



Read2Lead

The Mentor Leader by Tony Dungy

Book Summary:

If you're a football fan, you probably know who Tony Dungy is, and the [incredible success he had with Peyton Manning and the Indianapolis Colts](#). What you might not know, however, is his unique vision for leadership, which he fully describes in New York Times Best Seller *The Mentor Leader*. In this book rich with stories and anecdotes, Dungy draws on faith, family, and football to center leadership on something we might not expect, mentorship. Making his case, Dungy writes, "Success is measured in changed lives, strong character, and eternal values rather than in material gain, temporal achievement or status."

This emphasis on mentorship, then, sets the tone for the remaining nine chapters, in which Dungy elaborates on this mentor leader concept and building organizations around it. For Dungy, becoming the mentor leader we're meant to be paradoxically starts with ourselves. In addition to developing traits like character and trustworthiness, we must forgive ourselves and check the emotional baggage that's stopping us from reaching our potential. With an others-first mindset, these characteristics, and commitment to mentorship, we are thus equipped to build organizations that truly develop others, argues Dungy. If then, we engage, educate, equip, encourage, empower, energize, and elevate, we may be surprised who we impact, both ourselves and others, in life's journey.

Suggested Questions for Moderators:

1. In Chapter 1, Dungy writes, "Mentor leadership focuses on relationships and positive influence because success in temporal things can be so fleeting." Do you agree with this quote, especially in light of the needed discipline and explicit lethality of our profession?
 - a. *The purpose of this question is to push participants to consider whether Dungy's leadership style is compatible with our potentially lethal profession of arms.*
 - i. *Consider, however, [General Schwarzkopf's emphasis on both character and competence](#), or our [doctrinal imperative](#) to not just lead and achieve but develop as well.*
2. [Burnout and overwork](#) is a noted problem among the junior officer population. As lieutenants and captains, what do you think you can do to enjoy your journey as Dungy encourages in Chapter 2?
 - a. *Reference "[Self Care for Junior Officers](#)" for ways lieutenants and captains can recharge.*
 - b. *Suggest junior officers build time in their schedule to train. If they are field artillery officers, shoot cannons; if they are transportation officers, lead convoys; etc.*
3. What types of emotional baggage do you think junior officers carry, and what do you think they can do to check it in order to be better leaders?
 - a. *Mention [Ranger tab culture](#) and [patch culture](#) and the difficulty leaders may have in establishing credibility without certain schools or a deployment.*

- b. *Push participants to consider issues specific to their career and branch, and whether they need to check their emotional baggage to better serve those around them.*
4. Dungy and the Army preach the importance of character, but, based on your experience, do you feel as if character is sufficiently emphasized, valued, and rewarded in our profession? Do you ever feel as if competence is valued more than character?
 - a. *Do participants feel as if certain ranks, MOSs, or even those with deployment patches or combat badges are more valued than others? Everyone in the Army is part of a team, but is their team truly a team of equals?*
 5. Do you think every junior officer can or should be a mentor leader? Is mentor leadership, or just mentoring, the sole domain of captains leading lieutenants? Can lieutenants mentor lieutenants? Can lieutenants mentor noncommissioned officers?
 - a. *We might be inclined to think of mentoring among junior officers as directed by captains to lieutenants. This question is meant to challenge that assumption.*
 - i. *Consider this [CJO article](#) on the mentorship senior lieutenants can afford more junior lieutenants, specifically when the senior lieutenants are XOs.*
 - ii. *Can junior officers mentor enlisted? Junior enlisted? Consider sharing your commissioning experience, especially ROTC or West Point, and [Service2School](#) as a resource for enlisted personnel thinking about commissioning.*
 6. In Chapter 6, Dungy highlights a “credibility gap” as the distance between a mentor leader’s words and actions. What common credibility gaps do you see junior officers develop? Moreover, what actions can they take to enhance their credibility?
 - a. *Are lieutenants and captains exempt from morning formation and organized PT? Do they show up for Motor Pool Mondays and PMCS vehicles? How does their engagement, or lack thereof, with these unpleasant, but necessary tasks affect their ability to credibly lead?*
 7. In Chapter 7, Dungy borrows the phrase “important but not indispensable” to describe a management style in which subordinates are ready to replace superiors, if need be. What does that look like at the platoon and company level, and how could you make it better?
 - a. *Encourage participants to think about how their time as a PL or CO is inherently limited. What are they doing to seamlessly hand off their responsibilities?*
 8. “Engage, educate, equip, encourage, empower, energize, and elevate.” Do you agree with Dungy’s steps for enhancing potential, and how would you apply them to your unit?
 9. In Chapter 9, Dungy makes the interesting argument that sometimes we’re not best positioned to mentor or develop those we care about. What does that look like at the junior officer level?
 - a. *Does it mean moving a lieutenant to a different company or battalion to allow him or her to gain more opportunities? Does it mean letting a captain go to a different battalion or brigade for a unique command opportunity?*

Follow-on Reading and Resources:

- [Army Officer’s Guide to Mentoring](#)
- [Mentoring Speech by Tony Dungy](#) (possible refresher prior to the Read2Lead)
- [“The Effects of High-Performing mentors on Junior Officer Promotion in the US Army”](#)

This Read2Lead was developed by First Lieutenant Clinton Grable. Clinton is a Military Intelligence Officer assigned to the 513th Military Intelligence Brigade at Fort Gordon, Georgia. He is a 2022 CJO Leadership Fellow.