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vice president of public relations, Insight for Living

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—KATHE WUNNENBERG, speaker;
author of *Grieving the Loss of a Loved One*

“What a joy to read a how-to book that really addresses the how-to. Carol Kent has systematically covered the details that have made her an outstanding speaker. I am delighted to recommend this book to the throngs of people who yearn to speak up with confidence.”

—JEANNETTE CLIFT GEORGE, founder and artistic director,
A.D. Players, a Christian Drama Company; writer; public speaker

“You will not find a more excellent communicator than Carol Kent. When I hear her speak, I listen in rapt attention, and while reading her book, I could not put it down. In *Speak Up with Confidence*, she unselfishly shares her effective secrets with us. This is must reading whether you are a beginner or have been speaking for years.”

—NEY BAIELY, author and international speaker

“Going into a seminar led by Carol Kent is like walking into a highly charged magnetic field. It is exciting! Things are popping, and you have to keep moving! It is more than energy and enthusiasm; it is a deep-rooted faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ.”

—DR. NELL MAHONEY, author and speaker

“When Carol Kent speaks, people listen! She is a highly trained, energetic, and gifted woman. Her insight and understanding of people, as well as her ability to communicate God’s truth, make her one of the leaders in the Christian women’s world.”

—PAUL MATTHEWS, Tuscon, Arizona

WHAT SPEAK UP SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS ARE SAYING

“I would recommend the Speak Up with Confidence seminar to anyone desiring to share his or her faith with one person or a thousand.”

—PAT PROBASCO, Speak Up seminar participant

“I would recommend this workshop to everyone. Who would not benefit from learning how to better represent themselves, their organization, or the Lord?”

—THEA RILEY, Speak Up seminar participant

“I was so blessed with the Speak Up conference. I increased my learning abundantly and it was fun, too. I have a BA in Bible theology and taught in a Bible college for fifteen years, and presenting this kind of talk is quite different but is something I always wanted to do.”

—MARTHA HARTMAN, Speak Up seminar participant

Speak Up WITH Confidence

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR SPEAKERS AND LEADERS

Revised and Updated Edition

Carol Kent

NAVPRESS® 

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*This book is lovingly dedicated to my parents,
Clyde and Pauline Afman.*

You prayed for me since I was in the womb.

*You led me to Jesus at an early age
and taught me to value the Word of God
as my authority and guidebook.*

*You taught me, by example, that serving Jesus
is more important than houses, land,
financial independence, or the acclaim of men.*

*You encouraged me to become educated and hard working,
but always dependent upon Him for power in ministry.*

*You are the spiritual backbone of all I am doing today
because you pray for me without ceasing.*

You are loved.

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PART ONE

Do I Have Potential
for Speaking?

ONE

Speak? Not Me!

An Introduction

*How many a man has dated a new era
in his life from the reading of a book.¹*

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

After months of planning, we were on our way to the Grand Canyon! The first day was all that our family had hoped for. During day two, the temperature topped one hundred degrees, and the weatherman said there was no sign of a change in the near future. For two full days our seven-year-old son, J.P., had been saying, “Are we almost there yet?”

I was driving at the end of that second long day when we entered Amarillo, Texas. The sign on a local motel flashed *Luxury for Less*. Oh, I wanted that! The line underneath it was equally impressive: *Clean and Comfortable*. I wanted *that*, too!

My husband went in, put our money on the counter, signed the registration form, and obtained our room key. When we stepped through the door, we were mildly disappointed, but it *did* have beds and there *was* a shower—the two preestablished requirements for home away from home on this trip.

As we got the last suitcase out of the trunk and into the motel room, the top of the door fell off its hinge. Little Texas “critters” were making their way across the floor. The air conditioning had two levels, “very low” and “off”; but we were in cattle country, so an open window would have invited barnyard smells into the room. Turning back the

covers on the beds, I discovered huge holes in the linens. (If you are from Texas, please don't be offended. I have visited your state on several occasions and realize you have many outstanding hotels. In this case, we had *chosen* low-budget accommodations.)

I wanted to leave, but my husband said, "We've paid our money, and we're staying!" It was one of those times when he had nonverbally said, "The end! Amen! Case closed! Don't bring it up again!"

