

Help Wanted: A Messenger

by Warren Wiersbe

A person is qualified to be a messenger if they have the right motive, can obey orders, have a message to share, and have the courage to face the consequences.

Duration: 37:33

Scripture: Acts 7:59, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Biblical Obedience", "Effective Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a message to deliver when speaking or singing. He expresses disappointment in those who can deliver beautiful performances but lack substance in their message. The speaker also discusses the courage required to deliver a message, citing examples from the Bible where messengers faced severe consequences for their words. He concludes by challenging the audience to examine their own qualifications as messengers and emphasizes the importance of obedience in delivering God's message.

Transcript

A bit of background, Absalom, David's son, Absalom had revolted against his father, taken over Jerusalem, taken over the palace, taken over David's wives, taken over his counselors and part of the army. And there's a battle going to be fought now and the battle is fought out at Mount Ephraim. David was a couple of three miles away at a city called Mahanaim waiting for the results.

And you remember from your Sunday school reading the story how that Absalom got his head caught in a tree and a man came along and killed him and they buried him and of course the last thing that David had said to his men when they went out to fight was deal gently with the young man, Absalom. Absalom was a spoiled brat. David had pampered him and his pampering of Absalom almost led to David losing his kingdom.

So Absalom is dead and somebody has to tell the king what happened. That day there was both good news and bad news. Let's read what happens.

Verse 19, Then said Ahime as the son of Zadok, let me now run and bear the king tidings how the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies. Joab said unto him, thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day. But this day thou shalt bear no tidings because the king's son is dead.

Then said Joab to the Cushite, go tell the king what thou hast seen. And the Cushite bowed himself unto Joab and ran. Then said Ahime as the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, but come what may let me I pray thee also run after the Cushite.

And Joab said why wilt thou run my son seeing that thou hast no tidings ready? But come what may said he, let me run. And he said unto him, run. Then Ahime as ran by the way of the plain and out ran the Cushite.

And David sat between the two gates and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate under the wall and lifted up his eyes and looked and behold a man running alone. And the watchman cried and told the king and the king said if he be alone there are tidings in his mouth. And he came apace and drew near.

And the watchman saw another man running and the watchman called him to the porter and said behold another man runneth alone. And the king said he also bringeth tidings. And the watchman said I think the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahime as the son of Zadok.

And the king said he is a good man and cometh with good tidings. And Ahime as called and said unto the king all is well. That's the Hebrew word shalom, peace.

And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king and said blessed be the Lord thy God who hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my Lord the king. And the king said is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahime as answered when Joab sent the king's servant and me thy servant I saw a great tumult but I knew not what it was. And the king said unto him turn aside and stand here.

And he turned aside and stood still. And behold the Cushite came and the Cushite said tidings my Lord the king for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them who rose up against thee. And the king said unto the Cushite is the young man Absalom safe? And the Cushite answered the enemies of my Lord the king and all who rise against thee to do thee harm be as that young man is.

And the king was much moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went thus he said oh my son Absalom my son my son Absalom would God I had died for thee oh Absalom my son my son. Methods of communication have certainly changed over the years.

None of us can remember those great days of yesteryear when people communicated with drums, smoke signals. Perhaps you saw the cartoon in New Yorker magazine when the atomic bomb went off, the first one out in Arizona. It showed an American Indian sitting on a hill and he sees this mushroom cloud coming up and he's saying to himself I wish I had said that.

Well you can't use smoke signals today because the air is so polluted nobody could read what you were trying to say. They used to use flags, used to use mirrors flashing back and forth, they used dogs to carry messages, birds to carry messages. Then of course electricity came along and we had telegraph and telephone and now television.

We have improved means of communication. I'm not so sure the message has improved any. Mr. Thoreau said we have improved means to unimproved ends and I think he was correct.

Today you can bounce a message off of a satellite, bounce a telephone call off of a satellite in just a few seconds, be communicating. It's a marvelous thing providing you're communicating the correct thing. But you know behind every piece of equipment, whether it's a computer or a telephone or a telegraph or a

television camera or whatever it may be, behind every piece of equipment has to be a person.

Somebody has to make it, somebody has to service it, somebody has to run the thing. Even our so-called electronic automatic equipment needs somebody there to make sure it's running properly. God still has to use hands and lips and ears and feet and other parts of the body to get the communication system working as it ought to work.

Now we as Christians are basically communicators. That's why we're here. We aren't salesmen trying to peddle some product.

We're communicators. Through our words and through our actions, our homes, our individual lives, what we are, what we do, we are seeking to communicate a message and that's the message of God's love. We're messengers.

