

is it really true that 'readers are leaders'?

Pippa Peppiatt looks at the importance of wide reading for those in any leadership role

Harry S Truman, former President of the United States, said, 'not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers.'¹

If you've taken the time to do research on the internet about the habits of leaders, you'll see that most lists have at least one fact in common: **reading**. They **make time** for it in their busy schedules.

One of the people I admire most in the world is my wonderful father-in-law, Martin. He is now an octogenarian who relates to teenagers better than most twenty-year-olds I know. The reason why? Because he takes an acute interest in everyone and is constantly asking questions to understand them better. His desire to be informed and to connect well with people extends to him being an avid reader. He reads books of many genres. Last week I found him reading a thriller written for young teenagers so that he could talk to my 14-year old son about it.

Martin's desire to read is one of the contributing factors that makes him such a visionary church leader. This is because reading has kept him well informed and able to understand people's viewpoints and concerns.

Reading multiplies our experiences. I may never get to experience the bumpy ride of a husky pulled sledge, but I feel I 'virtually' experienced it when I recently read Scott's book on his famous attempt to reach the South Pole.²

Reading helps us become a more adept and articulate communicator – a quality crucial to good leadership. Reading also cultivates that habit of asking 'why?' It helps us to challenge the status quo, think strategically and dream big.

As nurse leaders, the same need exists to be well informed, to communicate well, to think strategically and to ask questions. We need to be asking insightful questions like 'How can we do things better? How can we improve patient care even with our limited resources? How can we make our staff's lives better?'

Nurses are busy people, and very few I know are prolific readers. I would like to challenge this, and inspire nurses to rediscover the joy and the benefit of reading.

Too often the fine details in life bog us down, those endless tasks consume us and we find little time for reflection. If we want to develop as leaders, we need to carve out time to read, to learn, to be inspired by other leaders and what they've written. And as we read, we need to ask God to inform us, teach us, and grow a vision in us for our lives and our work.

'Great leaders have vision, share vision, and inspire others to create their own.'³

1. Truman H.S. Truman Quotes. *Truman State University*. bit.ly/2w43OY6
2. Crane D. *Scott of the Antarctic: The Definitive Biography*. New York: Harper Press 5 January 2012
3. Bennett R.T. *The Light in the Heart*. Kindle edition. 26 February 2016. ASIN B01CALZ290