

When the Lord Speaks

One night, at a critical time in my life, God spoke to me in the most profound way about our ministry. It was early 2017, and the night before, I had made the huge announcement that we were hosting four days of 24/7 prayer and worship at the National Mall in the fall of that year. I shared our plan to set up 50 tents for 50 states and invite thousands of musicians and singers to lead us in around-the-clock worship and prayer. The announcement was broadcast live from a church in Washington, D.C., and was viewed not just across the U.S. but around the world.

The paperwork for the permits had been signed, so it was official. We were planning to do something that had never been done—something that came with an incredibly high price tag—and we were committing to do this in front of tens of thousands of people.

In all honesty, after making this announcement, I started to panic.

As I lay in bed that night, I could feel the weight of what we had just committed to. I felt exposed and vulnerable. I had literally signed my name on the dotted line of what God had asked me to do, and now I was at His mercy. It was a test of my faith on a grand scale. I even had some close friends and leaders questioning the plan. Others had sacrificed for this too, and we needed God to come through and provide.

In the middle of the night, after having gone to bed with these thoughts buzzing in my mind, I was jolted awake. I went from a deep sleep to wide awake with my heart racing in a second.

I heard an audible voice.

It sounded like my natural father's voice, and He said only

one word: my name, "David." In one of my most profound moments of insecurity, God spoke identity to my heart by simply calling my name in the middle of the night. That's all He said. That's all I needed to hear.

Ironically I was scheduled to speak the next morning at our church, Awakening Community Church, about the Father's love. I had the whole message prepared. But as I stood up before the church that morning, I broke down in tears. God spoke the one thing I needed to hear more than anything else, and it was not strategy; it was affection.

Identity Crisis Solved

This is the only time I've heard God speak with my natural ears. Most people I know have never heard God speak audibly. But whether or not you hear His voice out loud, the fact is this: If you are in Christ, the Father loves you as He loves His own Son, Jesus (John 17:23). This defines your identity.

When it comes down to it, we are all in a frenzy to find our identities, and mostly we are looking in all the wrong places and making all the wrong choices. We find our identities in the places we get a sense of self-worth, and the multitude of things that are fueling most people's sense of identity—sexuality, careers, power and position, the list goes on—are falling short. Many people are experiencing an identity crisis at their cores because they just don't feel successful or fulfilled. Jesus answers the crisis. Hosting Jesus' presence is largely about discovering Jesus' personality, and this leads to His shaping our identities.

I'm convinced the encounter I had with the Father that night was not just for me. I believe He was establishing a culture for this movement of worship, prayer and gospel proclamation in our cities and college campuses. I believe that all our extravagant songs, prayers and proclamations are meant to pour out from a river that is flowing on the inside of us. That

river is flowing because we have discovered that the one seated on the throne in heaven is a Father who is smiling at each of us individually and personally. Knowing this will wash away all our shame. This revelation is the answer to our identity crisis.

This has been excerpted from Chapter 6, "Surprised By Love," of Awaken the Dawn (Charisma House). {eoa}