

Move On With God

Last year was one of the most intense times I've lived through. On a national level we were at war, but things got stressful in my personal life too. While American soldiers were dying in Iraq, my dad was hospitalized, my father-in-law had heart surgery and my church faced a huge crisis. And in the midst of the turbulence God called me to step out of my comfort zone to preach three times in Nigeria.

By the end of the year I had a lot of questions. My prayers became desperate complaints: "Lord, You picked the wrong guy. I'm not Your man of faith and power. Did I sign up for this? I'm not sure I want it!"

I looked for ways to back out. I entertained fear and discouragement much too often. Yet by year's end I was on my knees, telling God that I desire Him and His plan more than I want a quiet, stress-free life.

How was 2003 for you? Did you slam into some roadblocks that are still in your way? Were you tempted to stop moving forward spiritually?

God is calling us to pursue Him with greater passion, but our first response to His invitation is often one of stubborn reluctance. I've identified five reasons why we shrink back when God calls us higher:

1. Fear of the battle. All who follow Christ are called to active duty. The Bible does not give us permission to have a civilian mentality. Yet when

we step into the fray and hear the sound of Satan's smart bombs whizzing by, or if we are wounded in the conflict, we are prone to run away. Don't be a deserter!

2. Resistance to God's fire. We love to sing about God's holy presence. But when we get close to Him we learn that His holiness is uncomfortable. It burns sin, purifies motives and consumes offenses. It won't tolerate secret lusts or private idols. The fire is painful to our carnal nature, but the best place for us to be is in the midst of the flame.

3. Unwillingness to be broken. Those who want to follow Jesus all the way must submit to His deepest dealings. The One who wrestled with Jacob and gave him a permanent limp wants to overpower our pride and selfishness too. We say we want to know Him fully, but we forget that He schedules us for surgery when necessary. His knife hurts, but it makes us more like Him.

4. Reluctance to face persecution. Those who follow Christ wholeheartedly always suffer for it. Christians in Islamic countries are martyred for their faith. Some of us may simply have our reputations crucified by religious people.

It is especially hurtful to be criticized or condemned by your own Christian brothers, and Satan loves to engineer this sort of attack because he knows how much disillusionment it causes. Please don't let the ungodly actions of people stop you from chasing God.

5. Refusal to become a voice for others. Ultimately God wants to send us to a mission field—whether it is on the other side of the globe or in the office next door. We tend to recoil

from such assignments because they are never convenient and always require boldness and faith. Like Jonah, we run in the opposite direction when God asks us to speak for Him.

Please don't let anything stop you from running this race in 2004. Soak your mind in His Word, pray with tenacity, reject the devil's lies and plunge into God's purpose. If you hit a wall, don't turn back. Trust and obey. His grace will catapult you over every obstacle.