



Courageous Leadership

By Bill Hybels

Bill Hybels believes wholeheartedly that “the local church is the hope of the world” (p. 15). Because of this, his great desire is to see churches flourish and grow. Yet many churches never do, or even have that on their radar screen. As the author has traveled around the world helping with many churches, he has found that “what flourishing churches have in common is that they are led by people who possess and deploy the spiritual gift of leadership” (p. 25). He unpacks some of the key leadership components to enable church leaders to grow in their ability to lead.

“THE MOST POTENT WEAPON FOR WORLD CHANGE: VISION” (p. 31).

He defines vision as “a picture of the future that produces passion” (p. 32). The strength of God given vision is that it energizes leaders and those they lead to accomplish great things. If someone is unclear of their vision, he challenges them to ask the following questions: “Have you yielded yourself fully enough to God? Have you asked God to unveil his vision for your life, or are you asking him to bless a plan that you’ve already come up with? Have you fasted? Have you prayed? Have you been quiet and waited on God in solitude? Have you cleaned up sinful patterns in your life? Have you weeded out the distractions and ambient noise that would keep you from hearing what God is trying to say to you? Have you read avidly? Have you traveled widely? Have you visited a variety of ministries around the world? Have you exposed yourself to the kaleidoscope visions that God has given to others so that you can be inspired by the variety of options?” (p. 37). The three ways to communicate the vision is to embody it, share it with individuals and to cast it publicly. Bill challenges leaders to “keep it simple” (p. 44). If people can’t remember the vision they will not get excited about it.

“TURNING VISION TO ACTION” (p. 51).

There comes “a certain point people need more than vision. They need a plan, a step-by-step explanation of how to move from vision to reality” (p. 54). One of the best ways to do this is to use BHAGs (Big Hairy Audacious Goals) to use as mile markers to track your progress and give attainable goals along the way. There is great importance in making sure that there is complete buy-in and alignment across the organization or church. Without it, things will begin to drift and potential growth and change will be hindered.

“BUILDING A KINGDOM DREAM TEAM” (p. 71).

“The first step in building a dream team is to define the purpose of the team. And I mean, define it with ruthless specificity” (p. 80). Bill’s criteria for selecting a team is “first character, then competence, and finally chemistry with me and with the rest of the team” (p. 81). After some bad experiences, he never breaks this rule. Once people are on the team it takes continued work to grow together.

“THE RESOURCE CHALLENGE” (p. 93).

The primary leader must become the “CRR (chief resource raiser)” (p. 93) for projects if a church or organization is going to have the funds to accomplish the vision God has given. The following truths have helped Bill as he acts as the CRR: 1. “God is the ultimate resource supplier” (p. 98), 2. “under the right circumstances, people love to give” (p. 100), “funding a ministry proves the character of a leader like no other challenge” (p. 101). When leading the charge in fund raising, leaders should remember to 1. educate their people on giving, 2. give information about the need, 3. keep the information about giving simple and easy to understand, 4. strategically disciple individuals that God has gifted financially to help them be a good steward of that gift and 5. keep the vision before people when challenging them to give.

“DEVELOPING EMERGING LEADERS” (p. 121).

Bill is “convinced that leaders must make this one of their highest priorities. Why? Because only leaders can develop other leaders and create a leadership culture. Teachers can’t do it. Administrators can’t do it. Mercy-gifted folks can’t do it. Only leaders can multiply the leadership impact by raising up additional leaders” (p. 122). If we want our leadership to affect the next generations, we must develop leaders. To do so, we need to plan to do so, it won’t happen by accident. “A leadership development plan has to address these three phases: 1. Identifying emerging leaders 2. Investing in the development of emerging leaders 3. Entrusting responsibility to emerging leaders” (p. 126). When looking for leadership potential we can look for these characteristics: “Influence” (p. 127), “Character” (p. 128), “People Skills” (p. 128), “Drive” (p. 128), and “Intelligence” (p. 130).

“DISCOVERING AND DEVELOPING YOUR OWN LEADERSHIP STYLE” (p. 139).

There are multiple styles of leadership. It is important for leaders to find the style that God has wired them to lead with so they can focus on their strengths. Some of these styles are as follows:

- “1. THE VISIONARY LEADERSHIP STYLE ...has a crystal clear picture in mind of what the future could hold” (p. 141)
2. “THE DIRECTIONAL STYLE of [has a] God-given ability to choose the right path for an organization as it approaches a critical intersection” (p. 142)
3. “STRATEGIC LEADERS have the God-given ability to take an exciting vision and break it down into a series of sequential, achievable steps” (p. 144)
4. “MANAGING LEADERSHIP STYLE...who has the ability to organize people, processes, and resources to achieve a mission” (p. 145)
5. “THE MOTIVATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE [has] that God-given ability to keep their teammates fired up” (p. 146)
6. “THE SHEPHERDING LEADERSHIP STYLE ...builds a team slowly, loves team members deeply, nurtures them gently, supports them consistently, listens to them patiently, and prays for them diligently. This kind of leader draws team members into such a rich community experience that their hearts begin to overflow with good will that energizes them for achieving their mission” (p. 148)
7. “THE TEAM-BUILDING LEADERSHIP STYLE [has] a supernatural insight into people that allows them to successfully find and develop the right people with the right abilities, the right character, and the right chemistry with other team members’ (p. 150)
8. “THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP STYLE ...function optimally in start-up mode” (p. 151-52)
9. “THE REENGINEERING LEADERSHIP STYLE ... are at their best in turn-around environments. These leaders are gifted by God to thrive on the challenge of taking a troubled situation — a team that has lost its vision, a ministry where people are in wrong

positions, a department trying to move forward without a strategy — and turning it around” (p. 153)