By the next morning, the members of our happy, dynamic Christian family were barely speaking to one another. We silently packed the suitcases into the car, and with the exception of answering the questions of young J.P., we spent the entire last day of the trip with no laughter, no fun, no conversation, and no music.

Later that day we stopped at one of the viewing points along the south rim of the Grand Canyon. We parked the car and prepared to get our first glance of the sight. I was wearing sandals with heels on them, and I had every intention of putting on my tennis shoes, which were in the back seat.

At that moment my husband looked at me and broke the silence: "Surely you don't plan to see the Grand Canyon in high heels!"

Something in his tone made me decide that I *did* plan to see the Grand Canyon in high heels! We got out of the car and walked several feet toward the viewing point on very rocky terrain. I soon realized that I *could not* see the Grand Canyon in high heels.

I swallowed my pride and meekly asked my husband to retrieve my tennis shoes from the car. *Irritation* is not quite the word to describe what he was feeling at that point. *Exasperation* might come closer.

I'm sure Gene planned to throw the shoes *to* me rather than *at* me, but one of them hit me in the chest and the other one went flying beyond me. A young couple passing by us attempted to hide their amusement. In my humiliation I burst into tears, ran back to the car, and threw myself into the front seat as I shouted, "I've never wanted to see this dumb old canyon anyway. You and J.P. go look at it; I'll be waiting here in the car!"

My poor husband! We had traveled for three days in one-hundred-degree heat, and his wife was refusing to see the object of the entire trip. For several minutes he and J.P. stood outside the car waiting for me to quiet down and come to my senses.

Soon I heard our son say, “Daddy, *please* tell Mommy you’re sorry!”

Since I wasn’t climbing out, they decided to climb in. We had not begun the day with the Lord—it’s very hard to have family devotions when the family members aren’t speaking to one another. They said they were sorry; I said I was sorry; and together we told God how sorry we were for our terrible attitudes and lack of communication with Him and one another. As we finished, we exchanged hugs and shed a few more tears, this time for the right reason. I put on my tennis shoes, and hand in hand we started walking toward the canyon.

When we arrived at the edge of that gorgeous panorama of color, space, depth, and beauty, we were momentarily speechless. The pictures in *National Geographic* had not done it justice. I have never seen anything so breathtaking in my life!

We soon found out there was an echo in the canyon. Immediately, the words to a much-loved song of praise and testimony—“How Great Thou Art”—came to me. So we adapted the lyrics and formed a “yelling chorus.” Holding hands and standing along the rim of the canyon, we shouted into that massive space, “O MIGHTY GOD, HOW GREAT THOU ART!” And we heard the creation echo back to the Creator the wonder and majesty of who He really is! It was one of the most spectacular moments of my lifetime, and I almost missed it because of a bad attitude.

WHERE DO YOU FIT?

Attitude is the key to success in public speaking as well as in vacations. Over the past few years I’ve had the privilege of training many people in the area of Christian public speaking. Each individual comes with a different attitude.

Some are totally optimistic. They've tried speaking and enjoyed it. People have commented on their concise, meaningful presentations or their excellent delivery. They have a positive attitude of anticipation that is accompanied by a desire to learn more skills for effective communication.

Others come with a hesitant attitude. These persons have often been thrust into speaking because of a role expectation or because no one else was readily available to do a job. With feelings of inadequacy, these individuals have reservedly agreed to speak. I have greatly enjoyed working with people who admit they need help. They always come with a teachable attitude and are quick to implement suggestions for improving content and delivery. And they *always* improve!

The “cod liver oil” attitude is demonstrated by persons who come to learn about speaking because of a paralyzing fear they desire to overcome or because relatives or friends forced them to get help. There is hope for these people. I have observed some extremely shy and withdrawn individuals become excellent communicators when they master the basics of public speaking and depend on God's power for energizing their message.

Only a handful of people have an arrogant attitude. Fortunately, I have never had to deal with them because they don't ask for help. They already know everything. Some years ago I read the following definition in a newspaper: “Oratory is the art of making deep sounds from the chest seem like they are important messages from the brain.” Yes, there are a few individuals who speak with bombastic authority but have very little of lasting importance to say. For the Christian who desires to grow in the ability to communicate for God's glory, there is no room for this attitude.