This is why I've chosen this passage in 2 Samuel because it talks to us about a couple of messengers. As you meditate on this passage you see Ahimeaz, the one runner, he's so anxious to run. You see the Cushite, he just waits.

As you meditate on this passage you pick up some spiritual truths. Let me put it this way. Everybody here tonight who is saved, I'm sure, wants to be a communicator.

At your work, wherever you may be, you want to be able to communicate the love of God and the message of the gospel. The big question is are you qualified? Am I qualified? That's a big question. Not trained, not educated, qualified.

God has different ways of training his messengers. Qualified. And so as we read this account, I think we can derive from it several tests that we can apply to our own lives to see whether or not we're qualified to run.

Now there's a message. The message we have, thank God, is good news, not bad news. It's the good news that a son did die.

David said, Oh, would God I have died for you. But my message is praise God. He died for us.

Absalom was on a tree because he was a rebellious sinner. Jesus was on a tree because he was a surrendered servant. And when Absalom died, he died for his own sin and he was buried and that was the end of it.

When Jesus died, he died for our sins and he was buried and came forth from the grave victorious and he has won the battle. We have marvelous news to share. Marvelous news to share.

Did you ever notice in the four Gospels that often when Jesus healed somebody, he said, don't tell anybody. And they went out and told everybody. He tells us, tell everybody.

We don't tell anybody. Now are you and I qualified to be messengers? God's looking for messengers. Test number one is the motive test.

Why do you want to run? Now here's Joab, that master general. Joab sometimes did some dirty, underhanded things, but he was a master at military strategy and he sees that the battle is over. He sees that the enemy has been defeated.

He calls over the Cushite. Now there are some translations that change this to Cushite. That's his actual name, his given name, Cushite.

There are others who tell us that this phrase Cushite means he was a black man. I don't know, but God calls through Joab and says to this Cushite, you carry the message. And Ahimeaz comes running up and says, I want to do it.

I want to do it. Ever met anybody like that? Why do you want to run? If you'd been up there with your tape recorder getting a program for CBS or someone, you'd say, now I'd like to interview you. Why is it you want to run? Motive has a lot to do with it.

We don't know what Cushite's motive was, the Cushite. I think it was just simply obedience. But as I read this passage and kind of meditate on this fellow Ahimeaz, I get the suggestion, I will not judge him, but I get the suggestion he wanted to be important.

He wanted to be the one to carry the message to the king. I wonder if he were carrying the message to somebody else if he'd been that anxious. And you notice what he says? Let me now run and bear the king tidings how the Lord has avenged him of his enemies.

That's the only part he saw. The Lord avenged him of the enemy. The motive test.

Now some people have bad motives. Pride, envy, rivalry, competition. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, said Paul.

But in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other more important than themselves. Some people have mixed motives. I suppose most of us at some time or another have mixed motives.

We can't honestly say, Lord, my motives are very pure because we're sinful people. But the best we know how we want our motive to be obedience to God for his glory. That's all we're concerned about.

Some people have right motives, pure motives, holy motives. I think Ahimeaz's motives were just a little bit mixed. He wanted to be important.

He wanted to be able to say in later years, I carried the message from Mount Ephraim to Mahanaim and I told the king. Why do you want to run? Now you can apply this to any area of ministry. Why do you want to teach? Why do you want to preach or sing or do anything for God? Why do you want to run? The motive test.

Now the second test I want to call the obedience test. Okay, you want to run. Can you obey orders? Most important thing about a messenger is just to obey orders.

A messenger's job is not to invent a message. A messenger's job is to deliver a message. I feel sorry for those preachers who haven't learned that.

There are lots of preachers in this country who die every week trying to think up something to say, and I feel sorry for them. They read Time magazine, they scan all the newspapers looking for some great thing to come up with. That must be like giving birth to barbed wire.

Every week trying to come up with something like that. Why? I just opened my Bible and there's a message. In fact, my problem is not what message am I going to preach.

Can I find one? My problem is there's so much there you'll never have enough time in one lifetime to use it all. The obedience test. Can you obey orders? Now Joab was in charge.

You say, but Joab wasn't really a spiritual man. No, but he was in charge. Even if you can't respect the man, you've got to respect the office.

Joab was in charge. Now, Joab knew what happened. He knew all the details of the battle.

He was in charge. Joab knew his runners. He knew Ahimeaz, who was the son of a priest, and he knew the Cushite, and Joab knew David.

Joab knew David as few other people knew David. In fact, Joab knew some things about David some other people didn't know. Now, you put that all together.

Joab knew the events that happened. He knew his runners. He knew his king.

