

FROM THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE HOLE IN OUR GOSPEL*
RICHARD STEARNS

LEAD LIKE IT MATTERS TO GOD

VALUES-DRIVEN LEADERSHIP
IN A SUCCESS-DRIVEN WORLD

DETAILS



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

March 30, 2021 | \$25, 240 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-4730-3

"Whether you are a first-time leader or an experienced leader, the challenge of leadership is ever present and ubiquitous. Wherever you are on the leadership spectrum, the key is leading yourself first. Lead Like It Matters to God very quickly recalibrates an understanding of leadership that does not focus on what we produce as leaders but on who we are."

—Tom DeVries, CEO of the Global Leadership Network

Outlining a Radically Different Approach

As a leader who has navigated both secular and sacred spaces, Richard Stearns claims that the values Christian leaders embrace in their workplaces are actually more important than the results they achieve—that God is more concerned about a leader's character than a leader's success. With wisdom, wit, and biblical teaching, Stearns shares captivating stories of his life journey and unpacks seventeen crucial values that can transform leaders and their organizations.

When leaders embody values such as integrity, courage, excellence, forgiveness, humility, surrender, balance, generosity, perseverance, love, excellence, and encouragement, they not only improve their witness for Christ but also shape institutions, influence culture, improve team performance, and create healthy workplaces where people can flourish. This book aims to offer

- Wisdom on how to align your Christian values with your work and vocation,
- Real-life stories that illustrate seventeen principles necessary for true leadership in secular and faith-based contexts, and
- Inspiration for creating a workplace culture of trust, caring, and effectiveness.

Stearns says, "I am writing this book because I believe leadership is so very important. Leadership affects every dimension of our human experience. Leadership can unite us, lift us up, and inspire us to achieve great things. And leadership is crucial to accomplishing God's purposes in our world. In short, leadership matters to God and so it ought to matter to us."



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Sharing the principles he has learned over a remarkable corporate and ministry career, Richard Stearns offers seventeen crucial values that transform leaders and their organizations. When leaders embody these ideals, they not only improve their witness for Christ but they shape institutions, influence culture, and create healthy workplaces where people can flourish.

"Success is Overrated."

Yes, you heard me correctly, I said that success is overrated. Now I understand that making this statement, in a book about leadership, is akin to heresy. We live in a success-obsessed culture where winning is everything—in business, in sports, in politics, in school, and in life. We celebrate the wealthiest people, the most powerful leaders, the biggest churches, the winningest teams, the fastest growing companies, and the most famous celebrities. We are literally marinating in a success-driven, achievement-oriented culture that permeates every dimension of our work and our lives. The drive for success and achievement is so pervasive that we don't even realize how much it influences everything that we do. It's like a colorless, odorless gas that we are all breathing. But it can be deadly. 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. He is not impressed by growing revenues, increased church attendance, the size of your income, or the title on your business card. 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.

Right now, you might be thinking: Easy for you to say. You don't know what I face every day at work. It's perform or perish. I work in a dog-eat-dog environment. It's a brutal workplace culture. If you don't perform, you're out, and you might be out even when you do perform if you get on the wrong side of the workplace politics. On Sunday at church I hear about "putting on the full armor of God," but on Monday, if I want to make it through the week, I need to put on the full armor of the world. Because work sometimes feels like combat.

If that's what you're facing in your job, I totally understand because I worked in just those kind of tough, secular environments for almost twenty-five years. I have had some horrible bosses, worked in some toxic cultures, and have even been fired twice. But through all of it I learned that my Christian faith was not a liability; it was an asset. In the midst of all the stress and pressure, I discovered that when we truly take God with us to work, he will use us for his purposes.

