

Encouraging the Least of These  
By Dr. Gregory Wiens

This past week I was eating dinner with another pastor (and close friend) when I began a conversation with our server. I asked her about the red striped hair she had, her funky glasses and even the unique spelling of her name. After the meal, my friend asked me why did I ask her questions when I really am not interested in what she had to say. This took me back, because I really am interested in people. But as I reflected on it, I realized he is right: I am not the kind of pastoral minded person who enjoys giving long hours of nurturing care to individuals. I am not a shepherd (at least not a good one!).

But, I do love people. I think that, too often, catalytic and high “D” leaders can be labeled as not caring about people. They are accused of caring only about the next new thing or the next task. If this is actually true of you, then let me challenge you to rethink your gifting. My friend sees me as a catalytic leader, and that I am; but I am also concerned about every person I meet. I intentionally ask probing questions of those who often are ignored or passed over. I want my wait staff to feel important. I want them to know that I AM concerned about their day and their feelings. That person behind the counter is as important as the bank president. I consciously try to remember their names and a few details the next time I meet them. WHY? Because every individual is important in God’s eyes.

We all know this in our heads, but too often we are too busy to practice it. Or we treat people nicely when we want something, but when they no longer offer us anything of value, we move on. This is so sad. I have spent time with too many famous Christian authors, singers or speakers who treat others like they are of no value. I am been embarrassed by this kind of people. We are never so busy or so important that the little people in our lives lose their value. By “little” people I mean those who others can overlook. They are the ones who fill menial jobs around us or so serve us behind the scenes. They are the wait staff, the cooks, the garbage collectors, the bank tellers, the gas station attendants, the secretaries or receptionists, the bus drivers, hotel cleaning staff, customer service personnel, airport ticket agents, and the list goes on and on.

Everyone is important and deserves your attention. I fully appreciate how fast life can be and how our opportunities to be a positive witness for Christ may be limited; but you have enough time to encourage someone today. Let me ask you to encourage someone today who you have never met before. I believe God brings people into our lives everyday, like those listed above that we often overlook. Take 30 seconds to tell them that they are doing a wonderful job and if they didn’t do their job so well you would never be able to do yours. Thank them for making your life more enjoyable.

I have learned if you view every person you come into contact with like this, eventually you will change someone’s eternity...it just happens. As Christians we are given rare opportunities to spend precious moments with people that will shape the rest of their lives; and many times we won’t even be aware of it when it happens. I doubt I will ever see that red striped hair waitress with funky glasses from St. Augustine again. But, I bet she went home and told her live-in boyfriend that some old man really affirmed her that night...and by the way, because I know she heard us talking about churches and figured we were pastors, I left her a very large tip to prove I appreciated her.

