

# Feeling Inadequate? You Are Not Alone!

*Pastor Larry Hoskins, Th. M.*

**H**e did not feel up to the task, and he is not alone! Have you ever felt that way?

Some time ago, I was visiting a men's group at another church. Knowing that church needed teachers (*and that is not what this article is about*), one of the men commented that he did not feel ready to teach because he did not know that much. As I heard him, I reflected on my own past. I had begun teaching when I was in the eighth grade with no formal training, and now, understanding as a pastor a church's need for more men who would lead, I asked him how long he had been attending the church. "Five years," he responded. Trying to spur him forward past his reluctance, I smiled and said, "Couldn't you teach some of what you have learned in the past five years to some of those who are just starting to come? You're five years ahead of them!" The meeting ended, and I do not know what he chose to do. I do know that he felt inadequate, under-prepared.

Others have felt that same way. One good and godly man said to me recently when asked why he did not consider becoming an Elder, "I'm not sure that I know the Word good enough to be an Elder." He has been around the church and under the instruction of God's Word for some time, yet he still feels inadequate. I think most of us have felt that way at one time or another.

In Exodus 3, after God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and told him that He wanted him to go to Pharaoh to bring the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt. It was a monumental task, as later the nation was numbered at over two million people. Even though he had been raised in Pharaoh's court and had been sovereignly groomed by the Lord for the position, after being a shepherd for the past forty years, Moses repeatedly argued with God:

***But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exo. 3:11)***

***Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" (Exo. 3:13)***

***Then Moses said, "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.' " (Exo. 4:1)***

***Then Moses said to the Lord, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." (Exo. 4:10)***

***But he said, "Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will." (Exo 4:13)***

Repeatedly, Moses brought up to God his apprehensions about himself and his concerns about how the people of Israel might respond to him. He was not considering that it was the Lord God of Israel who was speaking to him and directing him into a very specific ministry.

After all of these responses to the Lord (and in between each question, the Lord gave an answer to Moses to disarm his concerns), how did God respond to Moses' continuing sense of inadequacy and to his refusal to do what the Lord had clearly instructed him?

***Then the anger of the Lord burned against Moses, . . . (Exodus 4:14)***

Moses taxed the patience of the Lord who became offended at his repeated refusals to bow to the command of the Lord.

Another great man, Jeremiah, likewise argued with God's calling upon him to be a prophet:

***Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,<sup>5</sup>"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." <sup>6</sup>Then I said, "Alas, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, because I am a youth." <sup>7</sup>But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' Because everywhere I send you, you shall go, And all that I command you, you shall speak. (Jer 1:4-7)***

*Why is it that we are so prone to see our own shortcomings rather than the nature and wisdom of God who calls us to be ministers? It was God who spoke to Jeremiah. It was God who created him in his mother's womb. It was God who had an omniscient, timeless awareness of him before he was even created. It was God who set him apart for this ministry. It was God who sent him to the people of Judah. It was God who directed Jeremiah to speak a very specific message to his nation. Who was*

*Jeremiah to argue with him? Who are we? Does not He know our limitations before He draws us or commands us to minister? Why risk His anger for refusing to comply?*

In a sense, we are right to consider ourselves inadequate. Humanly speaking, we do not have near the resources to do the things that God asks us to do. We can say with the Apostle Paul:

***Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, . . . (2 Cor. 3:4-5a)***

God's work had to be done in God's way with God's resources and in God's timing. All of this requires a divine empowerment. We are not adequate in ourselves to do what God asks of us, but we are made adequate by Him, as Paul discusses when he continues the above passage:

***. . . but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Cor. 3:5b-6)***

The central figure in our adequacy is the Spirit of God. Where He is actively at work, and where we are responsive to Him there is *life!* That is why Jesus spoke of divine empowerment when He spoke of sending the Spirit just before He ascended to heaven:

***"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you . . ." (Acts 1:8a).***

Has God been tugging on your heart to start or to become involved in a specific ministry? Have you been arguing with Him because you see your own inadequacies – however real they may be? It is okay to be aware of your own inadequacies. We need to recognize our own weaknesses, and we need to have humble hearts. But it is not okay to be dismissive of the Power of God present in you through the Holy Spirit as if He has the same limitations that we do. He shares none of them. In fact, He makes us adequate when we ourselves are inadequate, and to quote the great poet, Robert Frost, in *The Road Less Traveled*, "that has made all the difference."