

A Very VOCaL Woman

Whether she's singing or preaching, Judy Jacobs makes an impact with her voice. The volume has been loud ever since she was touched by the Holy Spirit's fire.

Standing before a sea of women at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee, conference host Judy Jacobs half sings, half shouts into the microphone. "Get ready, get ready, get ready!" she declares. "This is our time and our season to reclaim all the territory the enemy has stolen, and we have positioned ourselves in the spirit realm to receive all that God has for us."

Motioning enthusiastically with her hand for emphasis, Jacobs encourages the women in attendance to shout with one voice: "Ready!" as a way of serving notice to the devil. "We say to the darkness, 'Get out of our way,'" she declares, one finger pointed into the air above the crowd. "Here we come! We're pressing, we're pushing, and we're pursuing!"

Commanding the audience to "Get yourself ready," the energetic preacher launches into a song to build their expectation about what God is going to do for them—during the weekend conference and throughout their lives.

"Something great is about to happen / That's what I hear Him say / There's a stirring in my spirit / Something great is on its way / Although I can't explain it / I know I will obtain it / The pressure's great, the hour's late / Get ready, don't hesitate."

It's opening night, and Jacobs is setting the stage for the Holy Spirit to do above and beyond all the women could ever

ask, think or dream.

Jacobs, 47, hasn't always felt called to women's ministry. But four years ago, she says, God told her He wanted her to start mentoring women.

"It happened one day when I was in a Spanish-speaking church and the woman co-pastor simply asked me, 'Sister Judy, will you mentor me?'"

"I understood where she was," Jacobs says, "being ... thrust into ministry and having to balance being a wife and mother. I said I would be happy to correspond and see what happens. That's how it began."

As more and more women approached Jacobs in the following months, the reality of the ministry God was imparting began to take shape in her heart. Husband Jamie Tuttle was on board with the vision and pursued the dream with as much passion as his wife.

"God showed me I want you to press, push and pursue everything I've put inside you," Jacobs says. "And I want you to go after those women who have that same fervor and passion for Christ."

And go after them she did. Jacobs began hosting Press, Push and Pursue women's conferences in 2003. The conferences have included a variety of speakers, such as Paula White, Darlene Bishop, CeCe Winans and Joyce Rodgers, and have welcomed hundreds of women expecting an "unthinkable, undeniable and unbelievable" move of God.

“What is happening is prophecy is being fulfilled,” Jacobs says. “Jesus said, ‘In the last days I will pour out My Spirit upon on all flesh, your sons and daughters ... on My servants and handmaidens.’

“Loren Cunningham has said two-thirds of the church is made up of women. You can understand why the enemy would try to hold down this largest part of the body.

“In any church that is strong you will find that core group of dedicated women—just as Jesus was surrounded with women who supported and encouraged Him. They were there when He was crucified and were the first ones there when He rose from the grave.”

Beyond Conferences

But Jacobs knew the women’s conferences were not the sum of all God wanted her to do. He wanted her to mentor women in a more direct way.

Enter the International Institute of Mentoring. Though the women’s conferences attract a cross-section of women who want to pursue their relationships with God, the Institute of Mentoring is designed to go deeper.

Its attendees are women who, through a series of questionnaires, evaluations and recommendations from spiritual leaders, are determined to be serious about pursuing their Christian faith in a radical way. Instead of paying a conference fee, they pay tuition, another indication of the commitment level required of participants.

"The institute is all about training, equipping, sharing and imparting everything that has been poured into me in 37 years of ministry," Jacobs states emphatically. "And it's not just about what God has imparted in me, but in the strong ministries of those we bring in."

One of those ministries belongs to Shirley Arnold, pastor of Tree of Life Church in Lakeland, Florida.

"When I first met Judy, it was like Mary and Elizabeth meeting each other, pregnant with a powerful and symbiotic relationship," Arnold says. "Over time, we developed a true friendship and shared our vision for an environment where women could feel safe to be real and honest about the many complexities facing women with a call to function in leadership."

