stand up for what is right, and work to overcome what is wrong.