

Great leaders *must* do the hard work.

By Dr. Gregory Wiens

Great leaders must do things that they don't want to do, so that they can become what God created them to be. This is where many fail.

Last week I wrote about our own leadership and the leadership of our staff being the potential lid keeping our churches from their next level of impact. From the responses I received, it appears many of us are aware of that, but what do we do next? This week, I would like to address how to deal with our own leadership style when it becomes a lid.

I find it interesting that some pastors love to stand before their congregations, but loath quietly reflecting on themselves. Other pastors spend hours exegeting the scriptures but too few moments exegeting their own heart, mind or soul. Still others strive to be a great leader of their staff, leaders or church; yet fail in leading themselves.

The most critical skill sets that any leader must develop are the abilities of self-reflection, self-evaluation and self-regulation. We must develop the ability to look inside ourselves and see what is really there. We then must be able to understand why it is there and then know how to discipline what is inside of us to be whom God wants us to be.

Each of these skill sets can be learned, but not all by ourselves; this is where healthy community, mentors, trusted advisors or deep friends are necessary. As leaders we must discipline ourselves to think deeply about our life in context with others. We must continually ask ourselves what is working and what is not. We should not quickly dismiss difficulties with others as *their* issues; rather we must take the internal time to process. I have personally found journaling very helpful for this reason in my life.

However, as helpful as this is, it is not enough. This is where an outsider who is not emotionally involved in the situation can be invaluable at helping us decipher our interpretation for a more objective or unbiased perspective. Again, we must be ready to hear that which clearly doesn't agree with your own feelings—that is why you asked and outsider for perspective. Counselors or coaches can help us understand what is going on inside. They can much more clearly identify where we are allowing a blind spot or emotional trigger to produce unhealthy leadership.

No one is always a great leader; we go in and out of great leadership moments or seasons. That is why we need accountability to help us change some of our habits that are producing leadership lids in our lives and ministry. For me, it has been accountability through pain that has produced the deep change in my life and leadership.

Recently, I have been personally pushed, challenged and threatened that I must learn to lead leaders of leaders and stop doing. It has come through my staff and my coach. I was experiencing several symptoms:

- My schedule was too crowded
- Leaders around me were frustrated
- I became the bottleneck in our ministry

I had to take a long hard look at myself and even ask others to help me identify those problem areas. I also needed help in knowing how to change to deal with the issues. I was disappointed to discover the cures were:

- The need to develop clear lines of communication (without me in the chain)
- The need to develop clear lines of responsibilities (without me in the process)
- The need to develop systems of ministry (without me involved)

This was disappointing because none of these are my strengths; in fact they are painful for me. These may not appear painful to you because of your strengths, personalities or passions. The caveat (and the pain) was that I had to be part of the solution. I couldn't just get others to fix the problem. I had to force myself to focus on doing what was painful and difficult so that we could fix the problem. I need others to help me with the process, for sure; but I must discipline myself to work through the process. I cannot delegate this to others. I must intentionally do some things that I don't want to do so that inevitably I will be free to be whom God created me to be and FLCOGM would continue to be the impacting organization that it is.

Great leaders must always learn to lead themselves before they can lead leaders. You can lead followers without adequately leading yourself. But as you begin to lead leaders, they will first look to see how you are leading yourself. The first step in this process is being willing to change whatever is necessary in your own leadership that is impeding impact.