Mother Teresa, who was sainted by the Catholic church for her lifelong dedication to the poor in India, once made a profound statement that thoroughly shatters our secular notions of success. Senator Mark Hatfield was visiting her in Calcutta and watching as she moved among the beds of the sick and dying. The senator was struck by the sheer size of the needs compared to the resources she had available. "Mother," he asked, "don't you get awfully discouraged when you see the magnitude of the poverty and realize how little you can really do?" In a respectful way he was really asking her if she felt like she was failing in the face of those overwhelming odds. She answered him with this: "My dear Senator, God did not call me to be successful. He called me to be faithful." Wow! In just fourteen words Mother Teresa flipped our "success paradigm" upside down—God calls us to be faithful, not successful.

You see, 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." We prioritize the destination, but for God it's all about the journey. We reward success, but God's bottom line is faithfulness. This single truth flies in the face of most of what we've been taught about leadership in books, seminars, universities, and our workplaces.



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"In studying the seventeen values and leadership qualities that he believes are essential for Christian leaders to embody, I learned, as Rich did, even though I fall short of perfection, if I trust God, I still can learn to lead like it matters to him. If you read this book, I know that will happen to you too. Then watch the careers and lives of the people around you soar."

Ken Blanchard, coauthor of *The One Minute Manager* and *Servant Leadership in Action*

I don't know about you, but I sometimes imagine what it will be like someday to stand before the Lord and to hear his assessment of my life. And despite my three CEO titles and decades of working in multiple organizations, I just can't imagine God saying to me: "Well done, good and faithful servant, for those twenty consecutive quarters of earnings growth!" or, "Way to go, Rich, on becoming a CEO at the age of thirty-three. You killed it!" No, I don't think God will be impressed by those things. Hey, my wife isn't even impressed by those things. It's far more likely that God will speak to us about *how* we led and *how* we lived. How did we represent him to those we worked with? How did we embody the truths and values of the kingdom of God in our lives? And how did we tangibly show his great love for people in our daily conduct?

For most of my twenty years as president of World Vision, I had 2 Corinthians 5:20 stenciled on my office wall: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God is making his appeal through us." This verse, more than any other, seemed to capture my role as a Christian leader. Jesus was calling me to be his ambassador. And ambassadors are called to embody the values, ideals, and character of the one they represent. I will make the case in these pages that wherever you work or volunteer—in a school, a business, a church, a ministry, a nonprofit, in government, or in your home—you too are called first to be Christ's ambassador. God really is making his appeal through you. It's a humbling thought, isn't it? It doesn't matter whether you consider yourself a leader or not. You're Christ's ambassador. Your life is your witness whether you are at work or at home. When people look at how you live your life, raise your children, spend your money, do your work, and treat others, what will they see? These things matter most to God.

This book is about why I believe the values Christian leaders embrace are more important than the success they achieve. I am not arguing that success is a bad thing—it's just not the main thing. Character and competence are both honoring to God. When we focus first on being faithful to God in our lives, and when our work is driven by the values of God's kingdom, he may very well bless us with successful outcomes. But qualities like integrity, humility, excellence, perseverance, generosity, courage, and forgiveness matter more to God than the most impressive resume of accomplishments. And I believe that leaders who embrace these characteristics will lift not only their own performance but also the performance of their teams.

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.

—Adapted from the introduction

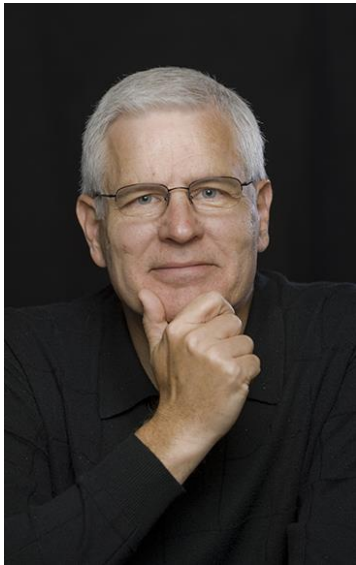


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BIO



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“This book is a rare treat—a fireside chat with a battle-tested Christian CEO who has led big organizations in both the secular and ministry worlds. Rich Stearns offers a master’s-level course on leadership with faith as his North Star. Embrace these seventeen leadership values and you will become a better leader and a better ambassador for Christ.”

