

How the Holy Spirit Broke the Power of Intimidation

I have been in Uganda, Africa, for one week. I am staying with Dr. Cliff and Julie Pash, who have established several churches here through their ministry, Advancing the Kingdom.

I have a little ministry experience—I have volunteered with a prayer house for over six years and have prayed for hundreds of people in that time. I have trained teachers in a children's ministry and led adult small groups.

So when I came to Uganda, I planned to jump right in and help. I was extremely excited at the prospect of speaking to and praying for new people.

But when I arrived in this new, unfamiliar place, with customs and languages I didn't understand, I found myself frozen with fear instead.

I felt so intimidated, it was hard to leave my room the first day.

I knew I had to step beyond this. But I didn't know how.

Then one night, wide awake at 3:00 in the morning (thanks, jet lag!), the Lord began to show me something.

The pictures of ministry I'd had in my mind were not based on faith. At least, not faith in Him.

What I had faith in was my own performance within my personal comfort zone.

Yeah, ouch.

But once I understood, I knew how to fix it. I asked forgiveness for trusting in myself instead of Him. And I began looking to Him to hear what He was saying, instead of relying on my familiar ways of operating.

It was awkward at first. I had to push myself. But I was no longer pushing myself toward the perfect performance. I couldn't, since I have no way of knowing what that might be in Uganda.

I began pushing myself closer to God. As I did that, and as Dr. Cliff put me in more ministry situations, that confidence began to return.

This time, with my focus on God instead of myself, I began to step into those opportunities with my confidence where it belonged—in the only One who can give these people, or anyone else, what they need.

I'm not saying I was ineffective in ministry before. Yet my effectiveness was limited to a small sphere of people and activities that were comfortable.

This past week has been anything but comfortable. But my ability to impact lives with the presence and power of God has grown significantly—because I didn't let myself back down from the discomfort.

What about you? Take a look at your faith. Is it possible you have gotten too comfortable? Maybe you should take a step (or jump) out of your own comfort zone today!

Karen Ramsey *is a blogger and special education teacher in the Kansas City Kansas school district.*