

## Growing Into My Skin By Dr. Gregory Wiens

This is Passion Week; the week leading up to Easter where we celebrate Jesus giving His life for the passion He lived. In Mark 10:45 Jesus tells us that *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* Jesus knew what it was like to wear a mantle. His entire life was lived under a sense of calling and destiny. From his birth through his childhood and into his adulthood He consistently and consciously lived out His calling to be about His Father’s business; right up to and including the cross.

Jesus didn’t have to prove anything to the important people of His day...He repeatedly turned down opportunities to be famous and popular, so He could fulfill His calling in the Kingdom. He continues to remind me of my calling to serve the Father, no matter the costs. He continues to call me back to serving the Kingdom and leaving the results to Him. He has taught me what passion is all about (and what it isn’t about!).

When I was in my early twenties, I sincerely attempted to serve God through my gifts and passions. At that stage in my life, there was so much to accomplish, so much to learn, so many battles to be won, so many wars to be conquered, so many people to win to the Lord, so many disciples to be developed, so many leaders to be made and churches to be refocused. It WAS passionate and personal. Everything I did was focused on seeing significant impact through my efforts.

Much of my first few decades of ministry were spent attempting to figure out how God wired me and what He wanted me to do. I was attempting to figure out what kind of skin God had given me to operate in. It wasn’t that I wasn’t comfortable with my skin at this stage of ministry; I wasn’t too sure what my skin was! In some sense I was trying to prove myself. Let me add for those who are in this stage, that this isn’t wrong or bad; it is just a stage of ministry that we all must go through in order for us to be effective in later stages of ministry. It is the time of training. Training means straining beyond what is comfortable and learning to do what we could not previously do.

After these couple of decades of ministry I went through some breaking years in my life; I learned that God really didn’t need me to lead the charge, that He actually could do it without me! We all know this in our heads, but when we have to give up our dreams in our hearts, it hurts! It is a challenge for leaders to accept that they really don’t have what it takes to be what they want to be. This was tough on my ego and every part of my leadership was broken. That is why it was such a difficult, yet formative time in my life.

I didn’t realize it at the time, but God was digging deep into my heart to inspect my desires, motives, drives and passions. All I could do at the time was to be faithful in the little things of my walk and ministry. I continued to have a consistent time alone with

God in prayer, study, journaling and continued to talk to others about Jesus...but ministry didn't go anywhere. I didn't seem to have significant impact and my gifts simply didn't "do" much for anyone.

I remember telling some friends that I wasn't sure what I was going to be doing the rest of my life or in ministry, but I knew it wasn't what I was doing at the time. Looking back, it was a painfully difficult and yet wonderfully formative time. I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy, but I kind of like what it did to me.

Now ten years later, my life is freed up from the bondage of being significant. No longer do I feel the drivenness of trying to "do" or "be", I now, just am who God made me. This morning as I reflected on a Nigel Parker's recent untimely death (he was my age) I wrote...

*"I am in your (God's) hands. We are all terminal and should live accordingly. But, I feel like I am just now getting into the groove. I simply want to live for you—so let me serve you in the way that can expand the Kingdom for you. I can truly live with reckless abandon for you NOW. Now that I have nothing to prove, no honors to win, no people to impress, no accolades to garner or medals to collect. So let me live the life that you have called me to live. I think good leaders finally get to that place in their life, where everything else in life and around life fades in importance. I too (like Paul before me) want to finish well the race SET BEFORE ME. I want to complete your race for me. I am comfortable running your race, your way and in your time. I am comfortable in my skin."*

Elsewhere, I have written that I spent the first half of my life trying to prove and defend who I was, now I am investing my life in living out of whom God has called me to be. It may sound like semantics, but it isn't. It is about being content with the call of God in a way that is like a mantle. There is no longer anything to prove, only obedience to a call. You finally reach a point where you actually fit into your skin and don't need to measure up to anyone else's standards. You wear the mantle God has given you to wear, no more or no less. It is your skin.