

2012

Halftime [review] / Buford, Bob

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Recommended Citation

Cosgrove, John F. (2012) "Halftime [review] / Buford, Bob," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*: Vol. 6: No. 1, 90-91.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl/vol6/iss1/9>

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BOOK REVIEWS

HALFTIME

By Bob Buford

Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan (2008, updated edition)

E-Publication, 298 pages

Reviewed by JOHN F. COSGROVE

In *Halftime*, Bob Buford argues for the importance of developing a life's purpose in order to live a life of significance. He presents a process for developing our personal purpose and constructing a plan for its realization. Buford describes us as being in a life-long athletic contest where we have successfully completed the first half and are now headed for the locker room. He states, "You probably rushed through college, fell in love, married, embarked on a career, climbed upward, and acquired a few things to make the journey comfortable." He further admits that we probably took some life "hits" such as divorce, loss of a job, or maybe the death of a child or spouse. We started the first half with great intentions, but "got blindsided along the way" (p. 37). We learn from our first half experiences so as to develop a strategy for a successful second half that will lead to victory, or rather, a life of significance. Buford's book is written for anyone who has an unquenchable

desire to move a successful life to a life of significance. His argument that a significant life rests with an individual's selection of a life's purpose and a strategy for its realization is practical, potentially life changing, and is supported by other scholars (such as Jim Collins, who wrote the Foreword to the 2008 edition, and Peter Drucker, who wrote the Foreword to the 1994 edition).

Buford forces us to reflect on life (reviewing the "first half"). "I knew what I believed," says Buford, "but I really did not know what to do about what I believed" (p. 15). We are asked to reflect on our earliest dreams, our most significant successes, the importance we place on faith, and what we are passionate about. The author uses these reflections to maneuver us through thoughts that include major life setbacks and how they were dealt with, the major influencers and how they impacted our life, major events and how they changed us, and moments when we felt like a champion and what we did to realize those feelings (pp. 70–75).

From these experiences and personal reflections Buford urges us to "take stock" of ourselves by asking a series of questions about our passions, beliefs, and values. This could include our relationship with God and our faith. He concludes this section by asking us to list the most important things in our life, place them in categories and, symbolically, place those categories "in a box." Buford argues that to have a successful second half we end up with one thing "in the box." It is your life's purpose. In Buford's case the three categories were family, religious beliefs, and career. He encourages us to involve our spouses and two trusted friends in making this decision (pp. 85–96). The end result is to proclaim the one thing that will define our reason for being. This is our life's purpose.

Buford spends the remainder of the book arguing a process for transitioning our life to realizing this newly discovered purpose. He discusses techniques for staying “centered” with our purpose (pp. 118–125). He emphasizes the use of what he calls “seismic testing,” that is, seeking advice from people familiar with our upcoming journey. In Buford’s case, he asked for advice from two pastors (pp. 128–132). Buford concludes the book by talking about his life with Christ, that his second half is not about collecting things but providing things to others, that learning never stops, and that this is about moving from a life of being controlled to a life of controlling things ourselves.

The readers who will find this book most valuable will have already found success and are discovering that they want more of life. They have gone through a professional life of accumulation and are asking “why continue this?” or “what’s the purpose of my work?” Many successful people are good at what they do, and could easily continue, but are simply bored. Though the book is based on the author’s life experiences, it is more than an autobiography. It addresses head-on the midlife crisis of so many. It addresses a fundamental social challenge of a developed and affluent society: we are living longer than our great-grandparents, and many of us are not ready to retire even though we might have the means. We need a new challenge. *Halftime* provides a process to enter that second half of life.

Though this book is engaging and thought provoking, it does have several shortcomings. For instance, Buford, a successful CEO of a large cable company, uses for examples people with similar wealth and position. There are many people of lesser means and status who have a yearn-

ing to be in halftime and develop a life of significance, but how this happens will not reflect Buford’s examples. Another weakness in *Halftime* is the absence of women in the discussion and examples. Women in midlife, whose nest is newly empty and who want to start a career, can learn from Buford’s suggestions, but they will have to approach their halftime in a very different way.

In conclusion, this book can be extremely valuable for those who are at halftime. Christians will appreciate Buford’s strong biblical foundation and may appreciate his signal that a personal purpose, leading to a life of significance, is actually a calling from God. There is much value in Buford’s process of defining a life’s purpose and the process for putting it in place. Even if your background differs from Buford’s but you are looking for a life that can turn success into significance, and particularly Christ-centered significance, *Halftime* is a valuable study.

JOHN F. COSGROVE is a former director for Merrill Lynch, President of Mellon Bank, and Senior Vice President for UBS. He presently owns several small businesses, including a financial firm and a fitness club, is a member of several non-profit boards, and is working towards establishing a leadership institute to serve his local community. He is beginning his second year at Andrews University as a Ph.D. student in the Department of Leadership.

A SAILOR LOOKS AT LEADERSHIP

By Randy Deering
Oldsmar, FL: Digital Publishing
of Florida (2012)
E-Publication

Reviewed by GARTH WOODRUFF

Randy Deering applies leadership principles from his sailing experience to business and other areas of everyday life in this enjoyable, easy-to-