

# Learning Leadership Skills

By Dr. Greg Wiens

It seems to me that leading people would be so much more fun if they would simply behave themselves. I can't tell you how many times I have had a pastor tell me that ministry wouldn't be bad if it weren't for the people! One of the lessons I have learned through the years is that often God is working *in me* through the people problems I face.

I have a friend who often asks me, "So what is God teaching you through this trial?" I sometimes want to say that God is teaching me that people are just dumb, but I know that isn't what my friend is asking...he is asking me what in **my life** is God dealing with through this challenging situation.

It is very easy to see problem people or people problems as intrusions on the work that we are called to do. Let me suggest that it is precisely through these problems God is doing what God is called to do. God is committed to make us the kind of leaders that can lead his people to fulfill his mission. All too often, the way God makes us into Godly leaders is by taking us through times with ungodly people. We only need to look to Jesus or Moses to see examples of this.

I am not sure where we get the idea that leading God's people should be easy and fun. Every time I experience a backlash or a challenge of leadership, deep in my heart I know that is why I am called to be the leader. Not to bully my way through situations (though that would be easier), but praying my way through the situation. I ask for God's divine insight as to HOW I should deal with this situation; opening myself up for God to change **ME** through it. I ask God to give me the skills commensurate to deal with this situation. Often, I find that troublesome times require skill sets I don't have—so I need to learn them.

If I dealt with every situation with the leadership skills I had prior to the situation, I would be a poor leader. Great leaders are simply men and women who continue to add more skills to their leadership library throughout their lifetime. Poor leaders learn one or two ways of dealing with situations and continue to deal with every new situation the same way every time it comes up. You have seen leaders who are harsh or soft every time. Now each of us may fall somewhere on that continuum naturally, however the church has too many varied situations for us to only respond one way.

At times we need to be forgiving, gracious and compassionate leaders; yet some may mistake this kindness for a weakness. They will attempt to exploit this in ways that do great damage to the Kingdom of God. So at these times we must be able to stand up to the Goliath in our lives and not flinch. Both of these extremes (and everything in between) are learned in dealing with challenging situations. Personally, I used to struggle with both of these extremes. Now, after almost forty years of leading I have

learned to demonstrate whatever God requires of me. Surely, it isn't easy, but it is necessary for the Kingdom.

The same can be said of learning to say the tough words that hurt but will eventually bring healing and wholeness. It is much easier to tell people what they want to hear, but that isn't what God always desires. Some times God wants me at times to monitor tremendous details or organize long processes. Neither of these tasks do I enjoy. But, in spite of all that I write and believe about playing your A-game, at times you have to play your C-game and play it well without complaining. You learn to improve these facets of your leadership through developing skills that you don't necessarily enjoy during tough times.

Florida Church of God Ministries has gone through a number of staff reductions this past year and I have had to learn a number of skills I would rather they remained dormant. But, that isn't God's plan for my life. So a good leader continues to learn new skills for their entire lifetime. One of the advantages of an economic contraction like we are now experiencing is that we all have the opportunity to learn new skills.

Take a quick inventory, what new skills have you learned this last year that have made you a better leader? If you can't name any, maybe its time to stop blaming others for problems and learn a few new skills.