

## What Others Are Saying About *Leadership Awakening: Foundational Principles for Lasting Success...*

“Doug strives to follow God in good times and in bad, and to challenge others to do the same. We are in desperate need of a leadership and spiritual awakening in our nation. Building upon lasting foundational principles, Doug is working tirelessly to plant the seeds for that awakening and revival.”

—Bobby Jindal  
Former Governor of Louisiana

“True leadership is a calling, not a convenience. In the midst of great personal crises, Doug displayed his calling with the ‘peace that surpasses understanding.’ Some talk, others lead. Doug is among the latter.”

—Greg Abbott  
Governor of Texas

“My friend Doug Stringer has written a courageous book out of the principles he personally exemplifies. His life speaks through this book. Though he says it well, well done is still better than well said. This book lays the foundation for how to finish well in life.”

—Bishop Dale Carnegie Bronner  
Founder and senior pastor, Word of Faith Cathedral, Atlanta, GA

“Doug Stringer has accomplished amazing things, and his organization, Somebody Cares, is one of the best in the nation. He models the leadership teachings of Jesus, and as a result, is one of the most effective leaders in the country. He has taken that leadership experience and put it in this excellent book, *Leadership Awakening*. Now you have an opportunity to learn some of the simple yet profound lessons that have made Doug so unique, and that will make you, too, into a leader.”

—David Barton  
Best-selling author  
Founder, WallBuilders

“In *Leadership Awakening*, my friend Doug Stringer offers a lifetime of wisdom and biblical insight on how to not only overcome the obstacles all leaders will inevitably face, but also how to become the battle-hardened leader whom God can use to fulfill His plans for the forthcoming great spiritual awakening.”

—Troy Anderson  
Pulitzer Prize-nominated journalist  
Author, *The Babylon Code*

“Doug Stringer is a true hero, acknowledged as a champion advocate and mobilizer by many city churches. His practical and penetrably effective strategy commands attention. His efforts have led to the formation of a ‘band of brothers’ with like values—leaders equipped with perception, passion, wisdom, and a practical spiritual sensitivity. Doug Stringer is among the five most effective parachurch leaders I have ever known in my fifty years of service. In a time of great need in our nation, cities, and local churches, I heartily recommend *Leadership Awakening: Foundational Principles for Lasting Success*. I urge you to open the pages of this book already knowing and fully assured that you will profit greatly.”

—Jack W. Hayford  
Founder and Chancellor, The King’s University, Southlake, Texas  
Pastor emeritus, The Church on the Way, Van Nuys, California

“Doug Stringer’s life embodies both leadership and endurance. His commitment to Christ, his integrity, and his passion for serving others have been a transformative demonstration of leadership—one worthy of emulating. Accordingly, our dark times require prophetic leadership, people who are committed to issuing a clarion call to followers of Jesus to be holy, to be one, and to be the light. Doug’s teachings and, more important, his life raise the volume on that call, all the while reconciling truth with love.”

—Rev. Samuel Rodriguez  
President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and  
Hispanic Evangelical Association

“Prayer warrior, leader, man of God—Doug Stringer issues a compelling call to each of us to be a leader that lasts. This is a unique moment in history. Now is the time for leaders to rise up and lead.”

—*Dr. Ronnie Floyd*

Former President, Southern Baptist Convention Senior Pastor  
Cross Church, Springdale, Arkansas  
President of the National Day of Prayer Task Force

“*Leadership Awakening* inspires us to rise and shine in the midst of great challenges and uncertainty, and to dream God-sized dreams. His prayer-driven leadership awakened a spirit of reconciliation among many people, in South Carolina and beyond, to help prepare our state to demonstrate grace and love to the world in the wake of difficult times. Doug reminds us that, now more than ever, Jesus is calling leaders to awaken to His great power and purpose.”

—*Rev. Jeff Kersey*

Lead pastor, Mt. Horeb United Methodist Church, Lexington, SC

“Doug Stringer reminds us of the basics of real leadership—the lessons we must learn are not easy but well worth the effort. All too often, we want to soar, but we have not laid a strong foundation. The book admirably provides the way and the motivation to live like strong leaders.”

—*Ken Eldred*

Author, *The Integrated Life*  
Cofounder and CEO, Living Stones Foundation

“In *Leadership Awakening*, Doug Stringer discusses the genuine spiritual disciplines through which the Holy Spirit develops successful leaders in the midst of ‘cosmetic’ Christianity. Doug shares how God adjusted him through the Word, and how God can develop a credible champion dedicated to the care of others.”

