

attack the stage

Yosemite National Park is really quite amazing. I've known about it for many years, but I've only visited one time. Recently, I traveled alone to meet up with eight other Children's Pastors in California. We agreed that this would not be a conference, but a retreat or "unconference". We all wanted to break away from regular life to reconnect deeply with our Creator in his creation. We were all challenged to hear from God.

As I spent extended time meditating on the Bible I began to hear. God was speaking to me.

One of the questions God was asking me to look into was "What are your fears?" At the risk of being vulnerable, I will mention a fear that became a theme among the others I listed. I fear disapproval. Now, if all are honest, everyone can admit to this. It just looks different for different people. Specifically for me, it translates into not wanting to be embarrassed or say something dumb or not be accepted by someone or some group.

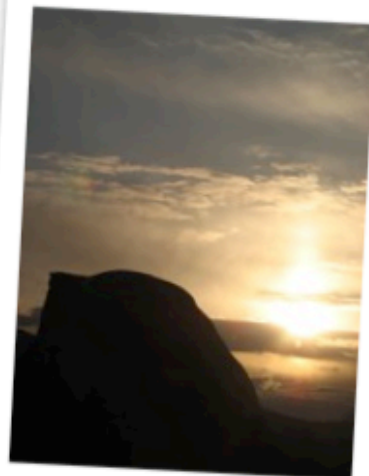
You can find many references in the Bible to not being afraid of man. Galatians 1:10 says, "For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ." In 1 John 4:18 we learn that perfect love drives out fear. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." As a servant of Christ, I want God's approval. I want God's perfect love to drive me and drive out all fear. May God's power be seen in me and my church.

Now the title of this article—"Attack the Stage"—may be a little confusing. What did the poor stage ever do to me? All it ever did was help people stand a little higher so an audience could view them better! Well, let me explain. I took a course on improv once with John Hollingsworth (thanks John for this life lesson even if you thought it was only to improve improv skills). One of the greatest fears people have is public speaking and probably even greater would be improv acting! And with improv acting not only will you look ridiculous, that's the point.

There's a game that those crazy people play called Freeze. In it you have a few actors and two that are



creating a humorous sketch on the spot. The ones that aren't involved are supposed to call "freeze" and then jump in to create a whole new sketch from scratch. The secret is that when you call freeze you really shouldn't have any ideas in your mind as to what you are going to do. You shouldn't wait for something to come to you. You just jump in and hopefully something will come...hopefully. This is called attacking the stage.



For the next season of my life, I am focusing on attacking the stage. Now, I'm not talking about running around doing things without thinking. What I am saying is that sometimes we consider all the things that could go wrong or we are way too concerned about how we will appear to others. This restrains us from diving into doing what we know we should. Many fears are irrational especially when put up against the God of Heaven. The only fear we should have is a biblical fear of God.

So what does a right fear of God look like? I'll just keep it simple: Doing the right thing is better than doing your own thing. Generally speaking, human beings with a conscience – and much more so, believers who have the Holy Spirit – know the right thing to do. However, as sinful people, we simply refuse to want what is right and instead we just want what we want. A fear of God says, "I want what God wants."

Let's get practical in light of this whole crazy idea of attacking the stage. Here are some examples:

pick up the phone and make the call; write the note; make the appointment; confess the sin to your spouse or in your eGroup that

you've been holding onto; serve that person in need; or even take that public speaking opportunity. What examples can you come up with? List three here:

(Aside: Signing up in children's ministry is a great training ground to improve your "attacking the stage" skill because kids are so forgiving and things actually go better when you look a little silly).

Now things may go all wrong (many times they don't). You may be rejected. You may look or at least feel silly. You may be vulnerable to criticism. You may not get the

appreciation you crave. But who are you seeking to please? Seriously, ponder that question for a few minutes. In the end, it won't matter a dime if you pleased a human being. In the end, the only thing that will matter is if you pleased God by fearing Him above all.

There are times to plan and prepare well. We need to be in God's Word to learn what the right things are. But in the moment or when the opportunity knocks we must attack the stage. Not for us or for anyone else. We do the right thing without hesitation for God alone. And just like anything you're trying to learn, whether it's improv, sports, music or your walk with God, you will mess up many times. But if you never try you are at risk of displeasing God and missing out on the enjoyment of living an adventurous life with Jesus. Let's not go down that road. Let's live life on the LEDGE. Let's attack the stage together.