

The ONE Truth Behind All Successful Leaders

Thirty pages in, the realization hit.

[Extreme Ownership](#) by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin is not only one of the best leadership books I have ever read, *it may be the only leadership book I have ever read cover to cover*. Typical books on leadership, especially church leadership, leave me uninspired... at best. At worst, a few seem to me as simply a series of notions stretched thin to create chapters.

Using the U.S. Navy Seals as their frame of reference, [Extreme Ownership](#) kept me turning pages by unpacking the depth of ONE astoundingly simple truth behind any successful leadership enterprise: **take responsibility**. In doing so, the highly effective church leader is no longer a mythical being, existing on a higher plane than the rest of all mere mortal pastors. But *with responsibility, every minister at every level of the staff structure, fulfills their duty to ensure success in leading toward the most important mission of all mankind: the Great Commission*.

In this, Willink and Babin's book is **practical**: Every minister, in every staff role can appreciate and live out the principles of [Extreme Ownership](#). Additionally, actual **stories** from their leadership during the Battle of Ramadi in Iraq, illustrating these principles in action, keep the reader connected because **testimony is the currency of transformation**. Finally, a sense of **gravity** is felt throughout the book as effective leadership for these authors was a matter of life or death. The obvious parallel for leaders in the church, is that extreme ownership could mean eternal life or death in our theater of operations.

Here is a summary of [Extreme Ownership](#) in 3 sentences:

1. Leadership is taking total responsibility for the effective execution of what you are called to accomplish.
2. When you are a leader, success always belongs to the team, failure always belongs to you.
3. A clear, simple, actionable mission that everyone believes-in is critical to the success of every team.

My Top 15 Quotes for Church Leaders from [Extreme Ownership](#) by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin

- Without a team there can be no leadership.
- For all the definitions, descriptions, and characterizations of leaders, there are only two that matter: effective and ineffective. Effective leaders lead successful teams that accomplish their mission. Ineffective leaders do not.
- For leaders, the humility to admit and own mistakes and develop a plan to overcome them is essential to success.
- The best leaders are not driven by ego or personal agendas. They are simply focused on the mission and how to best accomplish it.
- Leaders must own everything in their world. There is no one else to blame.
- The leader bears full responsibility for explaining the strategic mission, developing the

tactics, and securing the training and resources to enable the team properly and successfully execute.

- If an individual on a team is not performing at the level required for the team to succeed, the leader must train and mentor that underperformer... But the leader must be loyal to the team and the mission above any individual.
- When it comes to standards as a leader, it's not what you preach, it's what you tolerate.
- There are no bad teams anywhere... Only bad leaders.
- It is incumbent on senior leaders to take the time to explain and answer the questions of their junior leaders so that they too can understand why and believe.
- Leadership isn't one person leading a team. It is a group of leaders working together up and down the chain of command to lead.
- A broad and ambiguous mission results in lack of focus, ineffective execution, and mission creep.
- If your team isn't doing what you need them to do, you first have to look at yourself. Rather than blame them for not seeing the strategic picture, you must figure out a way to better communicate it to them in terms that are simple, clear and concise, so that they understand.
- A public display of discontent or disagreement with the chain of command undermines the authority at all levels. This is catastrophic to the performance of any organization.
- If your leader is not giving you the support that you need, don't blame him or her. Instead, reexamine what you can do to better clarify, educate, influence or convince that person to give you what you need in order to win.

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