

The Dangers of Pride in Ministry

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon warns against the dangers of pride in ministry and emphasizes the importance of listening to God's voice for effective leadership.

Duration: 18:48

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:12, Proverbs 3:6, Matthew 7:24, John 10:27, James 1:22

Topics: "Pride And Humility", "Listening To God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of listening to God's voice and following His leading, recounting a powerful experience at the Brooklyn Tabernacle where God's presence was so strong that no preaching or singing could take place. It highlights the need for pastors and believers to prioritize hearing from God through prayer, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, rather than relying on human strategies or programs. The story of a televangelist who faced consequences for not listening to God serves as a cautionary tale, illustrating the significance of heeding God's voice in all aspects of life and ministry.

Transcript

But I want to go back a number of years if I could. MSI wasn't the first nor the last man who wouldn't listen. I guess it was 20 years ago or more.

You'll pick up the date, some of you better. You'll know the story. We had a Sunday night service at the Brooklyn Tabernacle.

It was an unusual service. The presence of God came down in that building. We were supposed to take communion that night.

We had two singers from Nashville, Tennessee who were supposed to sing. I was supposed to preach. Nobody preached.

We couldn't take communion. Nobody got to sing. When God came down, the glory of God came down, and we began to worship God and weep and wait.

I can't even describe what happened. It's the only meeting since Carol and I have been at the Brooklyn Tabernacle. I couldn't interrupt it to take the offering.

Now, you know God is moving when you don't take an offering, right? That's right. I realized if I stop this for any reason, it will be a sin. I just got to let this go, God, and I was lost in it.

And the meeting started back in those days at, what, 7, 730. We left, Carol and I, about 10 to 11. People were still praying in the church.

It was just pure, pure spirit of the living God. No offering, no sermon, nothing, but trust me, God did some heavy-duty business with all of us. We got home that night, and my wife's habit in those days was to turn on the television late on Sunday night and watch the world's, at that time, the world's most famous televangelist.

And that's what she did. We came home from this meeting. She flipped on the television.

I was washing up in the bathroom, and I remember coming to the door of the bedroom. The TV was on. She was already in the bed.

I had a towel over my shoulder, and the televangelist, the most famous of them all, was preaching a message, and I had been troubled, and so had Carol been over the last few months because his messages weren't so much biblical anymore. They were just storytelling, and he was getting a very harsh tone. Very harsh tone, making fun of other Christians.

You know, when you're filled with the love of God, you don't make fun of other Christians. But I wasn't ready for what happened that night. And I stood in the doorway.

The televangelist was preaching, and he brought up some example about someone who molested a child, and it must have been in the news. It was a crusade of his in an auditorium that seated about 10,000 people, and the televangelist said, I'll tell you what I would do with a guy who molested a child like that. I would line him up against a tree and open a shotgun into his chest.

And when he said that, 10,000 people, as God is my witness, 10,000 people jumped to their feet and started applauding. And my wife and I had just been in the presence of God for hours. My wife let out a scream, and she just said, Turn it off.

Tears jumped to my eyes. I was groaning. I mean, I've been around church since a little kid, even though I wasn't always serving God.

I backslid a lot, but I've been around enough. I've never seen a meeting where you're cheering somebody getting killed. That's a long way from Calvary.

And as he was pacing back and forth and whipping the crowd into a frenzy, my wife and I flipped the TV off, and she began to weep. And I had the tears rolling down my eyes because we had seen this man really used of God. This man had been really used of God.

At least I felt so. And my wife said to me, because we had just made a new friend in the last year or two, led a well-known ministry himself, a national ministry. She said to me, Jim, why don't you call Brother So-and-So and talk to him? He knows this televangelist.

Somebody's got to get to this guy. Something's really wrong. And I said, you know, what was this, 1980, 81? I don't know.

I can't remember the years now. But, you know, who was I to call this new friend that I had had who had shown favor to me in preaching my church now, and I'd been out to his house in Texas. Who was I to call him to talk about the world's most famous televangelist? You know, that was beyond me.

But I was troubled all week long. There was a heavy gloom in my spirit. I couldn't shake it.

