

Right off the bat, can you name the top five biographies you have ever read—the ones that significantly impacted your own development most deeply? Even if you not really a big reader, you likely have a short list of people you have invested some significant research into—research that is more sweeping, more encompassing than just a simple Wikipedia summary.

How about it? Is your favorite biography perhaps about the Abraham of the Bible...or Abraham Lincoln? Is it about Martin Luther...or Martin Luther King, Jr.? How about Henry Ford the car guy or Henry Aaron the home-run king? Or maybe it's Sir Winston Churchill or Lady Margaret Thatcher.

Here's the deal. The highly selective reading and internalizing of strong biographies is rightly one of the irreplaceable ways to get a solid grounding in real leadership and stewardship. Whether it's the sustained stewardship of a country or a company, a kingdom or a family, we can and must learn important essentials from examples of dogged perseverance and wise decision-making!

In days long past, around 100 AD or so, Plutarch pioneered this in his way, profiling the famous of ancient times in short biographical sketches. His sketches are still in print today. Look it up, you can find a modern version of the book on Amazon titled *Plutarch's Lives*. Ever since Plutarch, biographers have been writing about people fascinating to others. Of all those subjects for a couple of millennia, a few were truly great and the rest just famous without being very great at all.

Really, when you think long enough about it, the value of a biography is based upon two major factors: the worthiness of the subject and the quality of the author. The reality is, for a biography to work really well, both the book's subject and the book's author need to be highly worthy and effective at their respective roles. And that starts limiting the field of quality biographies pretty quickly. For example, some interesting people may be compelling as a subject to a relatively small group of readers, but that subject may not capture the attention of very many astute outsiders at all.

And the quality of the biography's author is absolutely key. Is the author meticulous in the research, a truth-teller, focused on the essentials even while capturing the comprehensive picture?

Now then, that takes us to *autobiographies*—biographies written by authors about themselves—well now, that genre is a whole different ball game...for an obvious reason. Is the author trustworthy in relating his or her story to the reader? Or does the author present the unfolding narrative that tends to consistently put the author himself or herself in the best light possible? Perhaps the author omits crucial facts or deploys a bit of loose-with-the-truth creative writing here and there? This is for sure: these weaknesses diminish many autobiographies.

So quality biographies that are researched deeply with an unrelenting standard for accuracy and then are well-written with a full picture of the sweeping narrative—well, those biographies are just simply superior to all those stabs at autobiographies.

Except for this. Imagine an autobiography where the author meticulously tells the truth, even when enemies point to that as inherently indicting the author's judgment and motives. Imagine an autobiography where the author takes pains to point out when key events went dreadfully wrong, not just when things went right. Imagine an autobiography that is unflinchingly, brutally direct about betrayals and rebellion and good intentions gone awry—you know, all those happenings that are the stuff of everyday life that don't seem to reflect well on the leadership of organizations and families and nations.

Well, after all that imagining and perhaps a quick walk through a well-stocked bookstore, it's clear that there's one—and only one—autobiography that actually does all that. And that autobiography is the Word of God, the Bible. That's God's accurate revealing of Himself and the accompanying, essential picture of

His creation too, warts and all. And those features—exactly those features—are what make the Bible so valuable to us from a leadership and stewardship perspective.

In the Bible, you see, we find that perfectly designed approaches go awry. We see bad choices causing those problems. And we see redemptive responses. We see clear narratives about sin and bad motives, and we see clear narratives about success and good motives. We see faulty organizational precepts and actions in the kingdoms of this world contrasted with mind-blowing, elegant precepts and actions manifested in the Kingdom of God. Yes, in a nutshell, we see the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit's infallible leadership of fallible people. That's right—*infallible leadership of fallible people!*

All of this is accurate and immensely instructive for us as leaders in our businesses and nonprofits. The Bible, this one work combining 66 separate but inextricably-linked messages, weaves together a grand narrative of many grim realities of organizations even while exhibiting the patience, the perseverance, the elegance of astute answers to those grim realities! Answers full of redemption!

These truths and these contrasts are exactly where effective, unparalleled learning can take root in our lives. But that's true only if we read it, process it, and then apply it in the ways God demonstrates.

You see, the Bible is the only truly accurate autobiography that has ever existed or will ever be written. The Bible tells sad but necessary truths about people who reject ideal leadership—truths covering events happening over several thousand years. This unique book gives us as leaders today the reality-based perspective that even God has always had His perfect stewarding leadership rejected. And, along with that, God also models for us the types of mature responses we should manifest in our stewardship roles.

Listen. Now, we're down to whether you personally are striving to be a 24/7 follower of Christ—someone who follows Jesus both in the pew *and* at the office. Are you thinking about the Bible as the most astute organizational manual ever, a book superbly relevant to your every action in our modern, tech-centric world? Are you thinking holistically and practically about God's Kingdom and its amazing lessons for us in every organization we are a part of, every day? If you are not convinced that God and His Kingdom is the complete go-to learning benchmarks for your life-long stewardship in leading various organizations, well, then, step back, take a deep breath, and reconsider. Just what organization is remotely in the same league as God's Kingdom? Amazon? Microsoft? Strong results for those companies in recent times, for sure, but, honestly, don't make me laugh! The Kingdom, rightly studied and understood, dwarfs the long-term results of *every other organization in all regards.*

The entire Whitestone slate of resources—from seminar videos, to book reviews, to podcasts and the Application & Action materials—all of this is designed to help facilitate top performance. So, back to biographies and autobiographies. All of us should read key biographies. And every one of those biographies about amazing, accomplished stewards can and should be viewed in the context of the very best: God and His Kingdom. Our job, then, is to first become deeply saturated in the principles, practices, and outcomes of God's Kingdom and then compare and contrast that to how mere mortals like Churchill and Lincoln compare. This approach fosters our honing in to our own opportunities, a sort of triangulation showing us the way to stewarding and leading to the very highest levels in our businesses and nonprofits.

You see, this is really about leading an exciting, supernaturally-informed, un compartmentalized life in Christ, applying Kingdom principles in every nook and cranny of what we do—and bearing the fruits of exactly those approaches. Try it. It will be eye-opening. It will be humbling. It will be exhilarating.

And it all starts with reading the Bible. It's all about God's redemptive purposes through Jesus—and He's inviting us to participate! So, why not? Let's become part of His amazing story in ways we've never dreamed of before!

A&A: Application & Action

1. Are your actions and decisions evidence to others that you are totally sold out to an uncompartimentalized life in Christ? If yes, give examples. If no, give action steps to get there.
2. Beyond pure "ethics," give three unusual examples of Biblical standards being effectively applied in your workplace. Be specific. If there are none, give three changes you plan to make in this area.
3. Give a one-sentence takeaway from each of the top three biographies you have admired. If you haven't read many biographies, research three new titles to add to your reading list.