



Successful Leadership by Tom Hill

Successful Leaders are Courageous

From a secular view, being a successful leader is determined not just by the time you are in leadership—but also by what you leave behind. How successful is the organization AFTER you leave it? Jesus is the most successful leader of all time—and one measure of that is what He left behind. The impact of his leadership is still being felt today—over 2000 years later. Therefore, if you are going to study leadership, it makes sense to study the life of Jesus!

Introduction:

Pastor Jerry contacted me a couple of weeks ago and asked me if I would teach today. He wanted me to teach on Courage, and how it applies to being a successful leader. Well, because I am a server, and have a difficult time saying no, I said, “Yes”

I also thought, Wow, maybe he thinks I am courageous. Then I discovered, he was going to be out of town today—and so was Brandon—and Steve Harris is preaching at another church today. So—I figure I’m at least fourth down the list of possibilities to preach today. Anyway, here I am.

How many of you watched the trailer on the church web site about my talk this morning? I don’t like that kind of thing. They might have suspected that because they didn’t ask me. You know people sometimes say, “It is better to ask forgiveness than to ask permission.” I don’t like the video because it communicates the wrong thing. This is not about me—it is about Jesus—and it is about you. I want to **TELL** you about Jesus—and I want to **ENCOURAGE** you!

Let's pray

I grew up in Pryor, OK, with a wonderful mother, grandmother, and sisters, but a very abusive step-father. I learned early on that if I wanted something, I had to work for it and get it myself. No one was going to give it to me. I also learned that I had to be the man of the family, and I had to be the responsible one in the family, taking care of the others.

Our family moved to Oklahoma City when I was ½ way through my junior year so my dad could work at Kimray. I flunked out of high school, joined the Marines. I completed boot camp as the platoon leader and received the company “dress blues” for leadership. I went on to my first duty assignment, but I hadn't learned my lesson yet and was disciplined for fighting in a bar. I got my girlfriend pregnant (my wife now of 55+ years!) and spent 5 years flying in the back seat of a Phantom Jet and training others how to do the same. I spent one tour in Viet Nam, flying 176 missions and earning 17 air medals.

When I got out of the Marine Corps, I went to O.S.U. on the G.I. bill with a wife and 2 kids. It was tough, but I graduated as the top Electrical Engineer in my class. There was actually a plaque in old Engineering South at O.S.U with my name on it

During all this time, I was an alcoholic and a smoker. I was angry and controlling. So—I would not consider myself an example of courage AT ALL! I wasn't a good example of anything that really matters in life.

But—I know someone who is:

First let me define courage:

Courage is doing what God would have me do, no matter what the cost, trusting that God's way is the best way, and depending on the Holy Spirit to empower me to do it.

About 2000 years ago, a baby was born that was sent by God with a very specific purpose. I'm sure the child in his early years was much like any other child. As he became older, it became apparent that He had great wisdom and understanding for a child his age. His step father was a carpenter and I imagine that like most boys during that time, he was taught his father's trade. We don't know much about this child as he grew up except that he grew in wisdom and stature and favor of man and God. His name is Jesus.

Now let's jump forward to when He is about 30 years old. He gathered 12 men who became his followers. Jesus and these 12 men lived life together. They traveled around together, and Jesus taught them as they spent time together.

They went from city to city—and in each city Jesus would go to the local temple, read from the scriptures, and teach. One of these times He was going into the temple in Jerusalem and what He sees angers Him.

John 2:13-17

And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

To enter the temple, you have to pass through the outer court. In the outer court, they were selling oxen, sheep and doves, and exchanging money. The outer court had become, I am sure, like a bazaar, or a marketplace.

The Jewish Law required many sacrifices. The Jews were continuously going to the temple to sacrifice and the Law required the sacrificial animal to be unblemished. Some Jewish leaders had positioned themselves where they would “inspect” the animals and determine if the animals were fit for the sacrifice. If they rejected the animal as blemished, they would then provide the “opportunity” to purchase a “pre-inspected” and “approved” animal for the sacrifice. If the individual didn’t have the correct amount or had a foreign currency, there were money changers who would, for a fee of course, make change or convert the currency.

I’m sure Jesus had been to the temple in Jerusalem and seen this before, maybe many times. But this time He appeared to be determined to do something about it.