My wife would tell me every day, Jim, aren't you going to do something? This guy is going to self-destruct, and he's going to hurt a lot of Christians. I said, Carol, I know. I mean, we had just been in the presence of God.

You know, God's Spirit is pure love. God is love. When you're in God's presence, you get immersed in love.

So when that man said that, it was like somebody stuck a sword in my spirit. Eight days went by. And on that next Monday night, for some reason, I couldn't bring myself to call.

And who was I? Anybody. Anyway, I mean, what was going on? But on that Monday night, I was sitting in the bedroom next to the phone, and my wife looked at me, and she said, Jim, you know we've got to do something. We're nobody, but we've got to talk to somebody.

Jim, can't somebody reach this man? He's going to hurt himself. Something's wrong. So I picked up the phone.

I hit my friend's number, and I got him on the phone. Right directly, right through to his study at his home. I said, hi, brother.

He said, oh, hi. I said, I don't know how to tell you why I'm calling. And I hemmed, and I was nervous.

I said, look, it's like this. We were in this meeting. The presence of God came down.

Nobody could do anything but worship and wait. We came home, and this televangelist said this crazy remark. And the crowd cheered at the thought of a murder.

And nobody's saying yes on the other end of the phone. So I went, excuse me, brother, are you there? He goes, keep talking. So I said, well, okay, I will.

So we came home, and this is so troubling, my wife and I, and we're nobody. But we know you know him, and you preach at his Bible school. Brother, I don't have all the answers, but that's way off.

And then I'm sure that I hear my friend crying. He's crying on the phone. So I thought I had called at the wrong time, and the Lord is my witness.

I said to him, am I calling at a bad time? He said, no, you're calling at the exact time. He said, God had you called. I said, He did? He said, yes.

I was at that Bible school two weeks ago. And he said, that televangelist is out of the loop. He has built such an empire.

He has so many teasing obligations, crusades. He's got so much on top of him that he has no time to pray, no time for the word of God, no time to listen, no time to be with his wife. And my wife and I were just there for a couple days, and we came home, and we've been burdened and burdened.

We've been weeping. But he said, that's not all. Two nights ago, he said, I was praying for him, and God gave me a prophecy for him.

Three letters, three-page letter, a prophetic word for this brother. And the message in the letter was this, shut it down. Shut it all down.

Shut everything down. Get back to the word. Get back to prayer.

Get back to waiting on God. Get back to your wife. Get back to seeking the Lord.

And don't say, I can't afford to shut it down, because if you don't shut it down, God will shut it down. And my friend is trembling, and he's crying on the phone, and I'm crying. My wife doesn't understand what's going on, and my heart is pounding.

And he said, I wrote this letter, but I didn't send it. And today's Monday, and I finished, had my secretary type it. But I told her, don't send it out.

And it's sitting on the desk, Jim. But I went to prayer tonight, and I said, God, if this is really you, because this could cost me my friendship with this televangelist. If this is really you, give me a sign.

Have somebody call me. Have something happen that I'll know this is you. And as I was praying it, the phone rang, and there you were.

We both cried. He sent the letter. The response wasn't very good.

It was basically, you don't understand the anointing that I have on me. And you don't understand what God has raised me up to accomplish in the earth. Shut it down? I'm taking in almost a million dollars a day.

How could I shut it down? If I'm in the trouble you think I'm in, why is the money coming in? So I'm not shutting anything down. And I want you to know your word from the Lord is way out in left field. But it wasn't very long before the televangelist wished he had shut it down.

Because when you stop listening, bad things begin to happen. And now his word is an adjective. Imagine, he's sleeping somewhere tonight, and his name is an adjective.

In New York City it is. If you want to talk about somebody fraudulent and immoral and not real, his name is now an adjective in the English language. And it could have been spirited if he just would have listened.

Isn't God persistent? I was just a lot younger then, a young minister just learning a lot of things. But I thought to myself, God, you're amazing. You're following this guy and making people call each other and write letters and prophecies.

But what can God do when nobody's listening? In other words, God is speaking, but nobody was listening on the other end. That's what happened to Amaziah. That's what happens to pastors who run churches by computers instead of hearing from the Holy Ghost.

