

Why You Must Read Biographies by Ron White

“Don’t worry, boy—it will be all right. I’ve took this road you are walkin’ down. I’ve been in your shoes. It is just somethin’ that you have got to go through. I had this same talk with my dad.”

Those were the words I heard from my dad at the age of 12, when my heart had flushed my eyes with tears because the life of my dog was flickering out. Through the years, I have taken walks down the same road with my dad and I’ve heard different versions of the same speech when business was tough, friendships ended or I wasn’t feeling my best.

Sometimes it is nice to know that what you are going through isn’t an experience unique to you. There is comfort in knowing that others have been there and there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Often, when you are in the midst of the tunnel, the only thing that catches your focus is despair, discouragement and depression. Yet, it can turn your day around when someone ventures into the tunnel, walks with you and grabs your hand to say, “I’ve been here.... Hang in there. I turned out all right, and you will as well.”

Unfortunately, we don’t all have someone who will tread into the tunnel and walk beside us with encouragement. This is why it is so important to read biographies! A biography is a unique way to have a successful person walk beside you as you examine the story of their life. You will often be surprised that the most successful people of all time experience the same struggles as you.

Einstein was divorced, Lincoln battled depression, Ronald Reagan had his heart broken by his first wife and Sam Walton went broke twice. Where did I learn these facts? From the biographies I read! Did it make me feel better because they had hard times? Yes and no. I never delight in someone else’s pain. On the other hand, it is without question that Einstein, Lincoln, Reagan and Walton were monumental successes. It is refreshing and inspiring to read that they were also human and have walked down the same road that you and I have.

When my business was struggling a few years ago, what an encouragement it was to read Sam Walton’s biography. My eyes stopped on the page when I read that at the exact age I was—at that time—he was in an almost identical financial spot! I put the book down and a smile spread across my face. If you don’t know who Sam Walton is, he started a small company called Wal-Mart a few years ago, and it turned out OK.

Reading Sam Walton’s biography was a neat way for me to get inspired and reminded me that some pretty successful people have met discouragement head-on and succeeded. In a sense, while reading that book, a message from the spirit of Sam Walton said, “Ron, I have been there. It is hard, but don’t give up. The reward is worth it. Now press on.” I did, and I will be forever glad that I did.

Now, go to the bookstore and pick up a biography. By the way, if you are in a rough spot or experiencing some heartache, “don’t worry, boy—it will be all right. I’ve took this road you are walkin’ down. I’ve been in your shoes. It is just somethin’ that you have got to go through. I had this same talk with my dad.”