Another close friend and institute mentor is singer Karen Wheaton.

"Karen and I have so much in common, and when we get together we just sort of unload," Jacobs says. "We talk about things that relate to what we are and what we do. ... And I am learning, gleaning and walking with her."

Jacobs has relied upon other women in ministry to support her efforts at the institute as well, including gospel artist Reba Rambo-McGuire; Veter Nichols, the "spiritual mother" of Juanita Bynum; and singer and worship leader Martha Munizzi.

"Here there is the opportunity for women to be challenged and motivated," Munizzi says of the institute. "Not just to experience God's presence, but be challenged to be what God

has called them to be. It is an intimate look at true ministry and what that process looks like.”

Called to the Nations

Jacobs knows something about true ministry. Hers began at the age of 8 when she was baptized in the Holy Spirit and thrust into a “spiritual daze.”

“I wasn’t completely ‘out,’ but I was so overwhelmed with the presence of God,” the full-blooded Native American explains. “I didn’t want to eat. I just sat around, speaking in tongues under my breath. I think it was a preparation process for the journey God was setting before me.”

The event revolutionized the life of the child prodigy, who, though the youngest of the dozen Jacobs children, would for the next several years be the lead singer for the Jacobs Sisters. “There was boldness and an authority that rose up in my spirit that has stayed with me for the past 37 years,” Jacobs says.

As time went on, however, Jacobs recognized a void in her life—the lack of ability to read music. She decided to suspend some of her ministry activity in her hometown of Lumberton, North Carolina, to attend Lee College (now Lee University), a Christian college in Cleveland, Tennessee.

In 1981, as a 23-year-old freshman, she was profiled in the college yearbook.

“Nothing takes the place of the anointing,” she wrote in her

profile, “but just think what one could do with the anointing and a knowledge of music. I am here to turn something upside down for the Lord and be used in any way He wants!”

Sometime later, Jacobs was forced to return home to care for her ailing father. Within two months her father succumbed to his illness, leaving Jacobs, the only unmarried child, with the wrenching decision of whether she should stay on with her mother or return to college and pursue the call on her life.

“I was just so torn,” Jacobs recalls, “so I went on a two-week fast. During this time, I went to my church, where I got down on my knees and just began to worship. The next thing I knew I was out-slain in the Spirit.

“God showed me a vision of the peoples of the nations. I saw every color of people you can imagine. They had chains all around them—on their neck, chains on their arms, around their legs, chains wrapped around their bodies. I was so distraught about those chains I said, ‘God, what does it mean?’

“He said, ‘My people are in bondage; they are in chains, and I want you to set them free through My Spirit.’ I said, ‘How can I do that?’ God’s simple response was, ‘Speak My name.’

“So I just started crying out: ‘Jesus set you free! Jesus set you free!’ I saw the chains breaking and the people began to worship and praise God.

“I was still perplexed about [the decision to stay] with my mom and about having to say goodbye to her again after my dad’s death,” Jacobs goes on. “I felt such an obligation to stay there, and yet I was so pulled to go back and finish what

God had called me to do.”

When Jacobs arrived home, she learned that God had just spoken to her mother.

“I’ll never forget it as long as I live,” Jacobs says. “As I am still just totally out of it, my mom bursts out the front door, screaming at the top of her voice: ‘I know what you have to do! God just spoke and He said you have to go back to Lee College!’

‘You have to go to the nations of the world! He has called you to the peoples of the world!’ God had confirmed the vision through my mother.”

Jacobs’ return to Lee College in the early ’80s thrust her music ministry into the limelight as she traveled around the globe with different groups. Those groups cut several albums with Jacobs as a featured soloist.

The unmistakable delivery style that has characterized her vocal ministry through the years has produced such signature songs as “No God Like Jehovah” and “The Lion of Judah.” In 1989 Judy launched a solo ministry that eventually became known as His Song Ministries.

