

# Are You an Introvert? Don't Use That Label as an Excuse

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

But when I was 22, just out of college, a prophet who was visiting my church in Florida 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 freaked me out. Just the thought of speaking publicly made my palms sweat and my heart race.

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 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 noisy, confident, life-of-the-party extroverts rule the world, supposedly, while the timid introverts avoid crowds, shun leadership positions and spend a lot of time alone.

But that's not true. Too many Christians have slapped the “introvert” label on themselves when they really don't have permission from God to do that. Whether you feel shy or not, God has called you to overcome your insecurities and find your confidence in Him. David was a bold and confident leader, but

he often felt fear. He wrote: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you" (Ps. 56:3, NIV).

***Breaking News. Spirit-Filled Stories. Subscribe to Charisma on YouTube now!***

Timothy was most likely an introvert, but the apostle Paul installed him as a pastor in Ephesus and told 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 exemption just because he felt shy.

Regardless of how timid you feel, and no matter how sweaty your palms get or how many butterflies are fluttering in your stomach, God asks you to face your fears and rip off the introvert label. Your timidity is not your identity.

In today's self-centered culture, everybody is adopting special labels. People love to diagnose themselves with their own unique flaws—whether it's depressive personality, attention deficit, anxiety disorder, pansexualism and so forth—and counselors are eager to slap on the labels and prescribe the medicines needed for each problem. But when someone finds Jesus Christ, they find a new identity in Him, and they discover there is healing for depression, anxiety, sexual confusion, addiction and a multitude of other struggles.

In some churches today, there are Christians who want to hold on to their introverted nature, as if they have a right to be fearful. They don't like it when the pastor invites members of the congregation to greet one another with a handshake or hug. ("Horrors! Don't make me speak to someone I don't know!")

***Get your FREE CHARISMA NEWSLETTERS today! Stay up to date with current issues, Holy Spirit news, Christian teachings, Charisma videos & more!***

Sometimes a preacher will say, "Turn to your neighbor and say, '\_\_\_\_\_' " to help people in the congregation remember a point in his or her sermon. The introverts cry foul, insisting that this can be too frightening for some people. Seriously? Have we become this fragile?

Jesus told His early followers that they would be His vocal witnesses after they received the Holy Spirit's power. He commanded them to speak! And He never once mentioned that introverts were excused from this assignment.

When I was an insecure college student, I helped organize a campus outreach at my school in Georgia. An evangelist had come to our campus from out of town, and I was asked to introduce him. That was a huge stretch for me, and I was nervous. When I got to the microphone, my voice quivered as I invited people to take their seats.

The visiting preacher was slightly annoyed at my reticence, so he said from the front row, "Don't be timid, Lee! Be bold!" I was embarrassed that this man corrected me in public, but his words stayed with me. In fact, I recalled his stern exhortation years later, whenever I spoke to other audiences. I realized that his rebuke, which felt like a hot branding iron, was really a loving nudge from God.

The Lord continues to say to me, "Don't be timid, Lee! Be bold!" Even though I'm an introvert at heart, I am a bold man now. God didn't make me timid. Because of the Holy Spirit's power, I know I can crash through any fear. In spite of my weakness, He can speak through me.

***Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy Spirit is doing around the world!***

***J. Lee Grady is an author, award-winning journalist and ordained minister. He served as a news writer and magazine editor for many years before launching into full-time ministry.***

*Lee is the author of six books, including "10 Lies the Church Tells Women," "10 Lies Men Believe" and "Fearless Daughters of the Bible." His years at Charisma magazine also gave him a unique perspective of the Spirit-filled church and led him to write "The Holy Spirit Is Not for Sale" and "Set My Heart on Fire," which is a Bible study on the work of the Holy Spirit.*