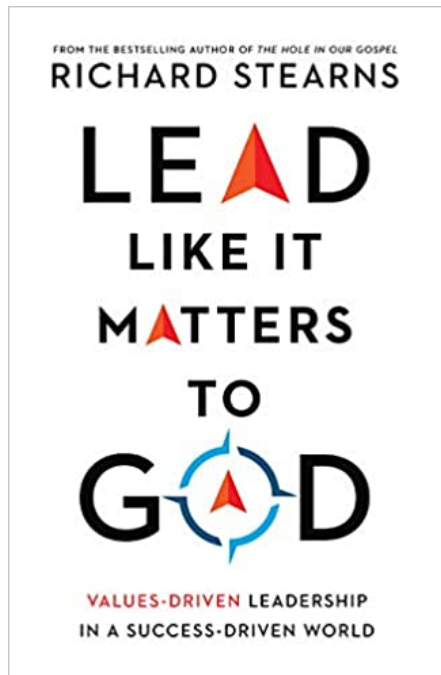


Lead Like It Matters to God – Values-Driven Leadership in a Success-Driven World

By Richard Stearns
Intervarsity Press, 2021, 264 Pages



Summary

This book, written by the former president of World Vision International, contains the insights of an evangelical leader recognized for his fruitfulness over many years. Having first served as the CEO of two large and thriving companies, he was subsequently asked to take over the leadership of World Vision. Over a period of twenty years under his guidance, World Vision experienced tremendous growth in both revenue and impact. This book contains the distilled essence of his insights into Christian leadership. The book identifies and elaborates on seventeen specific character qualities the author believes are essential in leading effectively as a Christian, specifically: surrender, sacrifice, trust, excellence, love, humility, integrity, vision, courage, generosity, forgiveness, self-awareness, balance, humor, encouragement, perseverance and listening.

Drawing on his lifetime of leading, the book contains many rich personal illustrations which reveal that the author significantly personifies the Biblical qualities of Christian leadership that he is advocating.

Best Illustration

“When I speak about leadership issues today, I am sometimes asked what one thing I would have done differently in my career if I had known at the beginning what I know now. There are a few things I could say in response, but my number-one answer is this: I wish I had better understood the power of encouragement to motivate others, lift performance, and help the people around me realize their full, God-given potential.”

Best Idea

“Good leaders can change the world in remarkable ways—just as bad leaders can do serious harm. As a Christian, I have come to believe that God’s design for leadership is radically different from the secular models that so dominate the current landscape and

have seeped into churches and ministries as well. THE PREMISE OF THIS BOOK is that the values leaders embrace are more important than the success they achieve. And yes, I understand that this statement flies in the face of virtually all the conventional wisdom permeating our success-driven culture.”

Best Take Away

“We live in a success-obsessed culture where winning is everything—in business, in sports, in politics, in school, and in life. The dogged pursuit of success can become an idol in our lives that lures us farther and farther away from God. But God, as it turns out, is not all that interested in success. God is looking for leaders ‘after his own heart,’ winsome leaders who will submit to his leading and trust him for the outcomes. A leader’s character matters more to God. God calls us to be faithful, not successful.”

Our Recommendation

We highly recommend this book. Given that Christian leaders are under self-imposed and external pressures to be “successful,” this book is a refreshing alternative perspective. The book can help liberate those experiencing that pressure.

Best Quotes

“We tend to put the highest value on the outcomes of our work, but God values our motives more. We value the ‘what’ of our work, but God values the ‘why’ and the ‘how.’” Kindle location 94

“I am not arguing that success is a bad thing—it’s just not the main thing.” Kindle location 114

“The beauty of becoming a values-driven leader is that embracing positive values does not require you to master any exceptional new skills or techniques. Values-driven leadership is more about character than capabilities, more about being than doing, more about pleasing God than people.” Kindle location 25-127

“I have organized the book around seventeen values and leadership qualities that I believe are essential for a Christian leader to embody: each of these values is expanded on in a chapter of its own, supported by Scripture and illustrated with stories from my own experiences.” Kindle location 127-130

