

“Leadership Success”

Galatians 5:22-23

Here’s a good discussion question for you. Who was the more impactful coach, Bill Walsh or Tom Landry? In terms of wins and great accomplishments, Tom Landry’s 270 wins have quite the edge over Bill Walsh’s 102 wins. Yet if you look at their coaching careers from a larger scope and ask how they impacted the game of football, Bill Walsh comes out on top.

Tom Landry was a great coach. Bill Walsh was an equally great coach. What separates the two men in terms of impact is how they invested in the lives of those they came into contact with. Tom Landry influenced a handful of people. Men like Wade Phillips, Mike Ditka, Dan Reeves, and Vince Tobin are direct coaching descendents of Tom Landry. In examining Bill Walsh’s impact on those around him, we come up with names such as: Mike Holgrem, Jim Fassel, Paul Hackett, Sam Wyche, George Seifert, and Dennis Green. Then we take one more step back and see that Bill Walsh’s influence flows into many more coaches than Tom Landry. In examining a “coaching tree” between the two, Tom Landry has about 10 Super Bowl wins in his “coaching tree,” but Bill Walsh has three times as many and has more current head coaches in the NFL.

The point about this is that a lasting success is built when leaders realize that their success has more to do with who follows them than what they are about at that moment.

Defining success is a hard task. Even in business where we can look at the numbers game and break everything down by the bottom line, understanding success can be elusive. Massive Fortune 500 companies are called successful one moment, than in the next we see their sudden demise. True success is not about momentary victories, but a long line of investment and diligence.

There is a popular phrase that goes: most overnight successes are years in the making. I think it is right on.

When we evaluate our roles and our primary responsibilities as the spiritual leaders of our homes, we see great moments of victory. But when we scrutinize the data and look long-term, success becomes more fuzzy and harder to identify in our lives.

We know in our own spiritual lives that success is a hard concept to wrap our arms around. Truth be told even in business, government, finances, and other areas of life we can’t tell if we are being truly successful until some time down the road.

This is also true about success in leading our families. It is hard to determine if we are being successful in the midst of family life. The big concepts in Galatians 5:22-23 are important guides for us: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

When we focus ourselves on seeing the fruit of the Spirit accomplished on a regular basis in our own lives and in our families, we can know we are taking the right steps towards being successful. These individual outward expressions come from a groundswell of earnest devotion to following God. You can’t truly express these characteristics if you are failing in following God well. It just isn’t possible.

Notice how the fruit of the Spirit works itself out with our relationships.

Practicing the fruit of the Spirit is a matter of maintaining our regular disciplines and leading those around us by example. As a man of God, you are uniquely equipped and called to be a spiritual leader. God desires for you to remain rooted in His Word and consistently coming before Him with a spirit open for instruction.

Timothy was a young man, probably about your age, when Paul wrote to him, “Now you, man of God, run from these things; but pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight for the faith; take hold of eternal life, to which you were called and have made a good confession before many witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:11-12) These powerful words are actions that we must be willing to practice and lead others in practicing if we are to see true success in our lives and the lives of our families.

In writing to Timothy, Paul uses a contrastive word, “now” that emphasizes the immediate movement away from the previous sins and evil habits that he had been talking about. The man of God is to move away from those things and chase after the listed virtues. These virtues are a roadmap for a growing relationship with God that impacts those immediately around us.

Maybe one of the best illustrations of what successful spiritual leadership looks like is that of a string. Think about a string, or even take one out and put it on a table. Now push that string around. It isn’t easy. Pushing a string causes it to bunch up and be difficult to move. Now pull that string in a direction you want it to head. Notice how much easier it is to pull the string along. Successful spiritual leadership is not about pushing people and manipulating them to do things. Spiritual leadership is about leading through example and pulling others through acts of service and grace.

Leading out in missions is one terrific way to continue to pull that string. Spiritual leadership always finds success when it leads to working together to build God’s kingdom. Imagine what your future families will look like from a “coaching tree” perspective if we practice participating in missions for a lifetime. Successful families can accomplish this is through participating together in mission trips both at home and internationally. Above all what matters the most is how the father, the spiritual leader, in the family practices missions himself. Being involved in the Great Commission now on an ongoing basis is a visible demonstration to our future wives and children of our spiritual leadership.

We can’t know how our families will turn out. We certainly can’t know how our children will turn out. Our obligation to them and before God is that we are men of God pursuing His will and discovering truth in His Word on a daily basis. Without this kind of focus and daily determination we will find ourselves caught up the midst of our tumultuous lives. Years later we will look back and see no movement towards true success in the spiritual lives of our family and ourselves. We must stay focused on God.

Spiritual success is a hard concept to get our minds around. Through committed disciplines and willing pursuit of God, we can see tremendous things accomplished for His kingdom.

Talk It Up:

1. How do you define spiritual success?
2. What does it take to see the fruits of the Spirit exercised in your lives on a daily basis?
3. When you read 1 Timothy 6:11-12 what are some thing you pick up on?
4. What are your next steps to becoming a leader this week?
5. How have your actions, words, or thoughts this week affirmed the “whole purpose of God” in your life? (Acts 20:27)
6. How has your mindset and/or actions reflected God’s missional purpose for you this week? (Acts 20:29)
7. How has God’s Word built you up this week? (Acts 20:32)

Prayer Requests:

- Pray that God might show you how to begin producing the fruit of the Spirit in your life.
- Continue to pray for each other in the group that you might grow in your willingness and ability to spiritually lead your future families and spouses.
- Ask God to open the hearts of specific people in your life who need a relationship with Jesus. Commit to pray regularly for them.
- Pray for God to start a spiritual awakening on your campus and on college campuses across North America and around the world.
- Take time to pray for any personal requests that group members may have.