

Lesson Two

OVERCOMING FEAR

If you plan to take a public part in church services, or want to preach, sooner or later you must stand before an audience before this desire can become a reality. Many men with the desire to preach or serve in a public capacity, have failed to do so because of their fear of standing before an audience. In speech circles, this is called **stage fright**. Every preacher I have talked with admits that he had to overcome this obstacle in the beginning, too. Many, after years of preaching, admit that they still have it, but are able to control it.

Some signs of stage fright are dry lips and throat, sudden stammer, bodily tenseness, weakness in the knees, shakey and trembling hands, suddenly feeling sick, fast palpitation of heart, blank memory, etc. Every speaker who feels some of these usually believes they are peculiar only to him; and therefore, he must have a physical deformity. This is rarely true. Usually the cause can be traced to mental and nervous problems which are created by the excitement of the preaching event.

Here are some suggestions that will help the new (and old) speaker as he stands before an audience to take a public part.

First, remember it is normal to feel nervous. This is part of the price we must pay to be God's spokesman. Moses no doubt felt nervous when called by God to be his spokesman; Exodus 1-12; 6:12. Also, remember that all preachers have felt it, and still do to some degree every time they speak. You are not abnormal because you feel nervous.

Second, never stand before an audience without being well prepared. This could be one of the main causes of nervousness. If one makes hasty last-minute preparation, he is bound to be nervous, and can expect to do a poor job. If possible, start your preparation several weeks before the actual time of delivery. A prepared man is a confident man.

Third, think of your audience as friendly individuals. Sometimes the beginning speaker will view them as ravenous wolves who want to tear him apart. This is not true. The audience is for the most part made up of Christians who are praying for your success. The audience does not form one giant mind, but rather is composed of individuals. Locate those friendly faces and communicate with them.

Fourth, concentrate on what you have to say. The beginning speaker usually will think about himself too much. He continually wonders about his suit, tie, hair, shoes, etc. Prepare yourself properly physically and then forget about your appearance. Worrying about this will prevent you from doing a good job. Concentrate on your message and not yourself.

Fifth, always remember you are not alone. God is our helper and strength. Jesus promised to be with us always, even unto the end of the world; Matthew 28:18-20. We must believe as Paul did: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:13. Therefore, with God on our side, how can we fail?

Sixth, develop the basic concept of speaking and preaching. Most beginning speakers have the wrong concept, and this has led them to say no to an opportunity to speak in public. Public speaking and preaching is enlarged conversation. There is little difference in talking to one person, or to one thousand. We talk to each member of the congregation as individuals, why not talk to them all at one time. In public speaking; you get to do all the talking without interruptions. Therefore, talk with the persons you see in the audience.

Seventh, always remember there will be a next time. Do everything you can to ensure a well-prepared presentation. Then, after much prayer and study, don't be afraid to stand up and take a public part. If you are not pleased with your presentation (you should never be), remember there will be a next time.

Remember fear is a state of mind. Don't let it prevent you from taking a public part. Don't become its slave!

Work Assignment

1. Make a five minute talk on "My Greatest Fear in Speaking."
2. Discuss a few stories you have heard about stage fright.
3. Pray each day for strength.
4. Memorize Philippians 4:13 and quote it in class.
5. Discuss your progress.

For Discussion and Answer

1. Is **stage fright** a common thing? Discuss
2. Discuss some of the characteristics of **stage fright**. Have you ever experienced any of them?
3. Ask several preachers about their feelings the first time they stood to preach.
4. Discuss why a lack of preparation will cause nervousness.
5. List some attitudes you should have toward your audience.
6. Discuss how Philippians 4:13 applies to preaching.
7. What is the basic concept of public speaking?
8. Had you rather fail trying, or fail without trying? Discuss the word **fail** as it relates to the power of the gospel.
9. Can you preach the second time until you have preached the first?
10. How is fear a slavery?