

## **Recommended by LDCR Aaron Fuller**

### **Resiliency Branch Head**

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[www.navymwrdigitallibrary.org](http://www.navymwrdigitallibrary.org)*

#### **The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life, David Brooks (Random House, 2019)**

**What's it about:** Brooks is a conservative social and political commentator who writes for the New York Times. In "The Second Mountain," he offers a critique of the effect hyper-individualism has on us today, and describes the pursuit of its goals as "the first mountain," a life focused on individual achievement and progress. From his own experience, Brooks examines the shortcomings of the "first mountain," and instead offers the "second mountain" that leads to a more fulfilling and meaningful life: a life of deep commitment to things and other beyond ourselves.

**What I found interesting:** "The Second Mountain" should not be read as a prescriptive solution to the problems of the world. Brooks is simply a writer and commentator who has been exposed to a variety of worldviews in his life. Rather, Brooks does a good job of summarizing contributions and work in social and moral psychology, philosophy, spirituality, and religion to frame the problem of hyper-individualism, and make a claim for deep commitments of self-sacrifice as moral living.

**Who's it for? (best audience):** Marine leaders. As leaders seek to understand the youngest generation of Marines, Brooks offers what I believe to be a compelling shift in how we lead. How do leaders develop their subordinates to make deep commitments, and how do leaders help them discern which commitments are the right ones? For leaders, those might also be questions we ask ourselves as well.

#### **Questions for reflection:**

1. What do the Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment mean to you? How do you live them – and your personal values - out each day?
2. Are your values transparent to the Marines you lead? What messages do you think your Marines get from your words and actions? As Marines come from a society with confusion messages, how do you as a leader help your subordinates clarify their values and commitments?
3. Over the course of a military career, "realism" can set in as personal and professional demands and responsibilities increase over a career. How does one live and model "the second mountain?" Is it even possible?

**RANGE: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World, David Epstein (Riverhead Books, 2019)**

What's it about: Epstein, author of "The Sports Gene" examines evidence that points to the value of "generalists," individuals who possess multiple skillsets and knowledge that they applied to new projects and efforts. Epstein argues that generalists, while their skillsets don't always "fit" into workforce of specialization, have often been drivers of innovation and accomplishments because they possess a wider field of perspective, and may be more desired in a rapidly changing work world.

What I found interesting: Professionally, with the Navy and Marine Corps looking to make changes to their manpower and force structure, creating generalists with a multiple array of skillsets may be what advances the success of these changes. The book could spark imagination on how leaders utilize and train their people going forward. Personally, the book resonated with me because I am a generalist, and I've utilized multiple skillsets across a number of work roles – submariner and engineer, teacher, wrestling coach, and as Lutheran pastor and Navy chaplain.

Who's it for? (best audience): Great book for all ranks. It sparks a lot of great ideas, backed by research, which might change approaches to how we train and utilize our Marines – which ultimately could result in a more flexible, resilient force.

**Questions for reflection:**

1. How would you see generalists contributing within the Marine Corps? Is there a role for them?
2. Most of us accept that there is more than one defined path or skillset to achieve success. Do you think that is true within the Marine Corps? What does your command do, or what could they improve to foster multiple avenues of success?
3. In a result, merit based organization and civilian society, how do we form people to be life long learners? If thinking about you, what benefits does life-long learning have to your personal and professional growth?

**The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups, Daniel Coyle (Bantam Books, 2018)**

What's it about: Where does great culture come from? How do you build and sustain it, and how would you fix a culture that is broken? Coyle examines a number of highly successful teams in an attempt to see what has led their success. Interestingly, Coyle discovers great cultures are not defined by a set of "intangible" attributes, but rather, distinct practices. Said in the summary, "culture is not something you are, but something you do."

What I found interesting: Coyle's findings suggest that we can actually measure effective cultures. In the Navy and Marine Corps, we talk a lot about the importance of concepts like trust, esprit de corps, warrior ethos, and resiliency, but they are often vague and abstract to many. What if we defined these concepts by what units and commands did? In a time where we often define great culture in terms of risk management and minimizing negative behaviors, I think this is a question to be asked up and down the ranks: "What does this team do to show it is effective/resilient/strong?"