John C. Maxwell, author of *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*

A Tested, Trusted, and Timeless Leader

“Steady. Reliable. Focused. These are the words I use to describe Richard Stearns. I’ve known him for two decades, traveled with him to distant lands, and partnered with him in multiple projects. He leads with impeccable integrity and skill.” —Max Lucado, pastor and author

Richard Stearns went from success to significance when he left the corporate world behind to become president of World Vision US in 1998. After twenty years as the longest-serving CEO of the Christian relief and development organization, he retired in January 2019 and now serves as president emeritus.

His professional career included leadership roles at Gillette, Parker Brothers Games, The Franklin Mint, and Lenox Inc., where he became president and chief executive officer in 1995. Stearns brought corporate best practices to World Vision, where he inspired a culture of outcome-focused management. His lasting legacy is his leadership in calling on the church in America to respond to some of the greatest needs of our time, notably the HIV and AIDS pandemic and the global refugee crisis.

As a thought leader, he has appeared regularly in media outlets such as *Christianity Today*, FOX News, CNN, NPR, Charisma News, and *Relevant* magazine. Among the honors Stearns received for his humanitarian service are five honorary doctoral degrees, the Julia Vadala Taft Outstanding Leadership Award from InterAction, and the Christian Leadership Alliance’s highest honor. Stearns holds a bachelor’s degree from Cornell University and an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

His bestselling book *The Hole in Our Gospel* was named the 2010 Christian Book of the Year. He also wrote *Unfinished*, as well as two books with his wife, Reneé—a children’s Bible storybook, *God’s Love For You*, and a ninety-day devotional, *He Walks Among Us*.



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"It has often been said that leadership is an action, not a position. In a society that often values others based on achievements and successes, we learn from Scripture that world-changing, upside-down, kingdom-minded leadership centers on cultivating who we are rather than what we can do. Rich's own unique experiences and stories demonstrate that having integrity and achieving success are not mutually exclusive but rather mutually reinforcing."

—*Jenny Yana*, vice president for advocacy and policy, World Relief

Casting a Compelling Vision

In your book *Lead Like It Matters to God*, you highlight seventeen different character traits that are important for leadership. In today's current climate, are there two or three traits that seem to be of critical importance right now?

Richard Stearns: Perseverance, Vision, and Encouragement. In this particular season of uncertainty, disruption, and anxiety, leaders have the challenging job of calming, encouraging, and motivating their teams despite their circumstances. In the midst of such daunting challenges a leader who can persevere with unwavering belief in a positive future can also help their team to believe there are better times ahead. Perseverance can be contagious. Then casting a compelling vision of what's possible and how to achieve will lift the eyes of the organization to a more desirable future state. The leader must own and sustain this vision by constantly painting the picture through their words and actions. And lastly, simple encouragement along the way really helps keep people motivated. Take time to recognize and praise team members when they make a good contribution. Call them personally to affirm how important their work is. Help them to believe that their work is crucial to the team's success. Encouragement has a great return on investment.

With COVID-19, many companies have a workforce that is now fully remote and working from home. In what ways do you believe leaders must adapt and change to continue to lead well virtually?

Richard: Shifting to a virtual workplace poses some real challenges for leaders. There are two critical ingredients that aren't easily transmitted virtually—culture and relationship. The workplace culture of an organization is critical to its identity and its flourishing. And culture is often created and sustained through both formal and informal human connections in a workplace. But how does that happen when the workplace is gone? Human connections and relationships in a workplace are critical to the fabric and health of an organizational culture. Leaders must find creative ways to build and strengthen culture online—celebrating victories, recognizing individual achievements, inspiring with vision. Work cannot be allowed to devolve into hour upon hour of mind-numbing technical drudgery. Finally, leaders need to have regular one-on-one talks with individual members of the team—not to review their to-do lists but to check in on them personally, affirm them, and encourage them along the way.

