

Learning How to Speak When You Feel Silenced

I can't remember what I was doing the day before, but I remember waking up and feeling hoarse.

Under normal circumstances, this wouldn't be a problem. However, we were leaving in a couple of hours for the concert. It wasn't the worst sore throat I'd ever felt but, it was strange. The tingling feeling kept progressing and by the time I'd reached the van, I could feel my throat tightening.

"Did you take any medicine for it?", asked one of the young ladies in the group.

"Uhhh, orange juice and some tea," I responded.

The next words in the conversation became the five most memorable and fearsome words in my life since...

"Do you want some Buckley's?"

Now, if you've never taken Buckley's, I'm not clear on the ingredients. However, if I had to *describe* the taste, I would say one part low sugar syrup and nine parts, *ammonia*. Why someone would purposely drink this, I'll never know.

I took the prescribed amount and I could feel the tingling in my throat begin to disappear. The minor congestion began to dissipate like fuzz from a dandelion and I could feel my body relaxing.

About 30 minutes later, I turned to my friend to thank her. When I opened my mouth to say the words, nothing came out except air. I had *no voice*. I was singing the lead for at least two songs at our concert. Not to mention I was responsible for many of the transitions because I was the group leader. But now, I had *no voice*! What were we going to do?

It can be frightening when we lose something dear to us. It can be even more terrifying when we lose something and we didn't realize its importance until it was gone.

Imagine Zachariah, standing in front of the angel and hearing the words, "You will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens" (Luke 1:18-20).

To hear the pronouncement is scary enough. But, imagine attempting to speak and nothing coming out. At that moment, he must have realized his voice was central to his identity. Yes, he had a name and possessions which clarified his existence. But his voice, his unique timbre, and his personal, verbal perspective expressed who he was.

Our voices express who we are. This is why conflict arises when we feel unheard or as if our voices have been taken away. This is the cause of simmering discomfort in so many people, a forced disconnection from their voice or an inability to fully engage their voices. In other words, sometimes our voices are taken from us and at other times we yield our voices through what we allow. And we seem to allow a lot. We allow distraction, comparison,

and some of us even allow ourselves to be caught up in the expectations of others before solidifying our personal directives. Steve Jobs once quipped, "Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice."

Too many of our voices, powerful dreams and revolutionary ideas die in the seas of our imaginations because we refused to free our minds from the slavery of opinion.

We gave in and allowed ourselves to be muted because, like Zachariah, we refused to believe that we are a part of the miracle. The funny thing about Zachariah was he *prayed* for a son, and when the angel came to tell him his prayer had been answered, he doubted the answer because his attention was on his immediate circumstance and the opinions of those around him. He told the angel, "I'm old. How can I be sure what you're telling me is true?" Check out the irony here. He used his voice to express faith and request a miracle. He lost his voice because he doubted this same miracle. The same is true for many of us.

We mute our faith and our voice with unbelief.

So, how do I find my voice in the middle of crazy? How do I become 'heard' in a world of noise? What can I do to regain my moxie and reclaim my identity through my voice?

Here are 3 steps

1. Believe there is room for your voice. We hide our voices because we feel swallowed up in the midst of it all. Oftentimes, we assume our experiences are unique to us and no one will listen. Then we hear so many other voices and so we rationalize that there couldn't possibly be a need for another. But your voice, your specific timbre and pitch is clearly heard by a specific, assigned ear belonging to someone who needs you to be courageous enough to speak.
2. Eliminate distractions for a time. Yes, there is value in a social media fast. Our world is moving fast and we consume gobs of information every minute. Scrolling down your IG timeline subjects you to ads, other people's vacations, glorified snapshots of moments they want you to see and constant reminders of material lack. Take some time to ruthlessly eliminate the distraction. Take a personal sabbatical so you can regain perspective, gain clarity and begin to hear your own voice again.
3. Capture your thoughts. Write your thoughts freely in the morning. Place a notebook on your nightstand and begin to capture the ideas God places within you regularly. He does speak to us and prompt us frequently. We just need to give ourselves the space to listen and capture the voice.