Wasn't he the logical man to decide who's supposed to run with the message? I say to myself, the Holy Spirit knows what's going on in this world, and the Holy Spirit knows me, and the Holy Spirit knows the people he wants me to communicate the message to, and the Holy Spirit puts them together. The obedience test. Can you obey orders? You know what Ahimeaz did? He argued and debated for the privilege of running.

Don't ever do that. Don't ever get a crowbar and push your way in. The Bible says a man's gift shall make room for him.

If you've got a gift and you've got a calling, God will see to it that you'll use it. God will never permit you to put your light under a bushel. If he has to, he'll burn the bushel up.

But he argued his way in. Now, if you're writing things down, write this down and don't forget it. In doing God's work, it takes more than permission.

It takes submission. God may say to you, okay, go ahead, it's the worst thing that ever happened to you. God may say, fine, go right ahead.

Joab finally said to Ahimeaz, Ron, you take the consequences. The obedience test. I've asked myself the question, I'm not sure I can answer it, but I've asked myself the question, why did Joab not want Ahimeaz to run? There could be several reasons for this.

One, he knew his motive was wrong. You know, leaders, I tell no secrets when I say this, leaders don't like to be pushed. And Joab was running that affair and Ahimeaz came up and tried to push just a little bit.

But you know, I think the real reason Joab would not let Ahimeaz run was because he loved him too much. He knew it was not an easy responsibility. Do I have to remind you that when a messenger came up one day, years before, and told David that Saul was dead, and he admitted he had had a part in it, David killed him.

When Nathan came to David to face David with David's sins, when Nathan had to preach a sermon about sin and robbery and adultery, and he had to point to the king and say, you're the man, Nathan was taking his life in his hands. I just wonder if Joab wasn't showing his love for Ahimeaz. You know, you may be anxious to run.

There may be something you just think you ought to do for God, and circumstances or people or events have hindered this. Now maybe it's of the devil, I don't know, but it may be the love of God in sparing you from something. It's worth praying about.

The obedience test. The Cushite just stepped up, said yes sir, away he went. There's a third test that we need to ask ourselves to see if we are really qualified to run.

Why do you want to run? What's your motive? The obedience test, can you really obey orders? The third test is the message test. Have you got anything to say? Now quite frankly, as Ahimeaz ran, and he took the longer but the easier route. When you check the map, you find that Ahimeaz ran from the woods of Ephraim around to Mahanaim in the easier but the longer route.

The Cushite took the direct route, it was harder, up and down and through some difficult terrain. And Ahimeaz had an easier route, the longer, and therefore was able to get there a little sooner. But when he got there, you know what? He had nothing to say.

He falls down before the king and says, Shalom, all is well. All was not well. All was not well.

Now he gives glory to the Lord. Blessed be the Lord thy God who hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my Lord the King. And then he quietly prayed that David wouldn't ask about Absalom.

And David did ask about Absalom. Now I don't commend David for this, but I understand that in the next chapter we discover that David is in such sorrow and mourning over the death of Absalom that the whole government machinery comes to a halt. And Joab has to come to him and say to him, I suppose if all of us had been killed and your son had lived, that would have been all right.

David snapped out of it and said, you're right, I'm wrong, but can you blame a father for weeping over the death of a son, especially a wayward son? Can you blame him? I think not. David says, is the young man Absalom safe? And you know what? Ahimeaz has no message. The one thing that David wanted to know and needed to know, the messenger either would not or could not tell him.

And so I say to you, there's no substitute for the message. Ahimeaz could run faster, but he had no message. He was more enthusiastic, but he had no message.

He was devoted to the king, but he had no message. A man may be a great orator, but if he has no message, what good's the oratory? A person may be a magnificent singer, but if there's no message, what good's the music? The message test. You want to run? All right.

Have you got anything to say? Now, as you read your Bible, you find all kinds of messengers. Some have no message at all. Some have just part of the message.

That's what Ahimeaz's problem was. He just had part of the message. He knew that the forces of the king had defeated the forces of Absalom, but either he did not or would not find out about the rest of it.

Apollos was this way. Apollos showed up in the synagogue one day and began to preach, but he only had part of a message. He knew about the baptism of John the Baptist.

He didn't know anything about the finished work of Christ. He didn't know anything about the coming of the Holy Spirit, and so two of the Christians who were sitting there, Priscilla and Aquila, got him off to one side privately, and they gave him the whole message. Lots of preachers today just have half of a message.

God wants us to take the whole message, and God has given us a great message to take. The battle's been won. The son has died, but he's been raised from the dead, and the victory is ours through faith in Christ.

The message test, have you got anything to say? It's really unfortunate that there are a lot of people in places where they can speak today, but they have nothing to say. They say it beautifully. They sing it beautifully, but they have nothing to say.

