

Call Sign Chaos Summary

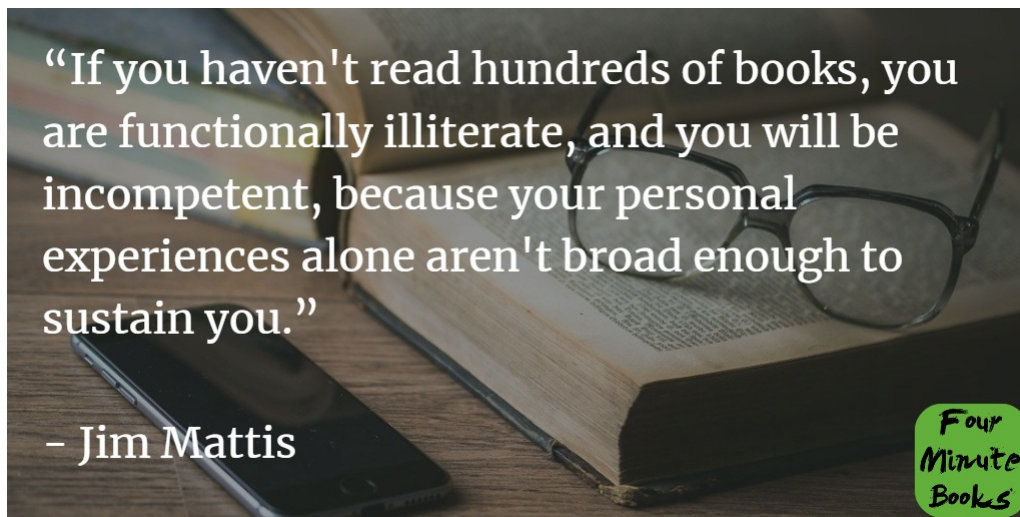


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1-Sentence-Summary: *Call Sign Chaos* is a review of US foreign policy through the eyes of General Jim Mattis, who led forces in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Imagine being a general in not one, but three major wars within 30 years. You'd probably have a lot of experience, ideas, and life lessons to share, right? That's the case for Jim Mattis, who has been an officer in the Marines for over 40 years. Serving as the Commander of the US Joint Forces Command and Commander of the US Central Command, Mattis is one of the most highly respected US generals.

His leadership in Kuwait, Afghanistan, and Iraq give him a unique perspective on war. Specifically, Mattis has a particular knowledge for what went well in liberating Kuwait from Iraqi forces in 1991, and what went wrong in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003.

His book *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead* is a look at his experiences and conclusions about how decisions affected the areas he was leading troops in. We also learn a few valuable life lessons that can help any of us improve without having to go to war.

Here are the 3 most impactful lessons I learned from this book:

1. If you don't feel like your life has a purpose, join a program like the Marines.
2. Lead with competence, care, and conviction to set yourself and your team up for success.

3. Planning and preparation, or the lack of it, is a deciding factor in how well something will go.

Are you ready for a few life lessons from the military? Let's go!

Lesson 1: Participating in a program like the Marines can help you find a purpose.

It's the winter of 1971 and Jim Mattis, newly graduated from college and wondering what to do with his life, is on a hiking trip. As he's standing on a ridge over the Columbia river, he slips, falling down a ravine. Although Mattis could have died that day, he only had a few cracked ribs.

At the bottom of the ravine, the man remembered the words of a Vietnam veteran who said:

“We don't get to choose *when we die*, but we can choose *how* we meet death.”

This was a life-changing moment for Mattis. He knew that he wanted to surround himself with men of the same character as that soldier.

But life wasn't always so purpose-filled for would-be General Mattis. At Central Washington State College, he was known for being a mediocre student. Partying more than studying, he often got into trouble. Once ordered to spend weekends in the local jail for underage drinking, his life didn't have much direction.

That all changed at the Quantico, Virginia training program for officers. There, Mattis found a purpose in life. He became so determined at his new calling that he refused to leave, even though each summer more than half the class was screened out.

If you, like young Mattis, feel that you lack a sense of meaning in life, join a program like the Marines. It maybe doesn't have to be so intense, but whatever it is will change your life.

Lesson 2: Win the most important battle – the one for your men's hearts – by leading with competence, care, and conviction.

In 1973, the US introduced an all-volunteer army in an effort to defuse the anti-war feelings of the time. Prior to this time, conscription, or required enlistment, was the rule. With a choice-only basis for joining, many dropouts and criminals began enlisting. Leaders in the military had to learn to be tough but effective.

In Mattis's experience, there are three qualities of an effective leader:

1. Competence
2. Care
3. Conviction

In leading the Marines, you must be exceptional at the basics. It's hard to lead your troops if you can't run three miles in 18 minutes, for example, or if you're can't shoot straight. You must lead from the front, by example.

Next comes care for your soldiers. In the famous words of Teddy Roosevelt:

“Nobody knows how much you know until they know how much you care.”

It's good to show that you're concerned for others progress. But in the military leaders can't be friends with their subordinates. **It's better to think of being more like a coach that pushes your subordinates to grow toward efficiency in their strengths.**

Last, to be a great leader you need conviction. Declare your rules and be solid in enforcing them, but don't play favorites. In the military these are the sort of orders that are applicable to every soldier, all the time.

Lesson 3: If you want something to go well, do the proper planning ahead for it.

Mattis's experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq are examples of times when poor planning led to things not going so well. Let's take a look at what happened in Iraq for a moment.

After Saddam Hussein's death, his legacy fell apart. But without thinking ahead of the repercussions of this, the US wasn't prepared for the chaos that came after. Water and electricity stopped working, police officers left, and talks began of civil war between the Shiites and Sunnis.

In Mattis's eyes, because of the lack of preparation and forward-thinking, the US didn't realize the consequences that their actions in Iraq would have. A little planning ahead would have gone a long way in preventing some of the difficulties that Iraq and the US experienced after Hussein's empire toppled.

The state of the Iraqi army was one such problem. It's defeat meant that many young men that were trained but hardened by the war had no jobs or prospects. To Mattis, this was a disaster waiting to happen. Without putting out this potential fire the US had set up, it wouldn't be long before someone fanned the flame inside these young men to pit them against the American troops.

Our lesson here is that to make sure that you're not left in a worse place after solving a problem, make sure you think ahead. A little planning makes a big difference for your success and happiness.

Call Sign Chaos Review

I didn't think *Call Sign Chaos* was the most interesting book I've ever read. That's probably just me though because I really don't take to stories of war and politics very well. However, I think this is going to be a great read for people who are into history and the global affairs of the United States.

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Who would I recommend the Call Sign Chaos summary to?

The 21-year-old who is majoring in history in the United States, the 45-year-old who loves politics, and anyone who considers themselves a history buff.