Once we begin to hear our voice again, then we can summon the courage to speak again. And once we begin to speak again, we can know who we are and whose we are again. Then, once we know who we are, we won't be silent anymore.

The concert? I ended up playing. On that day, my voice came through my fingers. May you find the courage to make sure that no matter what room you're in your voice is never silent.

Listening For The Heart Of Fellow Human Beings

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Wednesday, October 12, 2016

[Listen to "Thoughts in Worship 10.12.2016" on Spreaker.](#)

"Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. Let those with understanding receive guidance by exploring the meaning in these proverbs and parables, the words of the wise and their riddles. Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline" (Proverbs 1:5-7, NLT).

Listening has become a rare form of communication. I know it seems odd that I would include listening as communication, but the fact is most people misunderstand one another because we are too busy formulating our own views and rebuttals while others are expressing themselves. We don't listen for word choices. Sometimes we miss what might be intended by what was said. In our listening, we miss the physical cues and don't hear the accompanying voice inflection. We don't listen for what was not said. I could go on, but I think you get the point.

If we invested double the time listening as we do speaking, we would be far better off. After all, the Lord did give us double the number of ears and eyes than He gave mouths, right? Not listening to the hearts of our fellow human beings fuels racism, hatred, malice, family dysfunction, war, and a host of other evils.

How To Become Wiser

Solomon said that we should listen to holy proverbs and become wiser. He said that we should devote ourselves to exploring their meanings. But get this: he continued by saying reverencing YHWH is foundational to true wisdom and knowledge. Do you realize that the fools who reject and despise wisdom and discipline are not mere idiots in the Proverbs? This is not a discussion of intelligence. The fools who turn their backs on knowledge and discipline are evil (that is what the term here actually means). They lack judgment and repentant hearts.

In light of today's words of wisdom, our focus should be to listen actively, explore the meaning of God's Proverbs, reverence Him and embrace the foundation of all wisdom and discipline. If we all do this, we will make the areas of our influence safe places where abuse, racism, political bickering, malice, and evil have no place.

2016 May / June Issue

Special Issue

TRUTH ALWAYS WINS

- [COVER STORY](#)
- [FEATURES](#)
- [FAVORITES](#)
- [SUBSCRIBE](#)

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

John 8:32 (NLT)

16 TRUTH ALWAYS WINS

17 God’s Text Messages

by Melvyn Hayden III

18 One God

by Stephen A. L. Richardson

19 The Father In Your Life

by Debra Mckinney Banks

20 Who Jesus Is

by Carol Barron

21 Holy Spirit

by Craig Newborn

22 God, Creator

by Rashad Burden

24 I’m Only Human

by Donald L. McPhaul

25 All-Time Conflict

by Washington Johnson II

26 He Fixed It!

by Jason Francis

27 The Experience of Salvation

by Jeremy J. Anderson

28 How Do I Love Thee...

by Omar Miranda

30 Growing In Christ

by Geoffrey Marshall

31 Walk Like a Believer

by Will Smith

32 Where to Find God’s People

by Ira L. Lake

33 Together At Last?

by Linda R. Anderson

34 Thinking About Taking the Plunge?

by Marc Swearingen

35 Sweet Communion

by J. D. Chaffin

36 God's

by Joanne Cortes

37 Truth vs. Fiction

by Carmela Monk Crawford

38 Law of Love

by Melissa Reid

39 Sabbath Reservation

by Richard D. Martin

40 Full Surrender

by Gary L. Wimbish

41 The Makings of A Family

by Derrick and Sonya Mccollum

42 The Defense Rests

by L. David Harris

44 The Best Thing Since the Second Coming of Christ

By Ivan L. Williams, Sr.