I always appreciate getting back to the Moody Church to be able to minister the Word of God and to hear music that says something. One of the chores, one of the burdens you carry when you're out in a conference ministry is having to listen to people beautifully, magnificently sing nothing. No message.

No message. You want to run. Why do you want to run? You want to run.

Can you take orders? You want to be a messenger. Have you got anything to say? Now, there's a fourth test that comes to us. That's the courage test.

Have you got the courage to face the consequences? Messages have consequences. Stephen brought a message. They stoned him to death.

Paul brought a message. He got stoned. One day, he got arrested.

One day, they cut his head off. Do you have the courage to face the consequences? There is no easy way to do a hard thing. If you ever find an easy way to do a hard thing, write a book about it.

You'll make a million dollars. I can never forget one of the hardest things I ever had to do was to sit down with a precious 12-year-old girl and explain to her that her father was dead and not just dead, but he had committed suicide. I want you to know I was wiped out for the rest of the day.

Before I talked to that girl, I had prayed. I had read my Bible. Part of my staff had prayed with me.

And how do you do it? And after I talked with her, I just sat and cried, cried, and cried. I was wiped out for the rest of the day. There's no easy way to do a hard thing.

The courage test. If you've got the courage to give the message, you've got the courage to take the consequences. Now, there was good news.

The war had been won. There was bad news. The king's son had been slain.

Did you notice that the Cushite had the courage to give the message? You notice that? The Cushite had the courage to give the message. A Jaimeas didn't. Is the young man Absalom safe? Oh, when Joab sent me, and believe me, Joab didn't send him.

He sent himself. When Joab sent me, there was a confusion. I don't know what happened.

Stand aside. Can you imagine the embarrassment of that? Stand aside. You know why the Cushite had the courage? It's very simple.

He was called. He knew his calling. He was under orders.

My friend, I don't have to worry about the consequences if I'm under orders. He had the calling. He was under orders, and he had the message.

He knew what he was talking about. My friend, if you're under orders, and you've been called, and you know what you're talking about, don't be afraid. I love to read biography, and many of the people whose lives I have read got into trouble.

Christian people. John Wesley got into trouble. John Wesley got into trouble because he stirred up the dust that had lain on the doctrines for so long, and God anointed Wesley, and God anointed Whitefield, and they weren't allowed to preach in their own churches, so they preached out in the fields.

But God had called Wesley, and God gave him a message. He said, I'll take the consequences. You know what the consequence was? The great Wesleyan revival that saved Great Britain from revolution.

The same kind of bloodbath that almost wiped out France could have wiped out Great Britain, and you can thank Whitefield and Wesley that it didn't. Do you ever read the life of Adoniram Judson? You ought to read it. One of the finest biographies of Adoniram Judson is called To the Golden Shore by a man named Courtney Anderson.

A marvelous book. You'd never believe what Adoniram Judson went through to take the gospel. What kept him going? He had a calling, and he knew his message.

The Cushite comes running up. Oh, he didn't get there first. Here's one of the cases in the Bible where the first was last, and the last was first.

Oh, if they put down in some future book of statistics who were the fastest runners, Ahimeas would get the record. He would be in the book of records as the fastest runner. You know, we're too worried about statistics these days.

I'm not concerned about miles per hour. I'm concerned about messages. You know why the Cushite had the courage to face this thing and go through with it? He was called.

He was a man under orders. He wasn't responsible for consequences. He was responsible for faithfulness, and he knew what he was talking about.

That would eliminate some people today. That was a fifth test. We've had the motive test.

Why do you want to run? The obedience test. Can you obey orders? Suppose you aren't supposed to run. Can you wait? The message test.

Have you got anything to say? The courage test. Can you face the consequences? Now, here's the hardest test of all, and this is where Ahimeas flunked. The compassion test.

Can you give your message with love? You see, Joab knew David's heart. Now, I want to be cautious as I say this, lest someone think I am judging. I trust God sees my heart and knows I'm not judging.

But you know, it's not enough to see a lot of dust and activity. We've got to know what really happened. As we read the Bible to get our message, we not only need to know what happened, but why it happened and how it happened.

You see, Joab knew David's heart. Now, Joab knew his battlefield. He knew just how the armies came together.

He knew just where Absalom had been caught in the tree. He knew just how the man had stabbed him to death and buried him. He knew all these facts.

But he also knew that these facts would come to David with crushing, terrible, heavy, burdensome pressure, because David loved his son. Now, Ahimeas didn't have that sensitivity. You know what's lacking in many messengers today? Sensitivity.

