

Are You Insecure About Public Speaking? Join the Club

God called me to preach 23 years ago, but it took months before I offered the appropriate response—which is, “Here I am, Lord, send me.” For years I felt like the reluctant Moses, who complained to God: “Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent” (Ex. 4:10, NASB). The Lord kept pushing me out of my comfort zone, urging me to surrender my fears so I would take the microphone willingly.

The reason I struggled to surrender is because I battle with insecurity about my delivery style. I’m not T.D. Jakes, Jentezen Franklin or Steven Furtick. If I compare myself with celebrity speakers, I feel like crawling off the stage.

On many occasions after speaking in a church or conference, I battled discouragement and wondered if my words had hit the mark. Did I preach OK? Did the message sink in? Finally I asked an older pastor if he had ever struggled with disappointment in his pulpit performance. He smiled and told me: “Son, I feel that way every Monday of my life.”

That’s when I realized that most people who are called to speak for God don’t feel confident about it. Most of us, if we are honest, feel weak and unqualified. Welcome to the club!

We should call ourselves The Fellowship of the Reluctant. Those who dare to allow God to speak through them will always squirm in holy agony. We will battle timidity, butterflies, self-doubt and discouragement. It is part of the labor of true ministry.

Today I mentor many young leaders who know God wants to use them in public speaking. I’ve offered practical tips about sermon preparation and how to flow in the Holy Spirit’s anointing. But what I want them to understand most is that

speaking for God is both a glorious and a horrifying responsibility.

For years I have used to the story of Jericho's walls to share truths about preaching. Here are three things you must remember from the sixth chapter of Joshua:

No. 1. God uses weak, common vessels. When God planned to defeat the enemy at Jericho, he told Joshua to have his men blow trumpets. Those trumpets were crude rams' horns, not fancy brass instruments. God uses the weak things of this world to confound the strong.

The apostle Paul called the preaching of the gospel "foolishness" (see 1 Cor. 1:18). While it is OK to improve your speaking abilities, don't become so polished that you become an orator with nothing to say. You are just a ram's horn. Don't try to be sophisticated.

Rams' horns came from animals that had been sacrificed. Only consecrated preachers who have died to self can preach a message that will bring down a spiritual wall.

A lot of preaching today is slick and orchestrated. But sometimes, after the applause, we realize it was just a bunch of ear candy. What we need in today's pulpits is less scripted sparkle and more raw, honest, tear-stained pleas from broken men and women who are aflame with the Holy Spirit. It is only the Spirit's power that can flatten the devil's stronghold—not rehearsed one-liners, high-definition microphones, designer jeans, expensive sneakers or cool graphics on big screens.

No. 2. Effective preaching requires patience. The Israelites had to blast their trumpets for seven days to flatten the city. On most of those days nothing happened after the blast. Yet in the invisible realm, the walls of the city were slowly cracking because of the invisible impact.

We love explosive sermons that get everyone waving

handkerchiefs and dancing in the aisles. But the kingdom of God is not built on one-night stands. When Paul the apostle preached, the results were not always immediate—or positive. Sometimes there were riots and jail time.

What God is looking for is not one sensational sermon but a lifetime of faithful preaching. He wants consistency, not fireworks. Never evaluate a preacher by one sermon; look for a lifetime of faithful obedience.

It's great when we have the exciting, handkerchief-waving moments, but we must realize that God's Spirit is also moving on quiet days when no one shouts "Amen!" and all you hear in the audience is cell phones ringing and babies crying. Even in moments where it seems nothing happened, we know a harvest is coming because we planted the incorruptible seed of God's Word.

No. 3. We should never preach for recognition. The Bible doesn't tell us who blew the trumpets in Joshua 6. All of them were unnamed men. We know these guys played an important role, but their names never appear in lights.

They trudged through the dry desert around Jericho for seven monotonous days, blowing their horns until their throats were dry and their lips were sore. And in the end, when the walls of the city finally collapsed, Scripture says Joshua's fame increased—not theirs (see Josh. 6:27).

Today we need preachers who are willing to faithfully speak God's Word with no hope of fame or fortune. If you truly want all the credit to go to Jesus, you won't worry about your performance or your applause. Just do your job. Ask God for boldness, then preach the Word and the walls will eventually fall. {eoa}

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