

Quiet? Shy? Don't Use the 'Introvert' Label as an Excuse

I used to be extremely shy. I was bullied in elementary school because of my lack of confidence. I was terrified of public speaking. I gravitated toward writing—and chose print journalism as a career—because I enjoyed hiding behind a computer more than talking to people.

But when I was 22, just out of college, a prophet who was visiting my Florida church called me out and said, “You will not hide behind your pen. The Lord says you will preach to His people.” I had a cassette tape of that prophecy, but I didn't listen to it often because it scared me to death. Just the thought of speaking publicly left my palms sweaty and my heart racing.

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Fast forward to today: My friends are surprised when I tell them I was reluctant to surrender to the call to preach. They think I'm comfortable behind a pulpit because I've preached in 39 countries and counting since the year 2000. They have no idea that I had to overcome so much shyness. And they are shocked when I tell them that I still deal with loads of fear every time I stand in front of an audience.

We are told today that people fit into two neat categories—introverts and extroverts. The loud, confident, life-of-the-party extroverts rule the world, supposedly, while the timid introverts avoid crowds, avoid leadership positions and spend a lot of time alone.

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But that's not true. Too many Christians have slapped the "introvert" label on themselves when God hasn't given them permission to do that. Whether or not you feel shy, God has called you to overcome your insecurities and find your confidence in Him. David was a bold, confident leader, but he often felt fear. He wrote: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you" (Ps. 56:3, NIV).

Timothy was most likely an introvert, but his mentor, Paul, installed him as a pastor in Ephesus and charged him: "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (see 2 Tim. 1:7, NASB). Paul didn't coddle Timothy, baby him or give him an excuse just because he felt shy.

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