46 The Last Enemy

by Ganoune Diop

47 Millennium Bound

by Mark A. McLeary

48 The End of the Story

by Keith S. Goodman

4 ELEVATION

by Phillip McGuire Wesley / MUSIC, BOOKS, AND APPS TO TAKE YOU HIGHER

5 EDITORIAL

by Carmela Monk Crawford / Spiritual Rehab

6 Optimal health

by Donna Green Goodman / Soup's On!

by Shelem Flemons / Glow Girl

9 Myth busters

by Donald L. McPhaul / Americhristians

10 futurecast

by Carlton Byrd / Who Has Your Vote

12 The experience

by Hilary Campbell / With Friends Like These...

The experience BIBLE study

by Rashad Burden / With Me or Against Me

15 RELATIONSHIP Rx

by Willie and Elaine Oliver / Marriage Material

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Fireworks! How Come I Didn't See This Coming?

Peter and Joan's anger often echoed throughout their small bungalow. Insults and name-calling were the normal mode of communication. The anger was not only affecting the relationship between them, but their two small children were unable to participate at school without demonstrating the same behavior!



Early in their marriage, Peter and Joan's relationship was good and they resolved their disagreements in a more sensitive manner. Somewhere, something broke! It appeared to start out as a minor incident but was soon picking up steam. Their sensitivity to each other was changing.

Peter considered himself a fairly clean and organized person and he became bothered by Joan's apparent lack of house-keeping skills and the amount of clutter around the house. He felt he was not receiving assistance from Joan and was always asking for her help to keep the home clean. Joan, on the other hand, was more focused on their day-care business and had a difficult time coming home to clean and cook for the family. Plus, as far as the house was concerned, Joan thought that the children should be able to play in the house after school.

Peter also had a hard time with the fact that Joan allowed her cat and their youngest child to sleep in their bed every night! He was allergic to cats. Peter had mood swings because of the on-again off-again relationship in the home. He thought he lacked the support from his wife within the household and felt the issues had become a problem. After all, he thought, all things should be done decently and in order. And in Proverbs 31:27 the Bible states that "[s]he looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness."

When to see it coming

One of the major areas of dating before marriage is to discuss how two personalities could come together and create a household. Peter and Joan were willing to spend time with each other during the courtship so they tolerated the little red flags of concerns. For example, Peter had convinced himself that he would accept Joan's cat and just take medication to live in the same environment with the cat. Peter's plan did not work because as the union between Peter and Joan weakened, so did Peter's desire to consume medication to adjust to the cat. Another example was housekeeping and responsibilities. Joan was not raised in an environment where that was a major concern. Her parents were not neat, and they did not create an argumentative household simply because of the clutter. Peter, however, was OCD—he had Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Peter needed to have everything in their place and would become stressed if the dishes were not washed or the bathroom was in disarray. Joan felt she could adjust to Peter and he could adjust to her. The marriage was set up for a conflagration. Failure to express sincere concerns of living together caused enough issues that simulated a volcanic explosion later on. This far in the marriage, Peter and Joan allowed their anger to prevent them from moving towards reconciliation. They forgot fundamental principals to enhance their marriage.

The simplicity of praying together on a regular basis was an essential endeavor that had been lost. Reviving that prayer habit was a primary step

towards healing Peter and Joan's relationship. Increasing their prayer life has and will continue to assist them transition from the negative to positive interaction.

The couple allowed anger to be a barrier causing the erosion of their union. The Bible's prescription in Romans 12:21 is a helpful fence-mender: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Peter realized that he wanted to improve his relationship with his wife and he needed to change his feelings by demonstrating humility, and he truly wanted change.

Being determined to focus on the areas that are broken such as communication, sensitivity and intimacy requires a strategic plan for healing. Recognizing and praying for God to intervene in these areas is crucial.

Peter and Joan are progressing because of their willingness to keep their family together. They are attending prayer meeting and bible study together and have progressed in how they communicate with each other. Joan is even willing to keep the cat out of the bed. The couple is currently in counseling and their names have been changed to protect confidentiality. Remember there is always a solution to change behaviors.