“It is not an exaggeration to say that all human achievements have been made possible by leaders who provided direction and vision to groups of people, enabling the groups to accomplish something that none of the individuals could have achieved alone.” Kindle location 168

“Organizational cultures can be brutal, or they can be life-giving. Good and godly leadership contributes to human flourishing when it creates cultures and environments that are fair, just, and caring.” Kindle location 288

“A surrendered leader has nothing left to lose because they’ve already put everything in God’s hands.” Kindle location 579

“Only by learning to trust God for their careers can leaders truly rise above the daily stresses and pressures of life and bear fruit for the Lord.” Kindle location 732

“Excellence is not about winning; it’s about producing the best result we are capable of achieving.” Kindle location 834

“We need to reward excellence. We can’t always control the outcomes of our work, but we can control the effort we put forth and celebrate those who work with diligence.” Kindle location 863

“A commitment to excellence simply means that we will strive to do our very best and expect the same of others. This leads to a culture that rewards effort rather than outcome.” Kindle location 865

“When you think about it, the understanding that ‘all we can do is the best we can do’ is incredibly liberating. If our best efforts fail, then they fail—no regrets.” Kindle location 890

“When people see that their leader truly cares about them, it creates a relationship of trust, fosters a positive culture, and amplifies that leader’s witness for Christ.” Kindle location 977

“In order to be an effective ambassador for Christ in your workplace, you need to see the people you work with from God’s perspective—as people whom he loves, people for whom Jesus gave his life. Moreover, when those people look at you, they need to see a person who truly cares about them.” Kindle location 985

“A leader with humility understands that it’s not about them. The humble leader listens to the input of others, encourages competing points of view, values all members of their team, and seeks the welfare of others over self.” Kindle location 1,124

“True humility¹ is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.” Kindle location 1,154

“Humility does not require us to deny the positive gifts and talents we possess but rather to recognize that those gifts and talents are given to us by God for a purpose.” Kindle location 1,155

“Integrity is one of the most powerful values a leader can possess and the bedrock of a leader’s credibility. It creates a cascade of positive outcomes for a team or an organization, including trust, unity, motivation, and improved morale and

productivity. It's more important to do the right thing than to do things right." Kindle location 1,261

"I was once actually fired for my values. I worked for a person who led by wielding fear, anger, abuse, and shame to drive performance. She created a dark and oppressive work culture that wounded people. As much as I could, I sought to shine a little light in that darkness by being a voice of integrity, fairness, and encouragement—trying to protect my team from her abuses whenever I could. I tried to hold on to my values rather than capitulate to hers." Kindle location 1,309

"The day she fired me, she told me that it was not performance related; it was because I made her feel uncomfortable because she knew that I 'didn't approve of her methods.' Because she was 'uncomfortable,' I was out of work for the next nine months. So, yes, sometimes there is a price to pay when we try to live out our faith at work. But Jesus never promised us a faith that costs us nothing." Kindle location 1,312

"Good leaders must communicate vision clearly, creatively, and continually. However, the vision doesn't come alive until the leader models it. VISION, OR VISION CASTING, may be one of the most difficult leadership qualities to embody because it calls on a leader to envision the future. A leader has the responsibility to chart the course, provide direction, and set priorities for the group or organization they are leading in order to arrive at some desired future state." Kindle location 1414-24

"A vision for a better future begins with a sober assessment of the current reality." Kindle location 1,435

"Failure to understand the present reality affecting an organization can have disastrous results. The American auto companies foolishly dismissed the threat of Japanese imports, believing that Americans would never switch to Japanese cars." Kindle location 1,434

"Kodak failed to adapt to the digital revolution, blinded by the profitability of their film business. When I worked at Parker Brothers Games, management had a hard time seeing that video games would become a threat to conventional board games. I championed the notion that we were not in the board-game business but rather the home-entertainment business, and two years after our video-game launch we had doubled the size of our one-hundred-year-old company." Kindle location 1,442-3

