

MASTERING 100 *MUST-READ* BOOKS

*Brief Book Reviews on Leadership,
Management, Governance, and Life*



JOHN PEARSON
with Jason Pearson

A PEARPOD RESOURCE

MASTERING 100 MUST-READ BOOKS

*Brief Book Reviews on Leadership,
Management, Governance, and Life*

10 MINUTES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING WORKBOOK

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INTRODUCTION: Q & A With Son & Pearson

Two Libraries: Your Library of Candidates & Your Living Library

Jason: So, Dad...we wrote our *Mastering Mistake-Making* book during the COVID marathon in 2021. And now in 2022, another book? (Another forest?) Way to go, but how are you coming on cleaning out the garage? Wasn't that your HIGH PRIORITY PROJECT after the *Mistakes* book?

John: LOL. Um. Er. Ahem. The garage is my *next* project. But...this book was already written (kinda) and so I just had to pull it together, get your ideas/edits/deletes...and endure some gut-wrenching decisions (which 100 books to include—and which books wouldn't make the cut)—and presto! Another book.

Jason: If my math is correct at publication time, you've reviewed over 525 books since 2006—so you're saying it was challenging to narrow your list down to just 100 Must-Read Books?

John: *Exactly!* Many books become like old friends. Even now I can remember helpful insights and best practices from many, many books. "That counsel was so, so helpful—how can that book be *excluded* from my Top-100 list?" Halfway through the selection process, I seriously thought of re-titling this book, "200 Must-Read Books!"

Jason: I get it. You love books. *But...can I be honest with you, Dad?* I can't possibly read (or listen to) *all* of the books that you think I should read! I mean, seriously! I have a day job, a wife, and a family of five teenagers. I do listen to books—but even 100 must-read books would be a daunting challenge!

John: I know, I know—and, maybe, you've just articulated why I'm hoping *Mastering 100 Must-Read Books* will be so helpful to many leaders and managers. I've selected *my* list—but my hope is that readers and leaders will be inspired to select *their* Top-100 Books list. I appreciate the wisdom in my Book #1, *The Little Guide to Your Well-Read Life*:

**"Do not set out to live a well-read life
but rather *your* well-read life.
No one can be well-read using someone else's reading list."**

Jason: That makes sense. I certainly have some books that would qualify for my "100 Must-Read Books." Many of those, definitely, would *not* be on your list!

John: Let me guess. You've quoted Marshall McLuhan since you could talk! "The medium is the message" and "We become what we behold. We shape our tools and then our tools shape us." But...until you caught my typo in this introduction, I had no idea that his 1967 book was actually titled, *The Medium Is the Massage*. And until I recently read his bio, I had no idea that his mother was a Baptist Sunday School teacher and his father was a Methodist—but McLuhan converted to Catholicism by reading G.K. Chesterton.

Jason: Good guess—I appreciate McLuhan. Another book on my Top-100 list would be *A Whack on the Side of the Head: How You Can Be More Creative*, by Roger von Oech.

John: Ah, yes! I remember! That book that was an automatic entry in every paper you wrote in high school! Your one-man crusade to educate teachers about right brain/left brain students was inspiring!

Jason: You were inspired—but most of my teachers (except one) were annoyed! But you should mention more about the two kinds of libraries every person should have. That inspired me. And Melinda and I are trying to inspire our five teenagers (although two of our voracious readers actually inspire us!).

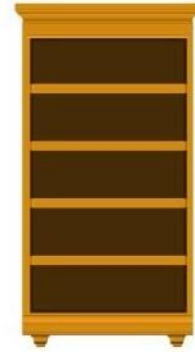
John: Good idea! Steve Leveen is the creative author of *The Little Guide to Your Well-Read Life: How to Get More Books in Your Life and More Life from Your Books* (see Book #1). He recommends a very simple—but profound—approach to building your library:



THE LIBRARY OF CANDIDATES
Based on your
List of Candidates



THE LIVING LIBRARY
Your library of
well-read friends



THE GIFT OF EMPTY SHELVES
“Like an open road, they hold the
promise of your future examined life.”

Jason: So, I know your “Living Library” has over 500 “well-read friends.” How many books are on your “Library of Candidates” shelves?

