

How to Speak and Be Heard

When our children were little, Craig, the father of all of these little ones, and I, the mother of this brood of future leaders, could speak the exact same words with the exact same heart intent and I, the desperate mother, would be ignored while he, the wise father, would be listened to and immediately obeyed.

Craig's voice just held more authority and timbre than mine did. I tended to raise my voice a decibel or two in order to capture the obedient attention of my children and it just never worked. When raising my voice failed to achieve the desired results, then I would resort to talking incessantly with added hand motions.

Can you picture it? A blonde, frustrated woman yelling at the top of her lungs and she doesn't know when to stop?! No wonder those five brilliant children had a hard time listening to me. Truthfully ... I wouldn't have listened to me either!

As I observed the authority and respect that their father had garnered in our children's lives, I learned to lower my volume, to speak with simple authority and to minimize the number of words that came out of my mouth.

And you know what? I have found that motherhood prepared me for ministry. This simple lesson learned with spit-up on my shoulders, dishes in the sink and Matchbox cars all over the living room floor, prepared me for the woman I am today and for the role that I play in ministry.

Your voice, as a woman in ministry, is a voice that needs to be heard and is able to bring peace to many vicious storms. Your voice is able to inject hope into discouragement, bravery into battle and joy into sadness. Your voice is able to speak wisdom into confusion. Your voice.

God has given women a powerful voice and oftentimes we are not heard because of our tendency to talk too loudly, to rattle on without purpose and to speak from frustration rather than from God-given authority.

If you are frustrated due to the lack of respect and the minimal response that is given to your well-meaning words, perhaps it is time for you to re-evaluate how you express yourself in meetings, in ministry relationships and with staff members. Louder does not create greater authority and more words do not bestow more power.

I have found that the right to be heard is often earned by speaking in measured tones rather than in massive tones. I have discovered that respect follows the choice not to say every single thing that I think, feel and believe. I have disciplined myself to become an engaged listener and have also recognized the virtue that the impact of carefully selected words earns.

To truly lead, we must ensure that our words are not birthed out of frustration or out of self-promotion. A powerful leader, whether male or female, understands the difference that a few, well-chosen words can make when spoken in wisdom and in love.

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." –Proverbs 25:11

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