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A Sailor Looks at Leadership [review] / Deering, Randy

Garth Woodruff

Andrews University, woodruffg@andrews.edu

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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-

read book on leadership. Though sailing seems to take a minor role in *A Sailor Looks at Leadership*, the author takes the helm in this fairly comprehensive overview of leadership methods and styles, expertly steering the reader through a fast-paced regatta of one-liners. Deering fills the pages with positive, simple, concise theories supported by quotes and data. For instance, he starts Chapter 3 with “someone has wisely quipped, ‘If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll probably wind up some place else’” (p. 31). In another place he quotes Burt Nanus: “There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, achievable vision for the future, widely shared” (p. 31). Finally, after depositing some thoughtful insights, Deering follows with an inscription chiseled in the walls of a Sussex church: “A vision without a task is just a dream, a task without a vision is drudgery, but a vision and a task is the hope of the world” (p. 32). Deering defiantly simplifies, yet supports, a life journey of leadership.

In the section on teamwork, Deering quotes Henry Ford and then follows up with his own thoughtful commentary: “Henry Ford said, ‘Don’t find fault, find a remedy.’ Problems either stop us or stretch us. We can see obstacles or we can see objectives. You can see solutions in every challenge or a problem in every situation” (p. 40). Within almost every theory or point, the author interjects some good homespun thought, obviously based on years of experience and an educated mind. All aspects of leadership seem to be covered: team building, top down leadership, values, and trust building, to name a few. He even shares what he feels a leader needs person-

ally, things like “keeping in shape physically and mentally” (p. 94), stress management, and seeking sanctuary.

Deering picks up many of the same lessons Christ would have learned through the simple life of one who lived by the sea, then repackages them into modern words. Deering, a theologian with Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees, has a tendency to treat the connection of leadership and Christianity as assumed until the last section of the last chapter. “Reputation is who people say you are, character is who you really are. The famous preacher D. L. Moody said, ‘Character is what you are in the dark when nobody is looking’” (p. 110). After a short dialog regarding character, not charisma, Deering wraps up with what he calls his “Ten Commandments for Leadership” (p. 111).

A Sailor Looks at Leadership can be viewed from two different paradigms. One would be that the book is for someone new to the concept of leadership, that it gives a general overview in a non-threatening tone to introduce a reader to a very complex set of topics. The second point of view is that Deering’s book is a nice review of deeply studied theories in laymen’s terms, coupled with copious illustrations and quotes that add to the foundation and understanding of these theories. In such a complex field as leadership, seldom do you find a book that not only attempts to simplify concepts but succeeds.

GARTH WOODRUFF is an Instructor of Horticulture and Landscape Design at Andrews University. He is currently an avid sailor and promoter of gaining leadership skills through outdoor experiences.