

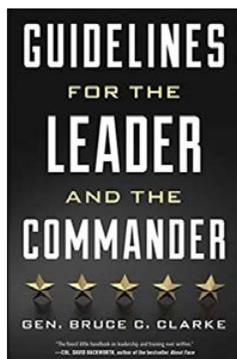
Book Reviews



Guidelines for the Leader and the Commander

By GEN Bruce C. Clarke
Guilford, CT: Stackpole Books,
2021 (reprint), 117 pages

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If you are looking for a book on leadership, you know there are an incredible amount of options out there. How do you select the “right one” with the seemingly endless possibilities? The savvy reader knows you must do your homework and conduct the requisite research. One of the key aspects of this is to establish the credentials of the author. Do they have the necessary background, experience, and expertise to craft a beneficial volume on a difficult subject — leadership? An author who unquestionably possesses these characteristics is the late GEN Bruce C. Clarke who addresses leadership (and much more) in his superb volume, *Guidelines for the Leader and the Commander*.

Let me highlight those exceptional credentials below. GEN Clarke served in the U.S. Army from 1917 to 1962 and held the ranks of private to four-star general. During his long career, he commanded a long list of formations in war and peacetime. These include commands at the division and corps level, U.S. Army Pacific, Seventh U.S. Army, U.S. Army Europe, and U.S. Continental Army Command. With all his accomplishments, he is perhaps best known for his leadership during the Battle of the Bulge where his actions and decisions were critical in halting the German advance. In total, this is clearly someone who walked the walk and can justifiably talk the talk on a myriad of topics including leadership.

Before delving into the many virtues of the book, let me address the history of the volume. *Guidelines for the Leader and the Commander* was first published in 1963. The volume was revised in 1964 and 1968 before its final edition was published in 1973. For well over 40 years, the book remained under the radar for new readership. Then in the fall of 2020, the book was featured on a highly popular podcast, and interest in GEN Clarke’s thoughts rose dramatically. The original publisher (Stackpole Books) saw this renewed interest and reprinted the 1973 edition in the spring of 2021, thus providing the volume for a new generation of readers.

Within this book, GEN Clarke captures these 45 years of experience. He does this by combining transcripts of his speeches and lectures, excerpts of his previous works, and his thoughts on various subjects into a cohesive volume. GEN Clarke divides these into four distinct sections: Leadership

and Command, Training, Operations and Administration, and A Final Word (capturing miscellaneous topics). Within each section, readers will find an incredible amount of nuggets to reflect upon. Some of these will be things that simply reinforce your own thoughts or support actions you already perform. Others may spark fresh views or generate new techniques or behavior. Not only will this text benefit a military audience, but those in the civilian world will also find numerous takeaways from the volume.

There are two factors which greatly assist the reader in gleaned these nuggets from the volume. First, is the writing style. This a book where you feel you are in an office with him and he is having a conversation with you. He also promotes a dialogue with the reader by having the ability to encourage them to reflect on points he makes. This reflection time is invaluable. The other factor is the book’s organization. GEN Clarke has organized his volume into bite-size chunks for the reader. Inside the aforementioned four major sections, GEN Clarke then divides his discussion into more specific chapters. Finally, he provides further specificity by dividing each chapter into numerous smaller discussion areas. These small sub-chapters truly promote reflection and comprehension.

There are two additional subjects I would like to address pertaining to the volume. The first is the dedication GEN Clarke places at the beginning of his book. Even nearly 60 years ago (when the volume was written), he sensed the way people were becoming enamored by technology. Consequently, he dedicates his book to the “Ground Combat Soldier.” Within this dedication, he states, “It will be a sorry day for all mankind in this supersonic nuclear age of ours should the ground combat soldier ever be deprived of his rightful place in the hearts and minds and military forces of his people.” Obviously, these words still ring true today.

The second point I would like to address is an added bonus of the volume. I believe this book affords readers an opportunity to learn about the post-World War II and Korean War Armies. There is much you can ascertain from GEN Clarke’s words regarding the state of the force during that period. His thoughts and opinions on certain areas give a great perspective on the mindset and capabilities of that force.

Some would say that a book on leadership written so long ago is no longer relevant today. They could not be further from the truth. Certainly, some of the things GEN Clarke writes on have changed over the years. However, the basic concepts and advice he provides are just as powerful today as ever. So if you are looking for that right book on leadership, I have done the research for you. This a book crafted by a Soldier and leader who is truly qualified to speak and write on the subject, and his advice should be heeded.