The spiritual fire placed in Jacobs at a young age brought with it a passion for guarding her life and ministry.

“I was very careful who I got around,” she said. “I chose my friends, the guys I dated. ... I didn’t want to do anything to hinder my calling or anointing or my relationship with the

Lord.”

Jacobs’ selectivity eventually led her to choose a mate who was well-suited for her. Tuttle, born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, was also raised in a family anointed for evangelism through music. A call to “mobile ministry” led him to Cleveland, Tennessee, where he enrolled in graduate school to pursue a master of divinity degree.

In 1993, the two married and became partners in ministry. Today Tuttle serves as director and administrator of His Song Ministries (HSM). The couple has two daughters, Kaylee and Erica.

A Rising Tide

During the first several years of Jacobs’ ministry, HSM struggled to exist on donations and CD sales while Jacobs and Tuttle worked in a leaky, rented office with an outdated computer. Though successful in the eyes of her admirers, Jacobs struggled to hang on to her visions and dreams with the same faith, tenacity and boldness she encouraged others to have and that she demonstrated in her ministry engagements.

In the last five years, however, HSM has seen greater financial stability. Jacobs has found favor with many recognized leaders in the evangelical and Pentecostal worlds, including T.D. Jakes, Rod Parsley, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer and Juanita Bynum. She appears regularly on Trinity Broadcasting Network, where she is featured not only for her vocal ministry but also for the messages she delivers.

The conferences and other events Jacobs hosts are helping. The

first mentoring institute was held in January 2004 at His Song Ministries headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee. An inaugural group of more than 100 women spent two days going deeper in the Lord.

The second conference was conducted in October 2004 in Chattanooga and again attracted more than 100 women, one from as far away as Africa.

Jacobs and her husband have seen prophecies fulfilled about the facilities where the institutes are held.

“Several years ago we were in Hungary, and we received a vision and a prophecy,” Tuttle says. “The vision consisted of a building on a hill in Cleveland, Tennessee, which would be our offices, and from this building were coming beams of light going to the nations from the top of that hill.

“At the time of the prophecy, we were in a tiny rented office in downtown Cleveland. We had no prospects of property. Judy’s call to mentoring was there, but there was no place to put these women.”

Not long after their return from Hungary, Tuttle, emboldened by the imparted vision, reminded Jacobs of a building that had been on the market for seven years.

Tuttle claimed it as theirs, though the asking price for the building was \$320,000, and the surrounding property was appraised much higher.

“Jamie was right,” Jacobs recalls. “Soaking in the tub one

night God told me the same thing, but God told me to only offer \$260,000 ... and that's it!"

Armed with the word spoken to her and the support of her husband, Jacobs made an appointment with the real estate agent.

"I was eventually hooked up with the owner and able to share the vision," Jacobs says. "I told him: 'We're gonna bring women together and we're gonna teach them, we're gonna train them and send them forth to the nations. And God told me to offer \$260,000!'"

The owner of the property replied: "You know the building and the surrounding seven acres is worth \$750,000. ... I don't know why, but I have to do what I am about to do. I'm going to let you have the building for \$260,000 ... and I'm going to let you have the property as a tax write-off."

The acquisition of the property will enable the ministry to pursue a master plan of building a center to accommodate an expanded menu of conferences and events on location at His Song Ministries headquarters.

Jacobs desires to hold mentoring institutes four times a year, intentionally keeping the numbers small to allow for more intimacy and interaction.

In all of it, Jacobs is doing what she has so boldly encouraged attendees at her women's conferences to do—press, push and pursue the things of God. She is getting herself ready to give birth to everything He has put on her heart.

Cameron Fisher is coordinator of communications and Internet ministries for the Church of God International Offices in Cleveland, Tennessee. For more information about Judy Jacobs' ministry, call 423-559-0173 or log on to . Her new book, Take It by Force, will release in September from Charisma House.