

WHY ME? JOHN 1:1-4, 10-13

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As I have had opportunity to preach and share my witness and personal testimony in sermon form, I have had many opportunities to examine my spiritual life. It has been my experience that one cannot speak for God without a great deal of wrestling with the issues of scripture and the extent to which they are evident in his own life. Repeatedly, I have asked myself, "Am I doing this in my life? Can I speak from a position of experience and authority? Have I applied what I am exhorting others to apply?" As you have been called upon to speak for Christ, perhaps you have had similar feelings and have wrestled with your own spiritual adequacy and, ultimately, wondered, "why me?" Well, I, too, have wondered "why me?" This question has come to mind in several situations in which the Lord has placed me.

In finding some sort of answer to this question, perhaps consideration of some basic qualifications would help. These apply to me and any other Christian. Through faith in Christ, we, as believers, find forgiveness and know the Father. As we experience the life of Christ in our lives, we experience life in its fullness and naturally share those experiences with others. Irrespective of who we are and where we are in our spiritual development, we all *should* have a story to tell about our faith and what makes it important in our lives.

But even with all of these good reassurances, each time I am asked to speak, I still struggle with what I am going to say. A major difficulty I have in settling on my topic is the feeling which I sometimes have — and maybe you have had it, too — that to speak for God, on His behalf, is to hold yourself up as some sort of "Super Christian".

A pitfall for many of us in full-time ministry is that one can develop a false sense of qualification by having

attended seminary. While seminary was necessary and helpful, my experience has been that I have had to hammer out my own spirituality — regardless of my formal training — on the anvil of my own heart. Walking with God has had to be a first-hand experience and conversations have had to be in the first person.

Through all of this, the issue for me has been the concern for quality in my own spiritual life. I've decided that this concern has two parts.

First is my internal concern. As I stand for Christ, I am reminded that I have some obligations. The fear I have of not living up to what I say or imply as God's truth is real. If I say it, I ought to believe it and do it in my own life. Put another way, if I say it, I should not only believe it, but I should be demonstrating my belief by my actions. So by holding myself up as an example as I speak — and as I serve in ministry — I make my self-rationalization about any lack of depth in my own spiritual commitments — more difficult.

The second concern I have is the external problem. That is, the sure knowledge that, in my willingness to stand and bear testimony of His workings in my life, I might impress some of you — those that don't know me very well. But some know me too well. They have seen me at other than my best and know that no matter what I say, I've got a long way to go before holding up my life as exemplary. I expect some of you have had some of the same thoughts — and fears.

There is a way out. By realizing that when I stand to bear witness of God's grace in my life, I don't stand because of who I am, what I have achieved or my station in life. I stand only by the right of His love and by His grace, and His allowance of my life among you. As scripture puts it, "Not by might, nor by power but by the Spirit, says the Lord Almighty." (Zech. 4:6) Quite simply, we have opportunity to stand for Him because of the potential that God has placed within us and His willingness to draw it from us.

Well, that is something of my personal walk with God and my thoughts along the way — and how I have resolved some real questions about my worthiness. At best, I have struggled to find my place in the Kingdom of God, and while I have settled on the thought that it is not my place because of what I *am*, but rather because of what I *am becoming*. It *has become* my privilege and God-given right to speak on His behalf. But perhaps more than right, it is my responsibility. More than opportunity for me, it is, hopefully, opportunity for others to glean a reflection of the Kingdom of God through my life.

So when I stand here — or anywhere — and talk about my faith in Jesus Christ, I am not telling you so that you will believe that I am better than I really am. At least, I pray to God that I am not. I am telling you what I really wish to be — and what I am becoming!

So — as I was reconciled to myself as the one to stand in front and bring this message, it only brought on another problem — what would I talk about? I thought, “Wasn’t that exactly where I began and what started all of this?” As I struggled, I soon realized that my struggles — my hesitations and uncertainties — were a story in themselves. They were part of my story, and, perhaps, part of yours.

Bearing the responsibility of being a reflection of Christ for the world makes the act of speaking and living for God that much more important. And since it is that important, isn’t the meaning of becoming “children of God” worth pondering — meditating about — praying over? That we — laity and ministers, alike — as ones who minister His gospel may never fall into the trap of self-adequacy or the rut of complacency. And as the priests mentioned in Leviticus 6:13 were charged, we, too, must keep the fire on the altar of our hearts constantly burning; it must not go out. May our hearts always be filled with wonder and awe when we consider anew that God has chosen us to be His witnesses and as we ponder the question, “Why Me?”