—*Tom Phillips*

Vice President, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

“As I reflected on the multiple insights in this book, I could not help but think that Doug Stringer’s ministry, *Somebody Cares*, emphasizes first and foremost that God cares. This book describes the power of one person, surrendered to God, who started a movement teaching that *anyone* can learn to care. Leadership is a process, and Doug Stringer’s lessons are lifesaving ropes for climbers on the mountain of the Christian life.”

—*Doug Beacham*

Presiding Bishop, International Pentecostal Holiness Church,  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

“Doug Stringer provides a compelling and comprehensive examination of the foundational principles of a Christ-centered *Leadership Awakening*—a must-read for those who aim to run their respective races with divine strength and confidence, and, most importantly, for those who aim to ‘finish well.’”

—*Dr. Karen Kossie-Chernyshev*

Professor of History, Texas Southern University  
Minister of Music, Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church, Houston,  
Texas

“I have watched the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in Doug Stringer’s life, making him an outstanding leader in our day. God has raised up Doug to spiritually awaken men and women leaders to the desperate needs of our culture and to minister to those needs. *Leadership Awakening* is a must-read for those who desire to impact ‘the day’ for God’s glory!”

—*Dr. Steve Riggle*

Founding Pastor, Grace Community Church, Houston, Texas  
President, Grace International Churches

“We must be led ourselves before we can expect to effectively lead other people. Within these pages, Doug Stringer will show you how to daily follow another’s lead. From the blessed dependence of that state, you can then learn to lead others toward true fruitfulness. Doug’s life exemplifies the humility of submission to the Lord, first and foremost. Being led by the Lord, we will develop and sustain authentic, servant leadership, bearing much fruit for the kingdom of God.”

—*Lisa Crump*  
Chief Operating Officer, National Day of Prayer Task Force

“Doug Stringer has challenged my leadership. He has stretched my thinking to embrace others and see my calling as larger than my assignment as a local church leader. I am a better leader because of Doug’s ministry and message.”

—*Garrett Booth*  
Senior Pastor, Grace Community Church, Houston, Texas

“I love it! Short paragraphs...short chapters...compelling illustrations and quotes...personal stories...confirming Scripture! More than leadership lessons, *Leadership Awakening* offers life lessons, as well. My sons will receive copies of this book! It is a fathomless resource of insight and inspiration from a father in the faith, and it captures the profound and the practical.”

—*Dr. Jeff Farmer*  
President, Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America  
Former President, Open Bible Churches

“Leadership is proven, not just preached. Doug’s track record of remarkable success and reach will be your road map to significance in kingdom ministry.”

—*Dr. Roger Parrott*  
President, Belhaven University

“Doug Stringer clearly expresses that leadership, in all its facets, is more about the life, character, and constant spiritual formation of the leader than about successful results. It is my privilege to recommend this insightful manual to those of us who are called and charged to lead.”

—*Dr. Randall J. Pannell*

Interim President and Vice President of Academics  
North Greenville University

“Doug Stringer’s compassionate outreaches to thousands, along with his networking skills, integrity, and patience under trial, have given him vast influence among several generations.”

—*Bishop Joseph Mattera*

Founder, Christ Covenant Coalition

“This book will stretch you to always excel in pleasing the Lord, whether you are a young or old, new or seasoned minister of the gospel. Doug Stringer shares many nuggets of wisdom he gained not as theories but as genuine experiences through the years.”

—*Dr. Paul Tan*

Apostolic Overseer, City Blessing Churches  
President, World Blessing Foundation and Indonesian Relief Fund

“If anyone understands the intricacies of leadership, Doug Stringer does. God has given him insight into the challenges, struggles, and discouragements. If ever we needed a leadership awakening, we need it today..”

—*Bishop Angel L. Núñez*

Senior Pastor, Bilingual Christian Church  
President, Multicultural Prayer Movement

“Dr. Stringer is able to succinctly describe, with biblical examples and real life stories, the calling and challenges of being a Christian leader. His ability to identify the attributes of great leaders is inspiring, and a must-read for anyone wanting to understand what it takes to overcome the temptations and pitfalls of Christian leadership.”

—*Jay E. Mincks*  
Executive Vice President, Insperty Inc.

“Doug Stringer is one of the most authentic ministers and credible leaders I have the great honor of knowing. This book is an invaluable deposit of Doug’s heartfelt passion and real-life pain, as well as his staunch perseverance in the process of true servant ministry. The wisdom purchased in this book graciously points current and future leaders to the root structures of lasting transformational leadership.”