He made a scourge, like a whip, and drove all the animals out of the courtyard. He also poured out the money-changers money and overturned the tables.

You have to picture this: There were oxen and sheep everywhere, along with the mess that they cause. Then among that, there were tables where men were changing currencies. Then Jesus goes after the animals with the whip and begins to drive them out. As the animals are frightened and bolting for the exit, Jesus begins to pour out the money and overturn tables. The noise of the animals, their uncontrolled movement, and the noise of the tables and money hitting the floor, then it all being stirred together by the bolting animals. It had to be a once-in-a-lifetime happening!

How was Jesus displaying courage in this action?

1. He was doing God’s will.

John 5:19 says, All Jesus does is the will of God.

2. He was willing to do it no matter what the cost.

The ultimate cost would be great, His death on the cross.

3. He was continually praying and trusting God and the Holy Spirit to empower him.

There were multiple times that Jesus displayed courage, as when he called the Pharisees hypocrites.

Matthew 23:14-36 describes one encounter with the Scribes and the Pharisees who were the leaders of their religion.

Jesus calls them hypocrites, sons of hell, blind guides, like whitewashed tombs, full of hypocrisy and lawlessness, and murderers. I can't even imagine the courage it took to say those things, and to their faces.

But maybe he displayed the most courage when He allowed the Jewish leaders to take Him and scourge Him, humiliate Him, and hang Him on a cross.

But He knew it was the will of the Father, and the Holy Spirit empowered Him, and He allowed it to happen for my sake—and for yours.

What demonstrations of courage do we see around us?

When I thought about this, I first thought of Brandon. It took courage for Brandon to confess his addiction to Pastor Jerry, and then to his wife, and then tell his story to the church. And the potential cost could be great. Loss of his job, loss of his wife and family, humiliation in the church and among family and friends.

But—every recovering addict will tell you that as long as the addiction is kept secret, kept in the dark, there is no beating it. It has to be brought into the light. Recovery requires accountability.

It takes great courage to admit to an addiction and seek help.

I think that for some, it takes great courage to get up in the morning.

It takes great courage for a man to resist temptation and be faithful to his wife, and to love her as Christ loves the church.

It takes great courage for a woman to love her husband and to stick with him as he makes mistakes and sometimes even when he is unfaithful.

It takes great courage to love your children and to believe in them and to enjoy them and to tell them you love them.

It takes great courage to believe you are who God says you are and not what the world says or even what the mirror says.

It takes great courage to trust God with your life and your future!

The video trailer posted by the church about this sermon talked about my time in Vietnam. Yes, I flew 176 missions and received 17 Air Metals. Did that require courage? I was only one of many in Vietnam. Hundreds of thousands served there during that war. 60,000 men died in Vietnam. I can't speak for those that served or those that died. I honor and respect every one of them.

But for me, it did not require a lot of courage to go and do what I did. I was doing what I had been trained to do and I was actually happy to be able to put my training into action. I was also 22 years old. I was too young and dumb to be afraid!

There are actually two times in my life that I remember that required great courage.

One was getting married. I think it requires a lot of courage for any man or woman, any couple, to commit to love and stay together until "death do us part."

The second was when I was eleven years old. I was at First Baptist Church, Pryor, OK. I was sitting in about the third row with my friends. When the pastor asked if any felt the call to be saved, I did, but I didn't want to step out and go to the front and tell the pastor. I finally, with the power of the Holy Spirit, did. I stepped out and went to the front and told the pastor that I had received Christ as my Savior. That Sunday night I was baptized.

My question to you today is, are you ready to acknowledge what Christ did for you and receive the free gift of salvation that He offers? If you are, do you have the courage to step out and come down here and meet with one of the leaders down here and tell them what you have done? Just like you can't be a secret recovering addict, you can't be a secret Christian. God wants you to tell others what you have done so you can be a Light for Him.

So that is my next question. Have you made a decision to receive the free gift of salvation but never told anyone? Never made it public? Now would be a good time to do it.

I know it takes courage. But this is what God asks us to do. To tell others about Him. You can't be an effective witness for Christ if you have never made a public profession of faith yourself.

Today is the first day of the rest of your life. Why not begin by acknowledging Christ as your Savior?