

2013

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Recommended Citation

Powell, M. Curtis (2013) "Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking [review] / Cain, Susan," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*: Vol. 7: No. 2, 106-107.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl/vol7/iss2/10>

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QUIET: THE POWER OF INTROVERTS IN A WORLD THAT CAN'T STOP TALKING

*By Susan Cain
New York, NY: Crown Publishers
(2012)
Paperback, 333 pages*

Reviewed by M. CURTIS POWELL

Susan Cain writes on behalf of the shy, the timid, and the quiet, thus giving voice to a deep-thinking and reflective segment of society. Throughout the book, she provides logical argument as to the relevance and power of the introvert.

In *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, Cain states that the powerful contributions of the introvert have been overlooked by a society that celebrates the extrovert. Cain leads the reader through her own journey of self-discovery as an introvert and her development as attorney and author. She also offers compelling research evidence and shares personal stories that have strong emotional appeal, supplying abundant anecdotal evidence to support her assertion that our society values the "extrovert ideal" while diminishing the introverted reality.

The trend, even in faith communities, says Cain, has been to celebrate the extrovert while the contributions of the introvert lay dormant or underdeveloped. The examples she gives debunk the myth that introverts have little to contribute. Do leaders have to be charismatic? Can introverts become great leaders? The author supports the view that leaders do not have to be extroverts, and that introverts can be great leaders. According to Cain, introverted leaders are more open to the opinion of others, take

more time to make crucial decisions, and are often more reflective on the big picture, rather than the moment. This observation adds balance to a perspective among many Christian leaders who may be tempted to minimize the introvert's contributions and celebrate the charismatic extroverted leader. Cain also believes that this value system has corrupted the evangelical church. The author's argument is that church leadership is influenced heavily by the leadership moments of society.

Cain's view, that we live in the "extrovert ideal" value system where introversion is viewed "as a second class trait," was given a solid footing through a historical overview of the Western ideal. Cain points out that there was a shift in Western society from character to charisma during the early portion of the 20th century. By the 1920s and 1930s, the value of inward qualities like honor, integrity and morals was replaced by a new list that included terms like magnetic, fascinating, and energetic. This shift positioned Western culture with a new system of social acceptance and upward mobility. Cain's historical overview of the value shift in American culture runs parallel with shifts within the leadership community at large, giving evidence that she is informed about current leadership literature and is keenly aware of leadership trends.

Not only does Cain point out the myths that accompany the introverted personality, she also offers insight for parents, educators, and those who feel silenced by the extrovert ideal. This insight proves helpful for those within the leadership community who are confronted with the complexities of diverse personalities. Cain's theme is bolstered by comparing the Western ideal of extroversion with that of Eastern culture. Cain

writes that “Westerners value boldness and verbal skill, traits that promote individuality, while Asians prize quiet, humility, and sensitivity, which foster group cohesion” (p. 189).

In writing *Quiet*, Cain gives voices to a segment of society that is often misunderstood and silenced. Her relevant arguments, supported by well-researched facts and anecdotal evidence, provide fresh insights for Christian communities which may be influenced by the “extrovert ideal.” Moreover, parents and educators, as well as those who are introverts, extroverts or ambiverts, can learn how to appreciate the strengths of various personality traits. I recommend this book to any leader, parent or educator who wishes to have a balanced perspective of the strengths and potential of introverts.

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THE POWER OF HABIT: WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO IN LIFE AND BUSINESS

By Charles Duhigg
New York, NY: Random House (2012)
Kindle, 371 pages

Reviewed by BILL MILLER

Through the use of storytelling, academic studies, and interviews, Mr. Duhigg, a reporter for *The New York Times*, entered the world of habits, the impact of habits, the power of habits, and what it takes to change the habits that encase our lives and culture.

Duhigg considered the routine of habits from three large frameworks: (1) how habits emerge within individ-

ual lives, (2) habits of successful companies and organizations, and (3) the habits of societies. Within the context of each chapter, he attempted to work from a central argument: “Habits can be changed, if we understand how they work” (pp. 1, 2).

Whether you are a pastor, an administrator, an academic, or a layperson, life as we know it is a conglomeration of decisions, habits, and addictions. This process tends to be done somewhat mindlessly until we recognize that maybe the direction we are going needs to change (i.e., our devotional life, use of money, family time, diet, exercise, leadership model, organizational culture).

Mr. Duhigg provided a method of changing a habit. One must establish a “keystone habit” which involves “identifying a few key priorities and fashioning them into powerful levers” (p. 101). These priorities will help when willpower is weak. He suggested that if one could understand the cues that have established the sequence of a present habit, and then begin to establish a different sequence of “cravings” or “addictions” toward a desired outcome, the ability to create a new habit comes more easily.

The brain must cope with a voluminous amount of input every moment of every day. Habits form so that the brain can work on multiple stimuli simultaneously. But when a different outcome is desired, new habits must be formed. Understanding the “habit loop” becomes critical: “cue, routine, reward; cue, routine, reward” (p. 19). A habit loop establishes belief—belief that change can take place. “Belief seems crucial” to creating a craving for a new habit (p. 85).

The Power of Habit, however, neglects to address the breadth of literature on addictions versus habits, historical literature on habit formation