—*Jayde Duncan*  
Senior Pastor, Antioch Church, Colorado Springs, Colorado

“Doug Stringer appeals to us to move beyond superficiality, ‘cosmetic Christianity,’ and even the judgmental spirit of Pharisees. Instead, he urges us to embody the biblical truths we hold dear, with authenticity, fervency, and consistency. He challenges us to seek to love, serve, and restore, and to be willing to make a difference at great sacrifice. Doug has not only picked out leadership principles and explained them clearly, he has also formulated concise leadership strategies and patterns that could be taught and applied anywhere—especially in the marketplace.”

—*Tan Sri (Dr.) Francis Yeoh*  
YTL Corporation & YTL Group

“Just when I wondered if anything new could be written on leadership, Doug Stringer stepped forward. Think of *Leadership Awakening* as twenty-five power-packed vignettes, each rich in practical counsel, each worthy of deep reflection. This book is designed to help you finish strong. It masterfully achieves that goal.”

—*John D. Beckett*  
Chairman, The Beckett Companies  
Author, *Loving Monday* and *Mastering Monday*

*“Leadership Awakening is a wonderful new contribution to the field of leadership success. I gained great insights from reading the book; you will, too.”*

*—Pat Williams*

Cofounder and Senior Vice President, NBA Orlando Magic

*“This is a timely book for our generation. It speaks beyond just our intellect and communicates to our soul. It will remind you why you said ‘yes’ to spiritual leadership, and what it takes to succeed in the Lord’s eyes. This is my #1 recommendation from 2017.”*

*—Jason Tourville*

Pastor, Shrewsbury Assembly  
Founder, Breakthrough Pastors

*“Doug has the mind of a scholar, the heart of a missionary pastor, the eyes of a prophet, and the hands and feet of a man who knows how to convert truth into action. He is a remarkable leader whose abundant knowledge of the biblical principles of leadership (reflected in this book) don’t just stay in his head, but are evident every day in his personal life and the ministry organizations God has entrusted to him.”*

*—Wallace Henley*

Founder, Master of Ministry Leadership degree program  
Belhaven University

*“I love Doug Stringer’s book, *Leadership Awakening*. Every leader should read it and apply it. Doug is one of the most gifted, humble, anointed, wise, and integral leaders in the world.”*

*—Brian Alarid*

President, America Prays

“I love the values, theology, and practical application of *Leadership Awakening*. It is authentic and appropriately challenges one’s thinking and practices. Great job. Personally, I got some new applications from Scripture I really like.”

—*Paul VanValin, PhD*

President, Eden Leaders Institute  
President, Eden Counseling and Consulting



LEADERSHIP  
AWAKENING



LEADERSHIP  
AWAKENING

DOUG  
STRINGER



WHITAKER  
HOUSE

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## **LEADERSHIP AWAKENING:** **Foundational Principles for Lasting Success**

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## Preface: Finishing the Race Well

Tanzanian John Stephen Akhwari was considered one of the best marathon runners in the world. He participated in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City but wasn't accustomed to the high altitude. At about the halfway mark, he collided with another runner. Akhwari was injured, hurting both his knee and shoulder; yet he continued the race with bandages and considerable pain—limping, walking, and jogging to the finish.

Of the seventy-five who started the race, only fifty-seven finished. Akhwari was number fifty-seven—dead last. When he crossed the finish line, people asked him, “Why did you continue the race when you were injured and in such pain?”

He replied, “My nation did not send me thousands of kilometers to start a race, but rather to finish the race.”

God didn't just call you to *start* the race; He called you to finish the race—and He wants you to *finish well*. Yet too often, this isn't the case with men and women God calls to lead His people. In fact, Dr. J. Robert Clinton of Fuller Theological Seminary has been quoted as saying that an estimated 70 percent of all leaders, biblically and historically, do *not* finish the race well.

There is an erosion and unraveling of so many of our moral foundations. We need a *Leadership Awakening!* We need a *Leadership Awakening* for the vacuum of godly and courageous leaders that exists today. Education alone doesn't make or produce them, Diplomas don't prove them. Character

does! Degrees on leadership are only worth the paper they're written on, without the substance of character to go with it.

I've written this book to illuminate the forces that war against Christian leaders, as well as the powerful resources God has given them to live in victory. Let me be clear: This is not a book based on untested theories or the latest fads about Christian leadership. Rather, it's filled with truths I've gleaned over thirty years of personal experience and biblical application, both in business and in ministry. To that end, throughout this book I am also including quotations of mine that I call "Provoke-a-Thoughts." These are sayings I have used throughout my work and ministry that seem to have resonated in the lives of others over the years. I hope they provoke your own thoughts about what it takes to become a leader who lasts.

I've discovered that when you build your life on the proper foundations, you don't have to fear how your story will end. Like King David, you will be able to confidently declare, "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever*" (Psalm 23:6).