Listen, that's what happens when we read church growth journals instead of seeking the Lord. Pastors, look at me, everybody that's here. You do understand that every single one of you is going to stand at the judgment seat of Christ.

Brother Task, I know, understands that. So does Brother Crabtree. You do understand that you're going to stand at the judgment seat of Christ.

Carol and I are going to stand there to give an answer for the quality of the work that we do. Not the quantity. The quality of our work.

You won't be judged by the church growth journals or by denominational headquarters. You're going to be judged by the king of kings and the Lord of lords whose eyes are like fire. And won't it be just horrific in that day if we find out that God was calling and trying to get through and talk to us, but nobody was listening? That he gave us his word, but instead of preaching it, we preach some insipid nonsense because the world says, you've been with sinners.

Why would God give us the gospel if he didn't want us to preach it? Sure, some people are going to get mad and walk out. But I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. How many are with me? Say amen.

I'm not ashamed of the gospel. We've got to preach. Paul told Timothy, preach the word.

Don't preach your vision. Preach the word. Preach the word of God.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Don't preach current events. Preach the word of God.

Listen to it. Let's get it in our hearts, brothers and sisters, because when you honor the word of God, God will honor you. You know how God answers prayer and why some people are powerful in prayer? You read the story of E.M. Bownes or Andrew Murray or some of these great men and women of God, and here's the way God looks at it.

If you listen to me when I talk, I'll listen to you when you talk. But if we're not listening to God, what right would we have to come into his presence and say, I need this and I want this. Of course, I'm not listening to what you need.

And it makes no sense at all. The future of my church and your church is based on this very fact. Why do you think all the seven letters are different in the book of Revelation that Jesus wrote? But why would they all have the same ending? He that hath an ear, let him.

When we stop listening and hearing what God is saying to us through his word and by his spirit, I don't care how many you're running, it's not a Christian church. You can juggle numbers and steal people from other churches, but that's not a Christian church. A Christian church is where God's word is honored and people are listening for the voice of the Spirit.

They believe and thus say of the Lord. This is Almighty God talking to us. It's not a place for charlatans and personalities and flippant behavior.

This is serious business. Just the other day, this last Sunday, we learned that a man, a godly couple in our church, came to one of my associate pastors and said, I've invited my neighbor twice, he's come twice to the church. He's not a Christian, he's a wild man, but they got him in there twice.

He fights like a cat and a dog with his wife. Pastor Combs, would you see this couple, even though they don't come to this church, even though they're not Christians, would you take time to see them? Pastor Combs said, I'll see them on Tuesday. A week ago, yesterday, a couple days ago, it was past Tuesday, a

week ago from that.

I'll see them at 6 o'clock. At 6 o'clock, they don't show. At the end of the prayer meeting, this godly couple from our church comes with their head down to Pastor Combs and says, You know why they didn't come? He killed her yesterday.

Strangled her, and then took an overdose of barbiturates and fell on top of her dead. The detectives found him laying on her, and he actually taped her last sounds so the police have the last sounds of her screaming as he took her life. You know what, brothers and sisters? Meetings are important.

I kicked myself that the man was twice in the church and we could... Maybe my message wasn't right or something wasn't right. But brothers and sisters, you know, momentous things are happening when we have our church services. We've got to preach the word of God and we've got to be listening to the spirit of God to lead us and direct us.

We can't have these little program meetings that have no life in them. We've got to be led by the Holy Ghost. How many are with me? Say amen.

Listen, if God could lead the Israelites for 40 years, can't he lead you through one service? Program down to the minute with no opportunity for the Holy Ghost to come down and talk to us. Ministers getting their sermons out of books instead of waiting on the Lord and hearing what God wants to say to the church. Plastic sermons.

It's not going to cut it today. There's too much evil. The devil has a satanic anointing on the people who are serving him.

We've got to have the anointing of the one that's greater than the evil one. But we're not going to do it, listen, with smoke and mirrors. We're going to do it by listening to God.

And it's not always hoop and holler. There's a time for hoop and holler. I'm all for hoop and holler.

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