10. THE BRIDGE BUILDING LEADERSHIP STYLE ...have the unique ability to bring together under a single leadership umbrella a wide range of constituent groups. This enables a complex organization to stay focused on a single mission. The unique gift that bridge-building leaders bring to this feat is enormous flexibility” (p. 154-55).

“THE SOURCES OF DECISION MAKING” (p. 161).

Leaders need to be able to make decisions in order to lead. The following are different data sources that help guide us as we make decisions. 1. “What I Believe” (P. 163), 2. “What I Know Other Leaders Would Do” (P. 168), 3. “Pain” (P. 175) Past Painful Experience Is A Great Teacher, 4. “The Holy Spirit” (p. 178). If we can take time to clearly articulate our core beliefs it will help inform us in our decision making.

“THE ART OF SELF-LEADERSHIP” (p. 181).

Our “toughest leadership challenge” is ourselves (p. 182). If we cannot lead ourselves, how can we rightly lead others? No one else can do this for us, and if we are too busy, we will let this slip and eventually it will destroy our leadership potential. At one point the church leaders told Bill: “The best gift you can give the people you lead here at Willow is a healthy, energized, fully surrendered, and focused self. And no one can make that happen in your life except you. It’s up to you to make the right choices so you can be at your best” (p. 185). Bill now asks himself a few questions to make sure he is on track: “Is my calling sure?” (p. 185), “Is my vision clear?” (p. 186), “Is my passion hot?” (p. 187), “Am I developing my gifts?” (p. 188), “Is my character submitted to Christ” (p. 189), “Is my pride subdued?” (p. 190), “Am I overcoming fear” (p. 190), “Are interior issues undermining my leadership?” (p. 192), “Is my pace sustainable?” (p. 193), “Is my love for God and people increasing?” (p. 194).

“A LEADER’S PRAYER” (p. 199).

Bill’s prayer, and ours should be “God, I want to be a better leader than I am. I don’t want to stand before you someday and have to admit that I squandered the opportunities you gave me. I want to develop my leadership skills to the peak of my potential. But I need your help. Please direct my growth and instruct me in the way I should go” (p. 199). Some characteristics that we can model our lives after are “David’s optimism” (p. 199), “Jonathan’s...love” (p. 201), “Joseph’s personal holiness” (p. 202), “Joshua’s decisiveness” (p. 204), “Esther’s courage” (p. 205) “Solomon’s wisdom” (p. 207), “Jeremiah’s emotional authenticity” (p. 207), Nehemiah’s “commitment to celebration” (p. 208), Peter’s “initiative” (p. 209), and “Paul’s intensity” (p. 210).

“A VITAL WALK WITH GOD” (p. 215).

“A leader’s greatest gift [is] a fully yielded heart” (p. 216). Bill noticed that different people pursue their walk with God in very different ways. When people pursue God using the way that they are wired to do so, they will find the greatest growth. Some of these paths are: “The Relational Pathway” (P. 217), “The Intellectual Pathway” (P. 219), “The Serving Pathway” (P. 221), “The Contemplative Pathway” (P. 221), “The Activist Pathway” (P. 223), “The Creation Pathway” (P. 224), “The Worship Pathway” (p. 225). Once we find and develop our path, we can also help others find their own path.

“DEVELOPING AN ENDURING SPIRIT” (p. 231).

A burning question of pastors is how they are going to be able to press on until the end of their race. Some of the ways that Bill recommends to help stay the course is: “Make Your Calling

Sure And Stay Focused” (P. 234), “Enduring By Developing The Courage To Change” (P. 237), “Enduring By Discovering Safe People” (P. 247), “Enduring With An Eternal Perspective” (P. 249).

“REFUSING GOD NOTHING” (p. 255).

“2 Chronicles 16: 9 says, “For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that he may strongly support those whose heart is completely his.” Every time I read that verse, I think of a huge radar wand rotating slowly in the heavens” (p. 256). God is looking for the kind of person that He can fully use and will not get in the way of what he wants to do through them. Because the true power of leadership comes from God, this is the most important quality in a leadership because it opens them up to the power of God working through their life. May our prayer be “God, I yield myself fully to you. I will do your bidding without delay. I will refuse you nothing. I will seek to love you as you have never been loved before. Here am I, send me!” (p. 271).