



From the Green Notebook sat down with former CENTCOM Commander, General Joseph Votel (U.S. Army, Retired), recently to discuss his leadership perspective, as well as his experience leading a combatant command in the [first episode of our podcast's second season](#).

General Votel provides a candid discussion on the challenges of strategic decision-making and risk management. He also emphasizes the importance of role modelling in leadership, highlighting some of the role models who shaped his career.

During the podcast, we asked General Votel to share some of the books he recommends to leaders for self-development. Below, you will find a few of the books he believes are important in the current environment to develop your understanding of the world and leave a lasting impact on those you lead.

[*The World: A Brief Introduction*](#) by Richard Haass (2020) - General Votel recommends this *New York Times* bestseller as a primer to better understand the global era in which we live

and its impact on the American way of life. This book is a great choice for any experience level to make sense of the “new normal” of the 21st Century.

[*Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World*](#) by David Epstein (2019) – A #1 *New York Times* bestseller, General Votel recommends this book to help you identify in people whether their approach is more specialist or a generalist. This book will help you understand what motivates people and provides insight on how you can work effectively with others, regardless of their approach. It also provides surprising insight into why generalists tend to be more successful than their specialized peers.

[*Leadership: In Turbulent Times*](#) by Doris Kearns Goodwin (2006) – This *New York Times* bestseller provides case examples of how Presidents throughout history dealt with the challenges of their time. General Votel recommends this book to understand how some of our most successful leaders worked through these challenges, both successfully and, in some cases, unsuccessfully. It also provides a closer look at how leaders deal with complex situations and various leaders’ decision making process when the stakes were high.

[*The Idea Factory: Bell Labs and the Great Age of American Innovation*](#) by John Gertner (2013) – General Votel recommends *The Idea Factory* to better understand innovation and the technical aspects of our world. Bell Labs was an incubator of technology in America from the 1920s until the 1980s. Gertner discusses how all of the technological potential in American history came together to give birth and grow into modern life as we know it, as well as the impact of technology on our society throughout that time.

[*Brave Men*](#) by Ernie Pyle (2001) – A “prolific writer and war correspondent,” Ernie Pyle details his time as a war correspondent on European Battlefields. In the podcast, General Votel highlights a portion of the book in which Pyle describes the time he spent with an infantry unit during the Italian Campaign. He tells the story of a young company commander, Captain Waskow, who was killed in action, and the ensuing march of his men down the mountain side with the young captain’s body. In his passing, his soldiers found strength in his example and rallied around him in their time of grief. This touching and poignant story is illustrative of the life of a leader who was deeply respected and admired by those with whom he served.

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