That is my prayer for you as I write these pages. May your life be marked by God's goodness and mercy all the way until you reach your finish line on earth, leaving a lasting legacy for those who follow.

—*Doug Stringer*

# 1

## Why So Many Tragic Endings?

If Dr. J. Robert Clinton is correct that such a large percentage of Christian leaders don't finish the race well, then it's crucial to learn lessons from those who have succeeded in avoiding the enemy's traps. Clinton has identified six key areas in which many leaders stumble:

1. Finances
2. Power
3. Pride
4. Sexual temptation
5. Family issues
6. Loss of spiritual momentum

I'm convinced that discouragement underlies many of these specific pitfalls; it is one of Satan's favorite weapons to use against leaders. Christian leaders are called to lead God's people to a place of promise and destiny, but it's impossible for them to do that if they are disillusioned, disappointed, or distracted along the way.

Effective leaders are able to maintain their vision, hold on to their hope, and continually fan into flame their passion for God and their compassion for hurting people. But it's not enough to do these things *sporadically*—they must do them *consistently* and *intentionally*.

## Back to the Basics

I have rarely seen a leader fall because of failing to grasp some deep theological treatise. The reason leaders stumble along the way is not because they don't understand Hebrew or Greek. Nor do they get off track because they misinterpret the book of Revelation or some other prophetic passages in God's Word. In many cases, leaders get into trouble because they neglect fundamental truths and basic spiritual disciplines. Let me explain with an illustration from one of the most successful football coaches of all time.

At age forty-five, Vince Lombardi became a head football coach in the NFL for the first time in his life. It was 1959, and he had the challenging task of leading the Green Bay Packers, a team that had won only two games the previous season. He clearly had his work cut out for him. But Lombardi wasn't going to let last year's record shape his expectations. After all, this was a *new season*.

When the discouraged NFL players gathered for their first preseason meeting, they must have wondered how their new coach was planning to turn things around. Coach Lombardi entered the locker room and stood silently for several seconds. Holding out a football in front of these men, he spoke one of the most famous lines in football history: "Gentlemen, this is a football."

In just five words, the new coach had communicated his philosophy for the team's success: They were going to start with the basics and make sure to execute the fundamentals. You see, the Packers had been losing not because they lacked talent but because they'd forgotten the basics of football.

This simple story is a powerful message for us as leaders. We can read countless leadership books and attend all the latest seminars on how to build a successful organization. But in the final analysis, our success or failure as leaders will be determined by how well we executed the basics of the Christian life.

Vince Lombardi brought the Packers a new philosophy that led to incredible success in the following years, including several league championships and Super Bowl victories. A seemingly hopeless team was given a new beginning.

What a great lesson! No matter how poorly things may have gone for you in the past, God can turn things around amazingly fast. However, the key to your turnaround is the same key that led the Packers to victory—you have to get back to the *basics*.

## Beyond the Superficial

When I say the basics, I don't mean a superficial or shallow spiritual life. Too many Christians—even those in leadership—have spiritual lifestyles akin to the old commercials for Brylcreem, the hair-styling gel: “A little dab'll do ya!” This is certainly not the philosophy we want to have when it comes to spiritual disciplines like prayer, fasting, and Bible study.

We can't expect to have powerful ministries if we have a “Now I lay me down to sleep” prayer life. I'll never forget the day Leonard Ravenhill told me, “Brother Doug, God doesn't answer prayer; He answers desperate prayer.” Rather than settling for token, superficial prayers, Christian leaders must learn to wrestle with God and passionately pursue His blessing on their lives. (See Genesis 32:24–32.)

In the same way, we'll never consistently live in victory just by memorizing a few favorite Bible verses to quote. We should consistently take time to saturate ourselves with God's presence and His Word. His Word must be written on our hearts, and we must be committed to applying it in every area of our life. (See Psalm 40:6–8; Ezra 7:10.)

As Bible teacher J. Vernon McGee used to say, it's not enough to carry a big leather Bible if we haven't ingested its teachings and put them into practice. He said we must “put the Word of God into shoe leather,” walking it out in every aspect of our life. That's the only way to consistently stand in victory and turn the world upside down for Christ.

The first-century Christians showed how powerful the basics can be. They were known as “*uneducated and untrained men*,” yet they rocked the world! How did this happen? Because “*they had been with Jesus*” (Acts 4:13).

The day of Pentecost had brought these early disciples a new beginning. In a moment's time, they received power from on high—reversing all the failure and frustration that had gone on before. Instead of denying,

doubting, or betraying their Lord, now they were bold witnesses. (See Acts 1:8; 2:1–4.) No matter how discouraged you may be at the moment, *you* can experience this same kind of turnaround!

