

PUBLIC SPEAKING 101: MESSAGES THAT MATTER

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Preface

"Speak from your heart and the world will listen! Lead from your heart and the world will follow. Follow your heart and know God's purpose for your life."

Randy Harvey's Motto

Ever spoken to someone and know what you were saying didn't matter to him or her? Ever say something about a matter important to you and not have the right words? Ever find yourself incapable of expressing what you really believe in a difficult situation? My purpose is to help you find your voice and express yourself with the exact message you want to get across.

This is not a book on religion. It is a book about expressing the human spirit. I will quote passages of sacred religious text from different religions. I will show you how others have stirred the hearts of men and women with words drawn from their own faith, experience, and the people in their lives. For your words to have meaning to others, they must first mean something to you. When delivered, your words must be drawn from your personal faith, meaning you believe what you are saying from the center of who you are. You must speak from what you know of the people and events in your own life that have meaning to you. Only then will they have meaning to others.

"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."

The writer of this passage made his living speaking to people attempting to convince them to believe as he does. Really, that is the essence of every speaker's task, every leader's purpose—convince the audience to believe as you do, and to change their behavior or belief to the truth you hold. When I wrote this book, my goal was to teach people how to identify their purpose and passion, and present it to others so powerfully that it would draw others to their vision.

When I was a child I would listen to inspiring speakers such as Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy, and later as a young adult, Ronald Reagan. As I would read the speeches of Abraham Lincoln and listen to the recorded speeches of Winston Churchill, I came to understand that it is possible for ordinary people to become extraordinary leaders and speakers. Despite common modern myths, the individuals I mentioned above were often loathed by major factions of the societies they lived in and led. Their messages were not always well received and they were often reviled. Some paid the ultimate price for their beliefs, others died before knowing the power of their words to turn the course of human history. One other thing they all have in common is that they worked at becoming good speakers.

What sets them apart from the world and gives them a place in the eons of history is their conviction, their understanding of who they were, what they were about, and what they wanted to accomplish. They had an undeterred commitment to pursue their highest calling based on the lessons they learned and relied on in their lives. Because of their conviction and core beliefs, their clarion voices sounded a clear call heard throughout the world, and even their deaths did not silence their voices.

When I was a child, I wanted my words to touch the lives of others. Given you are reading a book about mastering the messages that influence people; you probably have the same desire. This book was written during my journey to become a person with a profound message; before I die, I hope to arrive there. In this book I have compiled what I have learned so far about developing and managing a message that matters and influences people for good.

It is more than just a book about public speaking. I have written it from my heart about what is important in talking to people. I want to share with you the small and big things I have learned about speaking. I want to make a difference in the quality of what an audience gets from you, whether the audience is one or one hundred thousand. I'm sure there is more that I can learn about speaking.

Public Speaking 101: Messages That Matter

I have been speaking almost every day to someone or some group, for forty-seven years since I was twelve years old and gave my first expository speech in a sixth grade English class about Edison's invention of the light bulb. I competed in my first speech contest at age fourteen with a speech I titled, "Blinded by the Light, That I Might See the Light." I took second place in that statewide speech contest.

At eighteen years-old I gave the commencement speech at my high school graduation: "Let Every Man's Hope Be in Himself." I quoted my model for speaking, Martin Luther King Jr., "If a man hasn't found something he will die for, he isn't fit to live."

In college I participated on the speech and debate teams and later used my gift as a college youth pastor, teacher, and administrator. In May 2003, I joined a local Toastmasters Club, Sunday Speakers, which met in the basement of a Catholic Church. In November 2003 I won the District 7 Humorous Speech Contest for the region covering Northern California, Oregon, and Southern Washington, with a speech titled, "It Wasn't my Fault." Then in August of 2004, I won the World Championship of Public Speaking in Reno, Nevada, from a competitive field of twenty-five thousand contestants.

For nearly forty-seven years I have been obsessed with the quality of my words when speaking to audiences in churches, schools, professional organizations, in university courses I've taught, and speaking professionally. I have trained literally tens of thousands of people to speak and use their voice to influence people, in dozens of countries around the world. I tell you this not to impress you, but to tell you that as a teacher I have also been a student-I have learned from them in teaching them, and I have never stopped learning.

What is in this book comes from my heart and my reflection, experimenting, and successes and failures as a speaker. Thank you for joining me in the journey. I invite you to send me questions about public speaking so I can help you on your journey and expand my own knowledge by helping you find answers to your questions as well.

Throughout this book I have footnoted information for the reader. I have attempted where possible, to provide a World-Wide Web citation for the reader, so you can go to your computer and get instant access to the site where I found the information. There are no doubt more comprehensive sources of information to be had in libraries, but I want you to build your speaking ability rather than researching in libraries. There is a place for both activities, I am emphasizing speaking.