Love. We have the same routine, carbon copy, cookie cutter method of approaching every heart. And Jesus never did that.

Now, you've got to have some place to start. I remember when I first tried to start leading people to Christ, I didn't know what to do. We didn't have courses back in those days on how to do it.

And I used to meet every Thursday evening after I became a Christian with a group of people who were studying God's Word. I envy you new Christians who have new Christian courses to go through. We didn't have that.

You know what my follow-up course was after I got saved? Book of Hebrews. I went to a home Bible study back in those days. Yes, we had home Bible studies back in those days.

It's not a new invention. And we studied Hebrews. And I wanted to try to be a witness.

I got myself a little pocket New Testament. You know, I wanted to be a witness. And someone showed me Revelation 320 and said, now you can use this to lead people to Christ.

And you stumble a little bit. I wish someone had said, look, here's a little system. Then once you learn that, it's like playing the basic keys.

Then you can improvise. You can feel free. So it's good to have some system to start with, but don't stay there.

It's got to be you. It's got to come through you. When Jesus talked to Nicodemus, he talked about birth.

He didn't talk about birth to the woman at the well. I would have. She was a Samaritan.

She was born wrong. He talked about water. Talked about water.

When he talked to that crowd in the synagogue at Capernaum, he didn't talk about water. Talked about bread. You see, our Lord always adapted the message to the need, the interest, and the heart of the person to whom he was speaking.

Now, Ahimaaz, he was thinking only of the victory. The Lord has avenged all of your enemies. That's kind of a negative thing.

Joab was thinking about the heart of the king. How is he going to respond to this message? And so he said to Ahimaaz, don't you run. I don't think you've got what it takes to share this message in love.

You, Cushite, you know what to do. And so the Cushite went, and he ran, and he was able to do what Paul said in Ephesians 4.15, speak the truth in love. Isn't it beautiful the way he did it? He comes to him and he says, Tidings, my Lord the king, for the Lord has avenged thee this day of all them who rose up against thee.

Now, that word all gave David a hint, kind of prepared him. And the king said unto the Cushite, is the young man Absalom safe? You know what some people would have said? That good for nothing rebel is buried under a pile of rocks. But it's true.

Oh, but you speak the truth in love. How many times have you heard me say truth without love is brutality, and love without truth is hypocrisy? He didn't talk like that. The Cushite answered so quietly, and I'm sure he was putting all the love into what he could.

The enemies of my Lord the king and all who rise against thee to do thee harm, be as that young man is. David got the message. You know why we lose some people? We don't speak the truth in love.

We use the Bible sometimes to beat them over the head. When all the world is looking for today is just a little bit of love. Can you give the message in love? That's what Paul talks about in First Corinthians 13.

You know what was wrong with the Corinthian church? They needed love. That's all. Paul didn't tell them to throw away their gifts.

He said just use your gifts in love. Gifts with love become tools to build with. Gifts without love become weapons to fight with.

That's why Paul wrote First Corinthians 13. He says now look, if I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, oh that'd be worth listening to, and have not love, I'm just a lot of noise. And some messengers are just a lot of noise.

Our Lord Jesus spoke the truth in love. Sometimes the truth hurts. The truth hurt David, not because the truth was wrong, but because David was wrong.

David's heart was wrong. He had pampered his son. He'd sinned against his son.

He'd sinned against God. He knew it. That's why he said, oh I wish I had died.

The motive test. Why do you want to run? To be somebody important? To be recognized? To be seen? The obedience test. Can you obey? Can you get a crowbar and force your way in? The message test.

If you do run, have you got something to say? The courage test. Can you face the consequences? And most important, the compassion test. Can you speak the truth in love? Now God needs messengers today.

God still needs messengers, and he comes to me tonight and says, do you qualify? As I prepared this message, I had to get off by myself and look it over and say, now Lord, do I qualify? That's what you're going to want to do, because you want to be communicators. You want to be messengers. So just take these five simple tests.

Get alone with the Lord and say, Lord, do I qualify? The messenger is not held accountable for the consequences. He's held accountable for one thing, faithfully to deliver the message. That's all he asks.

Do we qualify? Gracious Father, we have such good news to tell, and we've shared other kinds of good news with people. Help us to share the good news of the victory won, of sins debt paid. I pray, Father, you'll help us to be good messengers.

Send us where you want to send us. When you want us to wait, tell us. Help us, Father, to be obedient.

I pray for any here tonight who have never responded to your message, that even tonight they might trust Jesus Christ who died on the tree for them. Deliver us, Lord, from being careless or proud or self-appointed messengers. We'll wait for your call, your time, your preparation for your glory.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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