

Leadership must be bold, not hesitant or faint hearted.

My father established a simple policy: “We win, they lose.” That policy is so bold that it instantly grabs your attention – and so concise that it is unforgettable. It was the theme of my father’s foreign policy throughout the eight years of his presidency. In the end, Dad won and the Soviets lost.

Boldness was a key element of my father’s leadership style. He often said that leaders (especially Republican leaders) should wave “a banner of bold, unmistakable colors, with no pale pastel shades.” By this, he meant that leaders should speak in terms that are daring and dynamic, forceful and arresting. Leaders should not appear hesitant, should not mumble uncertainly, and should not use weasel words. Leaders must proclaim, in terms loud and clear, the strong contrasts between themselves and their opponents.

We often hear people say there’s not a dime’s worth of difference between the two political parties. It’s becoming increasingly hard to argue with that view. But whenever a leader offers voters a choice between “bold colors” and “pale pastels,” boldness wins every time. Liberal Democrats never shy away from waving their bold liberal colors around. Unfortunately, all too many heirs of the party of Reagan are wrapping themselves in pale pastels.

As I have studied Dad’s approach to leadership, I am impressed again and again with his uncompromising boldness. He managed to communicate bold ideas and bold principals in a pleasing way. He mastered the art of being boldly charming, boldly engaging, boldly persuasive and boldly likable. He made friends of his enemies and got them to buy into his leadership vision.

To be a leader, you must by definition be bold. There is really no such thing as a “timid” leader. That would be a contradiction in terms. If you are not bold, you are not leading. If you are in a leadership position, but you are trying to wave a banner of pale pastels, then please get out of the way and let somebody bold take over. Leadership is for the bold!

From “Lessons My Father Taught Me” by Michael Reagan copyright 2016

