

# Why Leaders Need to Be Readers

Rick Warren

*I've said for years that leaders are readers. When you stop reading, you stop learning and when you stop learning you stop leading effectively. I'd rather have those who engage with me be drinking from a living stream rather than a stagnant pool. Pastor Rick Warren shares why leaders need to be readers. May his thoughts stir a renewed desire in you to continue to grow and learn regardless of how old you may be.*

We need to balance both input and output in business to be healthy. You can't constantly give unless you're filling up your tank. You can do this through many tools—from reading books to listening to podcasts to participating in conferences.

I heard someone once say, "When your output exceeds your input, your upkeep will be your downfall." You need a balance. Most Christians businessmen get too much input and not enough output. They're involved in projects after projects but aren't doing any business.

That's not usually the problem with leaders. We're always giving out. But if we don't get input, we'll dry up.

The simple habit of reading fills me up and helps me stay fresh. Every leader is a reader. Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers.

Here are four reasons reading is so critical to leading effective ministries:

## 1) Reading inspires and motivates us.

Harold Ockenga said, "Read to refill the walls of inspiration." Reading enlightens us, calms us, collects us, and prompts us to better our efforts. I've often heard people say that a man is known by the friends he keeps. That's true, but he is known even better by the books he reads. Few activities rescue me from sluggishness more than reading a good book. It gets my creative juices flowing.

You can never underestimate the power of a book. Thomas Carlyle said, "The best effect of any book is that it excites the reader to activity." You ought to read books that motivate you, stimulate you, and help you get going.

## 2) Reading sharpens our skills.

Aldous Huxley said, "Every man who knows how to read has in his power to magnify himself, to multiply the ways in which he exists, to make his life full, significant and interesting." Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. Your mind is like a muscle. The more you exercise it, the stronger it gets. You can't wear out your mind.

As a successful businessman, you need to continually upgrade your skills. You do that through reading.

Make a list of the skills you need for your success. Then read in those areas on a regular basis. For example, I try to read books on planning, leading, marketing, communication, and Christian books. I like to alternate between different skills that I'm continually trying to develop.

### **3) Reading allows us to learn from others.**

It's wise to learn from experience, but it's even wiser to learn from the experience of others. All of us learn through the school of hard knocks—trial and error—but we don't have time to make all the mistakes ourselves. If the only way you learn is by experience, you'll die before you learn everything you need to know. Then it's too late to use it!

Sir Isaac Newton said, "If I have seen further than other men, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." By reading books, you get to interact with people you've never met and see how the great minds think. I've been influenced by people who died before I was even born—like Peter Drucker, Dale Carnegie, Stephen Covey, Norman Vincent Peale, Zig Ziglar, Earl Nightingale and Og Mandino.

### **4) Reading helps us stay current in a changing world.**

I've seen hundreds of personal libraries in my life. A casual glance at a businessman's library often tells you quite a bit about that person. If books are any indication of the personal growth of leaders, then some have stopped growing after they got out of school. All you see in their libraries are books from college and cheap seminars. How do leaders stop reading come up with anything fresh?

In today's society, obsolescence comes quickly. By the time a science book gets to press, it's out of date. We've got to continually read to stay current. You can't thrive in business world on what you learned in college. You must keep growing and keep learning.

Make reading a habit. It will keep your mind fresh and help you prepare for tomorrow's challenges.