## Maintaining Your Passion

Just like us, the early Christians were tempted to get busy with other things and lose sight of the basics that had given them such strength and favor. But God brought them back to a renewed commitment, and they resolved, “*We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word*” (Acts 6:4). Furthermore, going back to the basics resulted in a time of breakthrough for the church in Jerusalem: “*Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly*” (Acts 6:7). It will do the same for us today.

Sadly, though, we later read in Revelation that some of the churches that began with great power and authority were in danger of not finishing well. The believers in Ephesus were full of admirable works, but they had lost their “*first love*” (Revelation 2:4) for the Lord. Jesus said the church in Sardis was spiritually “*dead*” (Revelation 3:1). And the Christians in

Laodicea were so lukewarm that Jesus said He was going to spit them out of His mouth. (See Revelation 3:15–16.)

### PROVOKE-A-THOUGHT:

“WE CANNOT CHANGE OUR PAST, BUT THE CHOICES WE MAKE EACH DAY DETERMINE OUR FUTURE.”

What a sobering message for us as kingdom leaders. Just as Paul wrote to his spiritual son Timothy, God would say to us today, “*Stir*

*up the gift of God which is in you*” (2 Timothy 1:6). In other translations, Paul compares us to waning embers of fire that must be continually fanned into flame, or rekindled.

You see, the world won’t be changed by dead religion or empty theology, but by Christians whose hearts are aflame with passion for God. We

will once again turn the world upside down when we return to our first Love and consistently practice the basics of our faith.

In words that now sound prophetic, Salvation Army founder William Booth warned,

I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell.

Today the church is blessed with many gifted orators and well-trained communicators, but we need much more than that. In order for the church to be transformed, we must have leaders who spend time in the presence of God. We need men and women who hear from Him and communicate His heart to a desperate world. And this means they must love the Lord and His people more than they love their career, ministry, or even their own lives.

## It's Not over Till It's Over

In the chapters that follow, I'll be sharing some vital principles on how you can not only experience success in your leadership role but experience *lasting* success. You see, it is very important how the game of life ends. If you're on a basketball or football team, you know that it's nice when your team has the lead in the first three quarters of the game, but it's tragic if your team blows the lead in the fourth quarter.

In this paraphrase from *The Message*, the apostle Paul gives a colorful description of what it takes to finish well and be a gold medalist in God's kingdom:

*You've all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win. All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You're after one that's gold eternally. I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finish line. I'm giving it everything I've got. No sloppy living for me! I'm staying alert and in top condition. I'm not going to get caught napping, telling*

*everyone else all about it and then missing out myself.*

(1 Corinthians 9:24–27 MSG)

Paul warns that a runner needs to run hard and stay alert in order successfully reach the finish line. He says he wants to make sure he doesn't miss out on God's best.

Some of you reading this book may wonder if it's too late to finish well. Perhaps you've fallen into some kind of sin and you doubt your life can ever be the same again. Or maybe you've hit a wall on your marathon through life. Perhaps your chosen career or ministry seems too difficult, and you feel like giving up.

Let me encourage you with the words of the great American philosopher and baseball Hall of Famer Yogi Berra: "It ain't over till it's over." Isn't that good news? As long as there's still breath in your lungs, the game isn't over. There's still hope for a turnaround. The gold medal can still be yours.

### **PROVOKE-A-THOUGHT:**

OUR TRUE LEGACY COMES NOT FROM THE SERMONS WE PREACH OR HOW MANY PEOPLE FOLLOW US ON TWITTER OR OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA. IT'S NOT THE SIZE OF OUR CHURCH OR MINISTRY. THE LIVES WE LIVE BEFORE WE ENTER THE PORTALS OF ETERNITY WILL DETERMINE THE INFLUENCE WE HAVE AND THE INFLUENCE WE WILL LEAVE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION.

Dr. Edwin Louis Cole, founder of the Christian Men's Network, said it this way: "Champions are not those who never fail, but those who never quit." He used to point out that Jesus refused to quit and pressed on to fulfill His mission even though it cost Him everything. Despite the agony of the Cross, our Lord was resurrected, and He's able to bring resurrection to

*your* hopes and dreams, too. Even if you've grievously departed from your high calling in Christ, the Bible says that you can "*rise again*" (Proverbs 24:16). You can bounce back from failure and frustration, having even more influence than you've ever had before.

Hebrews 12:1 says the grandstand is full of heroes of the faith who are cheering you on to victory. Through faith, they finished their races well, and now it's your turn. The example you set and the legacy you leave can set the pace for a whole new generation of champions, impacting the world for Jesus.