"Leaders who demonstrate courage when facing tough challenges and decisions will inspire their teams to overcome their own fears, enabling better performance and greater focus on desired outcomes." Kindle location 1,593

"Courage is being scared to death and doing the right thing anyway." Kindle location 1,604

"The creator of one of the most successful companies in history said that their goal was not to make money. Steve Jobs understood that money is no substitute for purpose. Apple became a great company because he focused on its higher purpose to design and develop remarkable products. Money can become a counterfeit

purpose that infiltrates an organization and over time replaces its higher purpose.” Kindle location 1,794

“Apology and forgiveness heal broken relationships and promote organizational health. Leaders need to model forgiveness in the workplace both by offering it and asking for it.” Kindle location 1,875

“Leaders must conduct themselves with the knowledge that they too, are broken and flawed people, both needing forgiveness and willing to forgive others.” Kindle location 1,903

“A leader’s willingness to apologize and also to forgive others can be a powerful tool in creating a healthy culture.” Kindle location 1,921

“It is critical for leaders to be willing not only to recognize their mistakes but also to apologize for them and take steps to repair the damage they have caused.” Kindle location 1,933

“A humble leader who recognizes their mistakes, owns them, and course-corrects will earn the respect of their team and create a healthy culture in which authenticity, forgiveness, and restoration are normative.” Kindle location 1,935

“The best leaders make efforts to become aware of their own weaknesses and shortcomings and learn to understand the magnified impact their words and actions can have on others.” Kindle location 2,083

“The greatest of faults is to be conscious of none.” Kindle location 2,086

“Self-awareness is complex; it’s a multifaceted concept. So let me unpack it in three different dimensions: role awareness, personal awareness, and relational awareness. Role awareness is about understanding your unique role as a leader. Personal awareness is a knowledge of one’s own strengths and weaknesses, talents, and deficiencies. Relational awareness is about understanding how others see us.” Kindle location 2,113–39

“I am a big believer in 360-degree reviews, where a leader is confidentially evaluated by a group of their coworkers. If structured correctly, this tool gives a leader a candid glimpse into exactly how they are being perceived by others.” Kindle location 2,141

“A leader who embodies the values outlined in this book—integrity, humility, generosity, love, forgiveness, self-awareness, and so on—creates an environment that makes team members feel safe and secure rather than fearful and paranoid. And people who feel safe and secure tend to perform at their highest level.” Kindle location 2,246

“A leader who achieves a healthy balance in life between work, family, faith, and rest will broaden their perspective, make better decisions, and set a positive example for their teams.” Kindle location 2,255

"Workaholism is an all-too-common malady. In the high-pressure culture found in many work environments today, the workaholic becomes a kind of tragic hero. He or she is the person who will sacrifice anything for the cause." Kindle location 2,338
"Achieving balance in our lives only starts with our 'God time.' It also requires that we make time for family, friendships, service, reading, rest, and recreation." Kindle location 2,402

"A leader who uses humor well has a powerful, culture-shaping tool that can ease tension, relieve stress, and bring a healthy perspective to workplace challenges. Humor is a gift you can give to those you lead." Kindle location 2,438

"Humor is a powerful tool in a leader's tool kit. It builds camaraderie and team spirit. In the midst of difficulty, it can bring relief and a healthier outlook." Kindle location 2,466

"A team that laughs together is in a much better frame of mind to work together with trust and shared purpose." Kindle location 2,473

"A leader who understands the power of encouragement and affirmation will see a huge return on investment, paid back in improved performance, motivation, and loyalty." Kindle location 2,555

"When a leader exhibits perseverance and grit in the face of difficult challenges, it sustains hope and lifts the confidence of their entire team. Never give in." Kindle location 2,741

"One of the surprising findings documented in Good to Great, Jim Collins's watershed book on the best-performing American companies, was that the best leaders of the most successful companies in America were individuals characterized by two things: a blend of deep personal humility and intense professional will or perseverance." Kindle location 2,757

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