



## Messes In Ministry

By Dr. Gregory Wiens

Ministry is messy. If you really trust in God and attempt to lead people in following Him, then you will inevitably find life isn't simply an equation where you put in the right variables and out comes happiness. The life of obedience to Christ will surely challenge you if you attempt to live it woodenly; like following a list of platitudes. The same is true of leadership. Leadership is leading in the context of relationships, and this too can be messy.

Our life with Christ is described as a relationship with God. Eternal life is described as something we have in the present tense (John 5.24) not something that takes place in the life after death. Christ lives in us (Galatians 2.20) and we live in him (Colossians 2.6). As a Christ follower (Christian), I am in relationship with him. And relationships cannot be boiled down into a bunch of do's and don'ts. It is a dynamic process, almost like a dance (can I use that term in the Church of God?). As we learn to walk in that relationship with Christ, we learn to walk in relationships with others (1 John 1.7).

Therefore, leadership is also like a dance. Last week I wrote about the tension of leading under our own power versus the under the power, possession and position of Christ. If leadership is leading in the context of relationships we must learn to lead as others follow. We must learn to move in a way that it allows others to follow.

I continue to work with leaders who think that leading is like running a race against others rather than dancing with others. It isn't as simple as setting goals and arranging my things to do to complete the assignments needed. Rather, leadership surely entails goals, but it also requires us to continue to check in with those on the team to find out how they are doing. As we do this, we often find that they have taken a step that is different from our last step and we need to adjust our tempo, direction and course to bring them along. This is where the dance comes in, as well as some of the messiness. We will only fulfill our mission as a team, when the team completes the course.

I experienced this when I had to eat three frogs this week...not literally. I once heard that if you have to eat a frog, don't stare at it long. This is wise advice. I had three tasks this week that I dreaded but that I knew I needed to do. So, I built up my courage and took care of them. We all have to eat frogs at times in ministry because of this dance of leadership. Things don't always go smoothly or as planned, so we have to go back and clean up messes that others or we have made.

Sometimes, messes are caused by our own mistakes and sometimes by the sins of others. As long as we live on this earth and lead people here on earth, there will be

messes of one sort or another to clear away. That is one of the reasons why God needs leaders. If problems were non-existent, God wouldn't need as many leaders. I am sure each of you in leadership will have some frogs to eat this week. Let me encourage you. *This is one of the reasons why God called you to be a leader.*

The goal is not to argue about who created the mess and who should clean it up, just do it. That is where servant leadership comes in (John 13). We should be willing to eat the frogs as leaders that others aren't willing to eat. That's what servant leadership is. You can always count on leadership being messy. If you don't want to deal with chaos or messes get out of leadership. Not just leadership, but also every part of life entails these same problems. That is why the Wisdom books Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs are so valuable. They address the joys and the messiness of real life.

Life and leadership are messy. The good news about our life and leadership in Christ is that we do not live this life alone. Christ is in us and we are in him, and we also have his body, the church, to walk through this life together.