



TRUSTING

By Dr. Gregory Wiens

So much of what of I write about concerns our ability to lead or be the leader God created us to be. So how do you find the balance of learning and growing while at the same time trusting in Christ and not in your own ability? For *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me..."* (Galatians 2.20)

This last week's training call dealt with the five lids of church health: space, staff, structure, strategy and systems. During the question session of the call, someone asked: "Where is God in all of this?" This is a fair question.

When I first came to Christ I was told a quote that has been attributed to everyone from Martin Luther to Dave Ramsey. It appears St. Augustine was the first we know to have said, *"Pray as if all depended on God and work as if it all depended on you"*. The truth of this is, in this world we hold competing truths.

So much of ministry is truly a mystery. We have great difficulty seeing behind the veil of the divine. Even Paul in 1 Corinthians 13.12 *"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."* Remember, their mirrors were hammered and polished metal, hardly a good reflection. Paul acknowledges that there are some things, which we will fully know on this earth.

Paul is specifically dealing with spiritual gifts as manifested in the Body of Christ. He is saying we must practice love through our gifts in the Body because we simply don't know the whole story or we don't see the whole picture. This is so crucial to keep in mind as we seek to be the Godly leaders that God has called us to be. We must be humble and give grace, love and patience to those whose gifts cause them to see things differently.

I was recently told of a pastor in our movement who lead a church bi-vocationally for over a decade...then suddenly the church exploded and now it averages over a thousand in services. So how do you explain this? Did this pastor/leader suddenly "see the light" and step up his leadership? Obviously, he learned some things along the way and did some things differently, but we will never know completely why things work as they do. God is still God and we do see a poor reflection.

It seems to me that we tend to fall into two camps: those who want to simply trust God to work and take little responsibility for developing their own skill sets, and those who work extremely hard and take full responsibility for the impact of their ministry. In ministry is not easy to trust in God while developing ourselves and learning all we can to effectively develop strategies for Kingdom impact.

In Matthew 10.16 Jesus tells his disciples, "*I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.*" as you know the snake or serpent had a terrible reputation for being crafty and scheming. I have seen this verse used to justify all kinds of inappropriate behavior. Jesus is clearly talking about taking the message of Christ to those who are far from Him. Jesus simply says we should be willing to learn, live and look for whatever strategies that will bring lost people toward Him. We need to be open to all possibilities, but we must do this with pure hearts that are committed to serving and worshipping Him.

The apostle Paul understood this in his ministry. He continued to learn and grow throughout his life. In his last recorded letter, he asks Timothy to bring his books to him so he could read in prison (2 Timothy 4.13). Yet he also wrote the church in Ephesus "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*"

Paul advocated practicing ministry through knowing, understanding and using the armor of God (truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the Word and the Spirit). But he also advocated and modeled a life committed to learning. John Wesley told the preachers under his care to read or get out of the ministry! The great women and men of God have notoriously been great prayers warriors and great readers.

So our ministry begins and ends with our heavenly Father. We are to bring honor to Christ in all that we do. And according to what Jesus says, one of the ways we do so is by doing whatever we can (and is acceptable to Him) to see people come to know and grow in Him. I am not naive enough to think we will all agree with what is acceptable to Him, but I do believe in the Church of God we can embrace each other as we labor together on this mission.