

Start to Finish

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An Executive Summary of **Start to Finish**, written by *Dr. Mark Dance*.

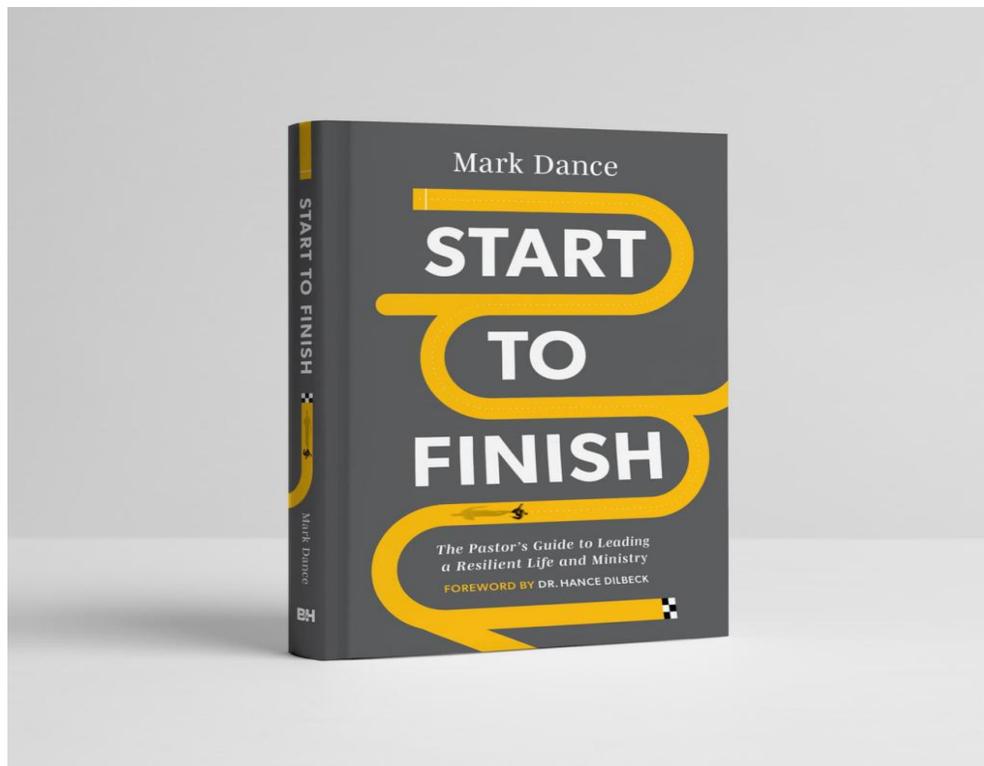
Author Biography

Mark Dance serves as the Executive Director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Before he and his wife, Janet, returned to Arkansas, Dance lived in Texas and served as director of Pastoral Wellness with GuideStone.

Reviewer's Biography

Jeremy Woodall is a husband, father, Collegiate Ministry Director in New Orleans, and a Doctoral Student at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

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The Pastors Guide to Leading a Resilient Life and Ministry

Prepared For:



**STRATEGIC
CHURCH
SOLUTIONS**

"The primary purpose of this book is to help pastors and ministry leaders both start and finish well." (p. 3)

"...he has a passion to help ministers be well and serve well. Pastoral wellness is his life's work. He is uniquely prepared to write this book." - Dr. Hance Dilbeck (President/CEO, Guidestone)

Dance begins *Start to Finish* talking about "The Main Thing". While admitting that the phrase has become overused and, in his words, "Cheesy", Dance does clearly define what should be a main thing in the ministry and life of a ministry leader, The Great Commandment.

"In this book we will unwrap the implications of a Great Commandment life, which is intrinsically connected to a Great Commission ministry." (p. 8)

The first half of, *Start to Finish*, begins with a focus on the command to love God as our "main thing" and what it looks like practically to do that holistically with our heart, soul, mind, and strength. In the second half of the book, Dance centers on the commandment to love those, "whom God has placed in our lives." (pg.10), our neighbors out of the overflow of our love for God. Dance breaks down who are neighbor is based on the "Neighborhood" of family, friends and church, and our communities and global neighbors.

Start to Finish



Ministry Application

A book full of biblical simplicity and practical clarity.

One of the greatest strengths of, *Start to Finish*, is its accessible guidance for ministry leaders.

When reading this book, I was reminded of the adage of who we are becoming spiritually is far more important than what we achieve professionally.

Dance reinforces the truth that spiritual formation is not optional for ministry leaders but is instead essential for sustaining long-term faithfulness. Dance's emphasis on holistic spiritual growth is a refreshing reminder in our attempt not just to start well, but to serve faithfully over the long term and ultimately finish well.

"This book is a summary of my ministry goal to help you start well, serve well, and finish well. A strong finish won't happen tomorrow unless you are willing to own your decisions today." (p. 9)



Final Thoughts

-By Jeremy Woodall

Full transparency, I was asked to read this book by the author, Dr. Mark Dance, himself. I have only been given a similar request a few other times in my ministry life, and each time, I believe, is because the author wrote their book under deep conviction that it is used as a tool for ministry leaders, their edification and growth, as well as in service to the church. I think this book would be a great tool to use with your ministry team, as well as a great book to read for a pastor on retreat or sabbatical. I hope this summary serves as a tool to fuel your desire to check out this practical and helpful resource for you and your ministry.

Summary

"The primary purpose of this book is to help pastors and ministry leaders both start and finish well." (p. 3)

In what may be my favorite section of the entire book, "The Awakened Soul" from Chapter 4: With All My Soul, Dance gives the reader disciplines meant as helps for ministers to lead themselves first in the attempt of leading well in their ministries. The disciplines are to *Worship Daily*, *Sabbath Weekly*, and *Discipleship Monthly*. This section address the conflict I sometimes find in my life of serving from an empty tank. I loved his quote in this section of, "There is a much better way to live. There is a much better way to serve." (p. 52)

"Paul's final words in writing to (the church at Ephesus) serve as a sacred model for how to finish well in ministry: 'The time for my departure is close. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved his appearing. (2 Tim. 4:6-8)'.