

# INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP 2020



1-2

WEEK 2

REAL LIFE APPLICATION

KNOWING WHERE TO LEAD

## EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP CASE STUDY – Denny Hill, The Ambitious Swim Coach <sup>1</sup>

Denny Hill’s career as a high school swimming coach didn’t start out well. The seniors on his team quit in the first season because he required them to come to all the workouts. The team only won three meets the whole season. That was 40 years ago. Since that time, the high school chemistry teacher’s success as a swimming coach has been extraordinary; his winnings include more than 900 boys’ and girls’ dual meets and a phenomenal 31 state titles.

Denny is noted for creating a team effort out of what is usually considered an individual sport. He begins every season with a team sleepover, followed by “Hell Week,” a two-week grueling regimen in which team members swim at least 5 miles a workout and 10 miles a day. He acknowledges this is a bonding experience for the swimmers, regardless of their skill, because they are “all in the same boat.”

Denny passes the mantle of leadership onto his team members. Seniors are expected to be mature leaders who inform the freshmen of the team goals and expectations. Juniors are to be role models, while sophomores serve as quiet leaders who are still learning but have a foundation in the team culture. Even the freshmen members have a job: They are required to pay attention to the coaches and other team members as they learn the team’s culture and what’s expected.

Denny holds a 20-minute team meeting each Monday where every member has the opportunity to present a rose or a complaint to anyone on the team including the coaches. He is tough on swimmers and makes them work, but when they need support he is always there to put an arm around them. Denny also uses humor, often making jokes that help take the edge off long, hard workouts.

And despite his teams’ successes, Denny isn’t about winning; he’s more about preparing to win—telling his swimmers that by preparing to win, everything takes care of itself. When you do win, he says, you’ve done it the right way.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter G. Northouse. *Introduction to leadership: Concepts and Practice*. SAGE Publications, Incorporated, 2019. p.14.