Take a few minutes to read through the following comments. Are any of your attitudes reflected here? Check any responses that apply to you.

“NOT ME!” ATTITUDES

- “I’ve never been good at speaking.”
- “I don’t have a college education, so I probably don’t have anything worthwhile to say.”
- “My voice sounds terrible on a recording, so why should I bore people by making them listen to me?”
- “If I can’t be the best at speaking, I don’t even want to try.”

“WHY ME?” ATTITUDES

- “I’m only teaching this class because no one else volunteered.”
- “My husband’s a pastor, and the people of this church expect me to lead the women’s Bible study even if I don’t feel qualified.”
- “There was a time in my life when I was excited about teaching, but lately I’ve run out of ideas and function more out of obligation than joyful service.”

“YES, LORD!” ATTITUDES

- “I love God’s Word and would like to be able to teach it more effectively.”
- “I’ve been asked to give my testimony and would like to organize the events of my life in an understandable manner.”
- “Even though I’ve been speaking for years, I know there is always room for more creativity in my presentations.”
- “I’m a beginner and no one has even asked me to speak, but I want to get prepared to serve the Lord in the best possible way.”

You may be as excited about learning how to speak as I was about seeing the Grand Canyon that summer. Or maybe you’ve never been asked to speak, but you’ve had an inner stirring (the Holy Spirit’s

nudging) that has stimulated you to prepare for doing God’s work in the best possible way.

You may have tried speaking, experienced failure feelings, and determined to leave that job for someone else. Or you may already be doing some teaching or speaking, but you feel in need of more variety and creativity. Or you may be a seasoned speaker, eager for a few fresh ideas and new illustrations. No matter which description fits you, this book can help you.

Several years ago I got caught up in the spiritually debilitating exercise of comparing myself with other speakers. God had begun to open doors for me to speak as a workshop leader at several major conferences where I heard some of the finest Christian speakers in the country. I instinctively found myself comparing my content, style, and audience appeal with theirs. Then began the mental game of “If only . . .” It went like this:

- “If only I could tell humorous illustrations like he does, I would be an effective speaker.”
- “If only I could teach the Bible like she does . . . maybe it’s her British accent; if I could master that accent . . .”
- “If only I could tell deeply moving stories of real life experiences like she does . . . perhaps I should sit on a stool and generate intimacy with the audience. . . .”
- “If only I had a more authoritative voice like . . .”
- “If only I had a dramatic life experience . . .”

For a while I tried imitating the styles and methods of many of my favorite Christian communicators. The result was more laughable than effective. Every time I used the verbal and physical artistic expressions of someone else, I appeared artificial, and I concentrated more on *performing* than on *ministering*. Most of my spiritual growth spurts have come on the heels of such miserable failure. What a relief it was to realize that it was okay to be me!

I began developing the material for this book when it became apparent that there were people in my Bible study and in my church who had tremendous potential for speaking but didn't know where to begin. Not knowing *how* to organize a talk was a big problem for most of them, but the greatest hurdle of all was *fear*!

According to the *Book of Lists*, the number one fear of people in the United States today is public speaking. This paralyzing emotion has held too many people in bondage too long. I am convinced that the quality of every individual's life and ministry can be enhanced by learning a few basic principles on how to *speak up with confidence*!

John Wolfe, president of a communications training organization, says, "We won't remove your butterflies entirely; we'll just get them to fly in formation!" Whether you are a beginner or a pro, this book will teach you the secrets of becoming a more successful public speaker. You will learn

- How to find a topic and develop an outline
- How to use illustrations effectively
- How to deliver a talk with appropriate body language, vocal variety, posture, and gestures
- How to get started in Christian public speaking
- How to introduce someone
- How to preside over a meeting
- How to guide a discussion
- How to put your personal testimony together
- How to teach the Bible with clarity
- How to organize and file speaking materials

The purpose of this book is not to produce cookie-cutter communicators, all polished and perfect models of the manual. The purpose is to help you, within the framework of your own personality and God-given abilities, exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and communicate His truth in the most effective way. The person who knows the power of God and

is willing to give his or her potential to Him will live in the humble realization that God often allows the person with little natural ability to do His greatest work.