John: Are you asking how often the Amazon driver shows up at our house? (LOL!) Actually, I’m over-blessed with friends, publishers, and publicists who send me a constant supply of books for my “Library of Candidates” shelves. And no—I have not yet given myself the “gift of empty shelves”—but that’s an aspirational goal this year (after I tidy up the garage).

Jason: I noticed that you organized *Mastering 100-Must Read Books* into 18 parts—and you seem to cover the waterfront from “The Mount Rushmore of Leadership Legends” to contrarian thinkers, to classics...then assessments, and sports stories...and then an interesting collection, “In Search of Global Perspectives.” Do you have a Top-1 favorite book?

John: Nice try, Jason—but I have way too many friends/authors who I would disappoint if I singled out just one book—including the books you’ve authored! I’ve already lost some friends by not including their books in the Top-100. *Please tell them I’m sorry...but if they were better writers...* (No, don’t say that!).

Jason: If I had to guess, I was wondering if Book #78, *Operation Mincemeat: How a Dead Man and a Bizarre Plan Fooled the Nazis and Assured an Allied Victory*, might be in the running for your favorite book—since you recently saw the 2022 movie starring Colin Firth. I was also intrigued with your five picks in the section, “Leadership & Management at War.” Or maybe J.I. Packer’s classic, *Knowing God*, in the “Feeble Faith and Flabby Worship” section?

John: Both books are good guesses and worthy picks on my short list of favorite books. But I’d also have to mention the quartet of books in “The Final Four” section (#97 to #100), especially

the 2022 gem from Steve Machia, *The Discerning Life*. And, as you know, we had no deadline for this book—and that was a problem, because readers will see I kept adding “Bonus Books” as sidebars. Really, some incredible books arrived in the last half of 2022, and I’ve included some of them—such as Henry Kissinger’s new book—in the “Index to Bonus Books.”

Jason: Some of my clients at Pearpod.com have asked me to recommend books for their board members, the CEO, and even new employees in their first management positions. What do you recommend?

John: That’s really the motivation behind *Mastering 100 Must-Read Books*. In the study guide (in the appendix) I list some ideas for all-staff meetings and department team meetings:

❑ **10 Minutes for Lifelong Learning at Every Staff Meeting:** To banish boredom at your weekly staff meeting (or department meeting), feature “10 Minutes for Lifelong Learning.” You’ll increase staff engagement and enrich the leadership and management competencies of your team members. At every staff meeting, invite one team member to prepare in advance to spotlight one of the Top-100 books. Over just one year of weekly staff meetings, you’ll introduce about 50 books (and insights) to your team.

❑ **New Team Members:** Browse through this book and pick five books that you have not read, including one book that your supervisor (or CEO) wants you to read. If the books are not on our resource shelf, go ahead and buy them, underline them, and write your name and date in the front of the book—and note your favorite chapter and why.

❑ **First-Time Managers:** Look over the list of books by “The Mount Rushmore of Leadership Legends” (Patrick Lencioni, Jim Collins, Ken Blanchard, and Peter Drucker) and read at least one book by each author, including one book your CEO recommends from those lists. Follow the same instructions (per above) for noting your insights.

❑ **Experienced CEOs and Senior Team Members:** You’ve probably coached and mentored others, using some of these books, over the years. But lifelong learners know that, as Ken Blanchard and C.S. Lewis recommend, there is great value in re-reading a book twice or even three or four times.

Jason: You’re saying that the discipline of investing just 10 minutes per week on lifelong learning at your staff meeting will expose every team member to leadership and management insights—and, perhaps, make the organization more effective? And...that many of these books will be on the organization’s resource shelf so team members can go deeper?

John: Bingo! Hopefully, leaders have recruited and hired self-motivated team members who are *already* lifelong learners. They don’t need carrots or sticks—but it’s always fun to throw in a few *hoopla!* ideas. See the *Hoopla!* chapter in *Mastering the Management Buckets*, Book #94. That chapter recommends a book, *The Carrot Principle*, which features 125 staff recognition ideas. I encourage managers to recognize staff members who model lifelong learning.

Jason: Anything else...before leaders and readers jump into *Mastering 100 Must-Read Books*?

John: Maybe just one thing. When veteran leaders (who are in the “Leaders of Leaders” category) scan this book, I’d encourage them to review my “Books-of-the-Year” picks (Books #6 to #21 and #99 and #100). Those gems are especially helpful books/reminders for experienced leaders—and also helpful tools when they are coaching and mentoring others.