Who's it for? (best audience): Anyone in a leadership position will enjoy this book, but truly, I think it is a book for mid-level leaders who are face to face with their people every day and can empower greatness.

Questions for reflection:

1. Coyle talks about the concept of "belonging cues," or things that organizations do to instill belonging. We often assume the title "Marine" implies belonging, but the truth is belonging is something that has to be maintained regularly. What "cues" exist in your command/unit that let you know your Marines feel like they "belong."
2. Recall how Coach Gregg Popovich of the San Antonio Spurs frames conversations with his players. What do you think of his approach? Is it a realistic one for a Marine leader? What blocks you and other leaders from adopting such an approach?
3. In Special Operations, one of the "SOF Truths" is "humans are more important than hardware." What does this "truth" mean to you, and drawing from the book, what practices reinforce this truth in cultures?

Read also by Daniel Coyle: *The Talent Code: Unlocking the Secret of Skill in Sports, Art, Music, Math, and Just about everything else.* (Bantam Books, 2009)

## **Let Your Life Speak, Parker Palmer (Josey-Bass, 1999)**

What's it about: "Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you. Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you represent." Palmer's book deals with the age-old question of "vocation," or "am I living the life I'm supposed to be living?" In his own philosophical and spiritual journey, Palmer comes to the conclusion that finding meaning and purpose doesn't come through one's Will, but perhaps by listening.

What I found interesting: I received Palmer's book as a gift after graduating the Naval Academy in 2001. It's been one of my "go to" books I will re-read at critical junctures in my life. Like many of us in the Navy/Marine Corps, I am a "driven" individual. That approach has failed me when I've encountered professional and personal setbacks and I can't simply "make it happen." Palmer's questions and insights – and perspective on Quaker spirituality of listening – have helped me discover truths (sometimes hard ones) about my own worth and contribution to society.

Who's it for? (best audience): Any Marine will benefit. However, this book is a great one for anyone struggling with questions of meaning, purpose, or at a crossroads in their life. There is much hope and strength to draw from Palmer's own story (and struggle with depression).

### Questions for reflection:

1. Many have said being a Marine is a "calling." Do you believe that? Are there other things in your life that matter to you beyond being a Marine?
2. How might listening be an asset to you when your life is at a crossroads? In what ways can you cultivate a practice of "listening to your life speak?"
3. Palmer talks about "burnout" in his book. What does burnout look like to you (how would you define it)? If you sense burnout in yourself or others, how might you address it?

## **Podcasts:**

### **On Being with Krista Tippett**

**Overview:** One of my favorite areas of interest is the intersection between cognitive performance, sociology, and spirituality. “On Being” is a series of interviews with leading researchers in these areas who discuss how what we think, what we believe, and the culture around us shapes our lives. It really is a podcast that attempts to answer this fundamental question: “What does it mean to live this life?”

### **30 for 30 Podcast, ESPN**

**Overview:** As a former athlete and coach, sports is a big part of my life and a source of inspiration and motivation for me. 30 for 30 examines the backstories behind some of sports greatest moments, which contain inspiration and important lessons about courage, humility, and resilience.

### **Finding Mastery, Dr. Michael Gervais**

**Overview:** Dr. Gervais is the Sports Psychologist for the Seattle Seahawks. In this podcast, he interviews a wide range of personalities in order to examine how they unlock their potential. In the realm of human performance, the podcast examines issues that lead to holistic approaches rather than singular, narrow solutions.

### **Optimizing Human Performance, Leadership Under Fire**

**Overview:** Leadership Under Fire is an organization that examines human performance for service-oriented professions, including law enforcement, firefighters, and military among their clientele. Among the interviewees are prior Marines and other service members providing perspective on human performance.

### **RUDIS Wrestling Podcast, RUDIS Wrestling**

**Overview:** As a former competitor and current coach in the sport of wrestling, I can't not include a podcast on wrestling! In addition to news and discussion about the history and current state of the sport, there are also interviews with competitors and coaches who discuss their habits and mindset that have enabled them to accomplish their goals.

*Lieutenant Commander Aaron Fuller is a Chaplain in the Navy Reserve. He has multiple deployments and mobilizations both as a Chaplain and as a former Submarine Warfare Officer. He is also a former NCAA Division I competitor and current coach in the sport of wrestling at the high school, NCAA Division III, and NCAA Division I levels.*