

This month's Dispatch is about books - books read for wisdom, for history, or for pleasure. Lance offers lessons for any business from a book about teams, Alleah details the benefits from reading for pleasure or for family business improvement, and Bill writes about re-reading, and joyously rediscovering, all the Bible has to offer. William Nicholson, in his C.S. Lewis play [Shadowlands](#), suggests that "we read to know that we are not alone." Indeed, thanks for joining us in reading another issue *Dispatch*, and let us know if you have a good book recommendation (or any other feedback) by hitting reply!

Ingredients of Success: Lessons from Team of Teams

By [Lance Woodbury](#)

A farmer from Minnesota recently asked me what I saw as a common challenge among farms. My one-word answer was "labor," but I went on to say that not only finding help, but motivating, rewarding and retaining the best staff was what made labor such a tough nut to crack. A tight labor market meant that the technical and operational aspects of farming (agronomy, weather, marketing, planting, equipment maintenance, etc.) were in many ways easier than the challenges of creating an adaptable, high-performing team that stays together over time.

General Stanley McChrystal's [Team of Teams](#) (recommended by Kip Pendleton) is about creating a high-performing team from among several military groups. He chronicles the shift of the Joint Special Operations Task Force from a top-down, command and control culture to a team-based, constantly adapting "team of teams" during the mid 2000's war with Al Qaeda. Here are five lessons he identifies from his experience that apply to your business:

1. Efficiency remains important, but the ability to adapt to complexity and continual change has become an imperative. Adaptability, agility, and resilience (the ability to bounce back) to changing situations are the skills needed to solve complex challenges.
2. The primary responsibility of the leader is to maintain a holistic, big picture view...no matter how tempting micromanaging may be. A leader must cultivate the entire team's awareness of the company's challenges.
3. Prediction and contingency plans can solve only some of the challenges you will face. Real preparation lies in developing trust among the team. Building trust involves creating a shared purpose and being transparent with information. Teams that trust each other perform better.
4. With the right team and culture, both speed and the quality of decisions increase. The payoff for months and years of team development and culture-building is a faster, better organization.
5. Nothing is heard until it is said several times. A shift in culture requires continual emphasis by the leader.

Ag family businesses often contain several teams – a family team, production teams, office teams and advisor teams. The book provides an insightful take on how to build the right team in a rapidly changing environment.

Reading for Pleasure and Profit

By [Alleah Heise](#)

Reading is a hobby I have enjoyed for years. As an elementary school student, I remember when our school first adopted the Accelerated Reader program, where books were assigned points and you were rewarded those points based on a scored comprehension test upon completion of a book. That experience likely fostered a love for reading that persists today.



Pleasure reading is something I thoroughly enjoy. A good historical novel and a couple of long nights to finish the book after my daughter is asleep, and I am a happy camper. For example, I recently completed, and highly recommend, Martha Hall Kelly's book [Lilac Girls](#). It is a gripping historical novel set early in WWII and follows the interwoven lives of three women, from three different cultures, as they experience the war in vastly different ways. Story and truth are neatly interwoven in this compelling book.

Yet now that I have chosen the career path of family business consultant, I am constantly on the hunt for reading that goes beyond the pleasure titles and topics. There are so many business books out there that choosing a good one can be overwhelming. But an appealing one I have recently completed and would recommend to next generation family business members is: [You Are a Badass: How to Stop Doubting Your Greatness and Start Living an Awesome Life](#). The book is designed to help people overcome behaviors that sabotage or undermine their possibilities for success. Witty stories are interlaced with practical advice to produce a quick, informative read.

There are [numerous studies](#) that have concluded that reading any kind of book, even comic books, can make you smarter--and not just from an IQ perspective. Pleasure reading can improve our emotional intelligence, and business reading can sharpen insights into what you are trying to accomplish in your work. To read any kind of book is to hone our cognitive abilities. You, and the people you work with, will appreciate the effort you take to enhance those abilities.

Faith and Family Business: Rediscovering the Bible

By [Bill Long](#)

If someone asked forty years ago, "Bill, do you ever think you will write an essay entitled 'Rediscovering the Bible'?" I would have answered with a resounding "No!" I was an avid student of the Bible at that time (my early to mid-twenties) and was in the process of picking up a ministerial degree and then a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies. After that I wrote several books on aspects of Biblical studies. It seemed that I would never leave my first literary love.

Yet things happened. Life became complex, new career opportunities arose, and I found myself, at age 50, as a litigation attorney in a large West Coast law firm. My well-thumbed Bible stayed on the shelf as I had to attend to urgent legal needs of clients. By my late 50s (a few years ago), I began to think of my Bible study as a thing of the past.

But still the Scriptures beckoned to me, gently inviting me to return to them, wooing me with past memories of insights and fruitful times by myself and with others in their study. I finally decided to heed the call, picking up at the beginning, in Genesis.

What I discovered was a world that opened to me as if for the first time. In law I had an important case regarding the legal rights of grandparents when one of the biological parents of a child had died and the other was seemingly unfit. When I picked up Genesis again, my eyes fell upon the story of Joseph and his family, and all the years of biblical and legal study combined to produce a symphonic richness of sadness and hope for redemption for broken families. As I continued to study, I found the Psalms making my heart sing again. I discovered the priceless wisdom of Proverbs that gave me more than enough food for every day.

I loved the Bible the first time around. But this time it is even richer. Bring your experience of living to your biblical study, and perhaps you too will discover its treasures again as if for the first time.

