

Running to Win # 16

Running to Lose

By Dr. Gregory Wiens

Easter is a time of celebration and Christ's victory over death. It is a time in which, when we win; we are victors in Christ. Hail to the Victors! But there are other times when we need to learn to lose. I am concerned with leaders who always have to win because otherwise they get angry, frustrated, lose motivation or they blame others. Losing has a way of helping us face reality. Let me give you an example of this.

Last week I ran the statistics on this column and realized that only 15% to 20% of those who receive this email actually click the link to read more than the first paragraph of the articles I write. What if you knew only one in five or one in six people were really listening to what you say? What if 80% to 85% of the people in the congregation you serve actually fell asleep during your sermons? The reality is, most can't fall asleep as easily so they probably just not tune out your messages.

I know it is easy for you to think: *"That is Greg's problem but not mine."* You probably think you are a much better communicator, and that may very well be true. But one thing I have learned from running is that we all lose sometimes and that is okay. In the book, [Good to Great](#), Jim Collins talks about our need to confront the brutal facts of reality. The more I work with leaders the more I see men and women who simply aren't willing to confront the brutal fact that losing helps us face the reality that change is needed.

That is one of the great aspects of running; there is no denying reality. You may not like your time, you may hate the pain, you may even have plenty of excuses for your performance; but you cannot deny your time, place and condition. As you are confronted with reality you can either accept it or create a new reality by doing whatever it takes to bring about the necessary change. There are a lot of people who trash talk before the race; but I have learned not to open my mouth. After the race is over, the results will be obvious.

Paul, the apostle knew this as he wrote his letters. He refers to running throughout them (see list of scriptures referencing running), but in his last letter he writes in 2 Timothy 4 in verse 7, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."* Later in this same chapter he refers to those who had left the faith and deserted him. In ministry we will need to finish the race well and realize there will be many victories and yes, some defeats.

There will be plenty of time to talk when the race is over, but till then you must face reality and make the necessary changes to your life, your leadership and/or your ministry style. In losing, I would challenge each of us to confront the facts of reality by not blaming others even ourselves. If we want different results, then I would suggest asking ourselves what are we willing to do differently to accomplish such. Losing can help us face reality and then make changes. Those who never acknowledge losing are robbed of great opportunities to grow and change.

During these past sixteen weeks we have discussed *(and are they available for review on the "Ministries" page on our website):*

- Measuring goals to understand your ministry strengths
- Being sure you know your ultimate goal or objective in ministry
- Knowing how to handle discouragement and pain in ministry

- Measuring the right things in ministry
- Healing appropriately in ministry
- Finding the right equipment to be successful
- Selecting and learning from Coaches
- Enjoying ministry through having fun
- Setting a sustainable pace for ministry
- Competing with yourself and not others
- Learning to develop routines for discipline
- Understanding how to discipline your head to be successful
- Keeping in mind the reason you are in ministry
- Losing sometimes helps you face reality

This has been a series that has challenged me to continue on my road of growth. I know we need to do something different to gain readership. I hope you have found it helpful in understanding the reality of ministry in which you find yourself; especially on this the Monday after Easter.

I have asked Bill Ferguson (who is planting an organic church—or what you might describe as a church focused on building small discipleship cells transforming a community through service, sacrifice, scripture study and community) to reflect on what he has learned this past year. He has attempted to live as a pastor in the midst of Miami, attempting to reach people far from Christ and bring them into Christian community. He is going to reflect on those lessons in a four-part series on how a pastor can live a transformative life in today's culture. Let me encourage you to read, reflect and learn through the next four weeks.