

What Do People See?

By Dr. Gregory Wiens

Have you ever watched a video of yourself speaking or of your golf swing? It can be painful to see ourselves from an outside perspective. In our staff meeting this past week we discussed how people perceive me. Ed Koch, State Credentials Coach, said that often people see me as goal oriented and focused on getting the task completed. They see me as being strategic in bringing about missional direction. Outsiders see me, as more of a confrontational person who is not afraid to address something that I see is wrong. None of that sounded bad, but as I probed a little, I was disappointed by what I didn't hear. Nowhere did I hear that people perceive me as a man whose life and ministry is founded upon my walk with God.

This bothered me because I make my time alone with God a significant priority. For twenty-five years I have been committed to seek the heart of my Father through consistent prayer, journaling, personal scripture study, meditating and memorization of His word. I don't talk about it a lot because Jesus tells us in Matthew 6.5ff that we don't need to show our spirituality so other people see it. But, I thought people would know my walk with Christ is the most critical part of my life and has been for almost three decades. But, it isn't as obvious as I thought it would be. Just like watching my golf swing on video was difficult, so was this.

As we explored why don't people see this in my life, we identified at least two reasons:

1. I don't connect the dots on how my devotional life is the center of my being.
2. People don't view my up front confrontational approach or my personality as spiritual.

I realized, I can do something about the first issue, but the second issue is a much larger cultural one. So let's look at these two reasons in more depth.

The first reason is that I don't connect the dots well for people. In other words, I don't share that my passion for God's mission or my thoughts on how to do things in ministry come out of a fresh experience with God and His word. As I continue to study and apply God's word to my life, I am repeatedly convicted that I will be held accountable for what I do with all of my life and actions. But, as I am convicted, I don't let others know that conviction is what is forming my actions and beliefs.

I am moved by God's continuous compassion throughout the scriptures for those who are far away from Him. As I study Jesus' life, I repeatedly am reminded of the way He was called to seek and save the lost; and He lived it! And so when I attempt to align all that Florida Church of God Ministries does in light of this, I don't tie it back to my being moved by God to do so.

Often when I am in prayer for situations in the state, I have thoughts about "how" we should or should not approach a specific issue. However, when I act accordingly, I don't mention that it was in my prayer time, or I don't say that God specifically told me to do such and such. Consequently people can think it is just my mind that comes up with these ideas. I become concerned about people blaming things on God. I believe God gets the blame or credit for many ideas, actions and thoughts that don't appear

consistent with His word. So I don't often use "God talk". But it appears that I have done so to the detriment of my impact.

I need to do better at this. Why? Because as we mentor younger leaders, they need to understand it isn't all about leadership skill sets, force of personality, strategic thinking, charisma and what you read; your entire ministry really does all rise and fall on your personal walk with Christ. Your ministry impact will only be the overflow of your walk with Christ. Sure, there are many Christian leaders who accomplish big things in the eyes of others using these things I just mentioned, but that is exactly what Paul was describing in *1 Corinthians 3.1*: "*Off as wood and straw; with a little mud over it looks great until it is tested by fire at the end of time.*" Ultimately, God knows and will judge our ministries, not the media, our friends or even the Church of God, Anderson.

My prayer is, no matter how naturally gifted you are, you will, like Paul consider it all rubbish next to knowing Christ (*Philippians 3.8*). As we know Christ personally and daily and He transforms our inner life are we able to then develop ourselves through leadership skill sets, strategic thinking, reading and so forth.

Next week we will deal with the second issue of what a spiritual person really looks like.