

Running to Win # 9

Enjoying the Trip

By Dr. Greg Wiens

I know by now, many of you think I have taken this running metaphor a little too far. You say, running isn't everything in life, and you are right. In fact, one of the things I enjoy about running is saying "Good Morning" to everyone that I lock eyes with. Whether they are riding a bike, walking with friends or with a stroller, running in any direction or even in a car. If I can lock eyes with them, I ALWAYS say "Good Morning". Okay, I have a little confession to make; I even say it to those who refuse to lock eyes with me.

You might ask, why? For me, saying "Good Morning" to everyone accomplishes three things that I think are important in life. The first is that it keeps me from taking running (and life) too seriously. It is very hard to be consumed with running if you say "good morning" to everyone. Greeting everyone I meet helps me to remember that I am to enjoy the trip.

I have seen some pastors and Christian leaders become so consumed with ministry that they too have lost all of the joy of living and enjoying our lives in Christ. Too often I see these obsessed leaders place so much emphasis on performance indicators in their ministry that their emotional state goes up or down depending on their numbers from the previous Sunday. In 2 Samuel 24.10, we read, "*But when it was all done, David was overwhelmed with guilt because he had counted the people, replacing trust with statistics...*" (The Message). This doesn't conflict with what I have written elsewhere about the importance of numbers. I am simply saying to not put your trust in those numbers so you lose the fun of ministry. Enjoy your walk and ministry with Christ.

I will never forget when I called Jeff Perkins early in his planting of Westside Community Church and asked him how he was doing. He said, (and I paraphrase) "the church is doing terribly, but I am doing well." I remember thinking that was impossible in my worldview at the time. I needed to unhook my mental and emotional state from the performance of the church. I began the journey after that phone call.

I know some of us as leaders need to put a little more emphasis on performance measures of a healthy church, but some of us leaders have the very opposite problem. Greeting people helps me keep in balance. Try greeting everyone you meet today and see if it doesn't help you enjoy the ministry. The ministry SHOULD NOT kill the joy of life in you. If it has, relax some today.

The second reason I say hi to everyone when I run is that it is a way of blessing him or her. Saying "good morning" is short for saying, "I hope you have a good morning." I want to be a blessing to everyone I meet so I practice my greeting on everyone. This brings up the question, what if they don't say anything back? Actually this happens

quite often. I am not offering this blessing to receive one back. I am simply being gracious in offering such. So I am not offended when they don't respond accordingly.

As you would expect, there have been a number of people throughout my running career who refuse to respond back to me. But, with time they would gradually nod, then grunt and then say hi, and eventually would even carry a conversation with me if I saw them later. One such person eventually even came to the church I was attending (and still does!).

How often do you offer a blessing to someone and expect nothing in response? Again, I would suggest that by doing so, it forces you to not be so compulsively driven to produce something from every action. It forces you to enjoy the trip and not take life and ministry so seriously. Intentionally offer a blessing like "Good Morning" to someone who you do not know and who probably won't respond accordingly. This is a great habit to get into.

The third reason I say, "good morning" is that it is a good way to break the ice with people. Quite often as Mary Kay and I walk through the neighborhood in the evenings, people will say, "oh you are that guy that runs aren't you." My morning greetings identify me in a way that allows me to strike up conversations, which hopefully lead to relationships, and ultimately people come to know Christ through our friendship.

Personally, I don't say anything more than "Good Morning" when I run because I don't want to assume they want to carry on a conversation with me. For me, it is very important to give people their space (in my world), and simply offer an open door to more conversation later, should they choose.

There is one drawback of saying "good morning" to everyone, everyday that I run. Once in a great while, I run in the evening...and you guessed it. I am so scripted that I greet them with a "good morning" and they think I am a little weird. But, I have found that is the only drawback.

So today say "Hi" to someone just to show you are not taking life so seriously, or try offering a blessing to someone with no expectation of anything in return, or maybe open the door to someone who needs a relationship with Christ. And who knows, it may become a habit and you might enjoy the trip just a little more.