

MY STUTTER DIDN'T STOP THE SPIRIT

By Scott D. Buck



I didn't think I could fulfill my new calling because of my speech problem, but I was willing to trust the Lord.

As my wife and I sat in our stake president's office, he asked me if I would serve on our stake's high council. The first thought that raced through my mind was that I'd never be able to fulfill that calling with my stuttering problem. From the time I first learned how to talk, I struggled with stuttering. Whether ordering at a fast-food restaurant or speaking on the phone, I quickly learned that life was easier when I kept my mouth shut.

As I got older and couldn't always remain silent, I learned a few coping strategies, but stuttering remained a difficult issue when I became nervous.

I explained to the stake president exactly what kind of person he would be getting if I said yes. He listened with compassion and understanding. When I finished, this wise man said something that the Spirit delivered to me with unusual force: "The Lord will accept what you have to offer."

This was what I had to offer. It might not have been much, but it was my offering, and He was giving me the opportunity to make it. I looked over at my sweet wife, whose eyes told me I needed to do this, and I said yes.

I left the stake president's office knowing that accepting this calling was the right thing to do but still not knowing how it was all going to work out. In the back of my mind was the thought, "What will I do when I have to get up in front of people and say things that I can't say?" I tried to focus my thoughts on my faith that the Lord would work it all out. I had to take a few steps of faith into the dark unknown before I discovered that more steps on the pathway ahead were lighted for me.

The day soon came when I needed to conduct some stake business in my home ward by reading the names of newly released and newly called stake members. In the congregation that day were many of my neighbors and most of my own family members. My turn came, and I stood up.

Regardless of how well I prepare for an event or how much

I try to remain calm, I can never be positive how fluent my speech will be. On this day, it did not go well. I couldn't finish saying many of the words, and I was totally stuck on others. I struggled awkwardly until the job was finished and I sat down.

I felt bad for the people whose names I had read and for the congregation who had to sit through it, but most of all I was truly sorry for having let the Lord down. I hated the thought that I had detracted from the usual dignity and organization of His Church.

It happened to be fast Sunday that day, so I thought I needed to stand up, bear my testimony, and try to make some short explanation. As I spoke, despite my nervous feelings, I was strangely at peace. Deep down it felt okay.

I was not prepared for the ward members' responses to the events of that day. At the end of the meeting, many people approached me and thanked me. Some explained that they had never spoken or prayed in church because they were afraid they wouldn't do it well enough. They said that seeing me struggle made them think they could try. Some people said it was the most "real" Church meeting they had ever attended. I realized that this must have been part of the reason I was called—so that the Lord could use my stuttering to help others.

Several years have passed since these events took place, and I now have the opportunity of serving in my ward's bishopric. There are still plenty of awkward moments, but I try to use humor where possible to put the congregation, and hopefully myself, at ease. I am grateful for the blessings the Lord has poured out upon my family and me through these experiences. His tender mercies have been plentiful.

Despite our individual challenges, each of us has an offering to give the Lord. I believe that when our hearts are sincere and we make our best efforts to serve Him, our imperfect offering becomes perfect in His eyes.

I love the scripture, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

When we do all we can and then place our trust in the Lord, He accepts our offering and makes more out of our lives than we ever could on our own. ■

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