What is the one thing about leadership you wish you knew when you began your career?

Richard Stearns: 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. That simple insight, though it may seem obvious, is one of the most powerful motivational tools at our disposal. The best leaders know that regular affirmation and encouragement, not criticism, is what helps the people on their team develop confidence, improve their performance, and lean into their gifts and abilities. Encouragement energizes people while criticism often demoralizes. 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.



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"What struck me right between the eyes was that there are hundreds of 'how-to' books on leadership, but I can't think of one 'why-to' book, which to me is the essence of true leadership. Rich has written the book that needed to be written, and there is no one more qualified to write it."

—Ron Blue, author of *Master Your Money*

Looking back at your impressive career, who would you say influenced your leadership style the most?

Richard: We are not born fully formed as great leaders. The best leaders grow and evolve over many years of experience—watching and learning from others above them, around them, and below them. But learning from others requires enough humility to admit that everyone from the janitor to the CEO may have something worth emulating. I learned not to try and emulate someone else's style of leadership because we each have our own unique style. You want to be the best you that you can be. But you can and should emulate the positive values and principles that you admire in others. How do they treat others, are they people of their word, are they forgiving, are they good listeners, and do they work with excellence? Imitate those qualities when you see them demonstrated.

Your career afforded you the opportunity to lead in both secular and Christian companies. What insights about leadership did you gain in both types of work environments? Were the insights the same or different?

Richard Stearns: There are many commonalities between for-profit, not-for-profit, and Christian organizations. All three involve carrying out a mission, managing people, and hitting financial targets. Most of the nuts and bolts of leadership are the same. But Christian and nonprofit organizations have an edge in motivating staff because of their unique and compelling missions—curing cancer, fighting poverty, educating students, etc. Those inspirational causes really help to inspire staff to work with passion. For-profit organizations don't always have such motivational missions and so they often invest more to motivate staff through financial incentives and career advancement. If I were to summarize the most profound difference, I would say it this way: In a for-profit organization, the end goal is money or profit. Everything else (books, automobiles, retail stores, software, etc.) is simply a means to that end. But in a nonprofit organization it's just the reverse. The end goal is usually cause related (improved health, reducing poverty, protecting the environment, etc.) and money is just a means to that end. It's a profound and fundamental difference that requires very different leadership approaches to motivating staff, establishing goals, and communicating with constituents/customers.

What lessons do you hope readers learn from your book *Lead Like It Matters to God*?

Richard: I hope readers will take away at least five key points from the book.

1. Christian leaders are called to be different—their leadership is their witness to the truth of the gospel. The 'one job' of a Christian leader is to be an ambassador for Christ as described in 2 Cor 5:20 "as though God is making his appeal through them."
2. Achieving success in the secular sense can become a form of idolatry for Christian leaders. In the words of Mother Teresa, "God has not called us to be successful; he has called us to be faithful."
3. God is much more concerned about how a Christian leader leads than what that leader achieves. In other words, 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. We prioritize the destination, but for God it's all about the journey. We reward success, but God's bottom line is faithfulness.



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"There are, it has been said, two sets of virtues or values. The résumé virtues relate to a job well done, and the rewards are more external—recognition, success, popularity, achievement, material benefits. The eulogy virtues signify a life well lived, and the rewards are more internal—a sense of purpose fulfilled, of benefits to others, of spiritual well-being. Rich Stearns in his remarkable career has experienced and valued both sets, which is why this honest and personal reflection on leadership is so important. In an age that values what is seen and temporal, Rich Stearns points us to what is unseen and eternal."

—Leighton Ford, Leighton Ford Ministries

4. 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.
5. Leaders who embrace these characteristics will lift not only their own performance but also the performance of their teams. Putting faithfulness above success will ironically make a leader more likely to achieve success as they honor God with their character and trust him for the outcomes. And not only do people want to follow a leader who consistently demonstrates a godly character—every organization wants to hire leaders like this because of the positive culture they create.



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