



The Greatest Gift: YOU!

By Greg Wiens

The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery

By David G. Benner

InterVarsity Press, 120 pp. \$13.00

As leaders, we often define ourselves by our accomplishments or the performance of our organization. In his book *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*, psychologist and spiritual director David Benner shines clarity into Christian walk help us know our Savior more deeply and more fully be the leader God has called us to be. He opens the book with a quote from Thomas Merton: “There is only one problem on which my existence, my peace, and my happiness depend: to discover myself in discovering God. If I find Him I will find myself and if I find my true self I will find Him.”

Benner’s premise is that the more we become like Christ, the more we become uniquely our own true self. This paradox makes sense when we think about the many “false” ways we seek to attain our uniqueness in the flesh, which really causes us to lose our true identity in Christ.

Benner says it this way, “The desire for uniqueness is a spiritual desire. So too is the longing to be authentic. These are not simply psychological longings, irrelevant to the spiritual journey. Both are the response of the Spirit—the Holy Spirit calling us home to our place and identity in Christ.” Benner substantiates the point that God created us as unique beings and he seeks to restore us to that uniqueness in Christ.

So much of how we see ourselves is defined by what we do. Christ’s identity was defined by his relationship with the Father. This was who he was and should be the basis for our identity too. Jesus’ whole life flowed out of this relationship. What he did was not the basis for who he was, it simply pointed to who he was. Everything he did came out of this relationship (John 5:36).

Benner focuses clearly on our knowing God first, then identifying our false ways of defining ourselves. He gets very concrete in this process through helping you understand your “besetting sin” (Hebrews 12.1). Benner asserts that the sin in our lives is more than telling a lie, but rather that many of us live a lie. We try to be who we never were created to be.

The first tenet of Benner’s philosophy deals with the basis for our identity. The second deals with the transformational power that comes through knowing God and Self. He then shifts the focus from truly knowing God to truly knowing ourselves. This takes several chapters as he dismantles our false selves and replaces this with our true self. As you walk through these chapters he quietly opens your life up to experience the unique identity God intended for you.

For leaders this may be a difficult book. As I mentioned, so much of who we are is defined by what we do. This book is really about the “soul work” that is essential for any church leader to be effective. We have many leaders who are trained with skill sets in leading, but are shallow in the soul. This is a short but essential read for every leader on a journey of impacting others for the Kingdom of God.

This book is not an easy read, but it is worthwhile. It is the kind of book you will read and reread a number of times. Fortunately, the size of a book doesn’t determine its impact. This book is barely 100 pages, but its message can significantly change the way you see yourself. The truths will free you up to discover your true self, and in doing so, discover more of God. Conversely, the deeper you know God, the deeper you’ll know yourself.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GREG WIENS, PLEASE VISIT WWW.LEADERSTHATLAST.ORG