



### ***Follow Your Dream***

For some time in the mid 90's I was aware that I had a dream to make a difference in the world greater than myself. My hometown, Atlanta, is the same city that claims Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as one of its favorite sons. In fact I was in a grammar school band with one of his sons. His final resting place is here. I have always admired his contributions to bettering the human race. Most of all I admire his "I Have a Dream" speech given on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. in 1963. His words stir the hearts of anyone who has a dream given him by the Creator.

Last month I began helping speakers and would-be speakers pursue their own dreams to become successful in accomplishing their dreams. It is fulfilling to help another person attain the thing that burns in their heart. I want to help you, also in your search to fulfill your fondest desire - your dream. Be it big or small, I know you want to see it come about with every fiber of your being. Here are the steps you will go through on the road to seeing your dream become a reality:

1. Become aware of your personal Dream and decide to pursue it. I call this your "One Thing." What is the *one* thing that brings you the most fulfillment? What is it that you would do if no one paid you to do it? What is it that burns inside of you to help other people with? Chances are this is your dream. It is your calling in life. I met a man several years ago who was working as a pastor in a church. You would think he was completely happy, but his greatest desire was to drive a truck and deliver goods to consumers. You might think that this was a preposterous idea to go from being a minister to a truck driver, but it was what he longed to do. Even his wife saw this in him and encouraged him to pursue his dream. In a short time he left the ministry and found a job driving for a local company. This led him to a job driving across country. The last time I saw him, he as happy as could be and his family was totally behind him. All he needed was impetus and support to step out and pursue his dream. John Ortberg says, "If you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat." If you have a dream that you have been putting off, you eventually have to face it and get out and pursue it or quit thinking about it. I pursued my own dream of becoming an international professional speaker. I decided to strike out one day and pursue it. I just needed the support and motivation to make the move. I haven't regretted it since that day.

2. Face fear as you leave your place of comfort. All of us have our “comfort zone.” It is the place where we reside in our hearts and ward off hurt and pain. We’ve tried to push the envelope and strike out so many times before and it hurt. Now we hide in a place of security. In this secure place there is very little criticism and almost no risk. We say to ourselves, “Let others take the chances. I am happy right where I am.” But the problem is we aren’t that happy. We aren’t happy because our dream keeps us up late at night, tugging at our heart and asking us to take a leap of faith. It isn’t easy to step out of the comfort zone and go where we have never been before. I know because I have been in that very same place. I had a stable job with a stable income in 2003. I had everything I needed, but I was sitting up at night wanting to pursue a vision I had of traveling the world, helping others out by speaking and consulting. Finally I came to grips with my unhappiness with my career and decided it was time to act. I called a few friends and got their support. Then I quit cold turkey. I mean one day I was working in an office and the next I was driving around interviewing meeting planners to see if they would hire me as a speaker and consultant. Was it scary? You better believe it was! For three months nobody hired me. But then my marketing plan began to come together and I got my first speaking client. This led to 21 solid leads from the audience who heard me and I began signing them for training and consulting. Within a year I signed a client for almost the same amount of money that I had spent an entire year earning in 2003! My dream was becoming a reality. Yours will, too, when you strike out and do the hard work to pursue your dream.
3. Encounter opposition from those around them. Right away you find out who your friends are. Often people we think support us do so in words only. Not when it is time to take action. Sometimes the people who have supported us in the past have done so only because it was convenient for them or we fit their mold of support. What will you do when your network of support falters? How do you address the critics who assail you in the pursuit of your calling in life? You have to build a network of support around you when you decide to “step out of the boat.” I got involved in the National Speakers Association on both the national and local level and began building my support base. A friend of mine wanted to become a Family Law Mediator. Her obstacles were the lack of money and fear of rejection. She contacted people in her county judicial system and built her support there. Today she is successful and in high demand. Think of people you have known who took the chance and got opposition from those they thought were their friends. The ones who were tenacious and stuck with their dream built new networks of support, often at the expense of their friends and family who opposed them. It is a chance you have to take, but the rewards are so fulfilling. I work with future speakers who face opposition from their spouses, parents and closest friends. The successful ones are those that stay with their dream. Here is the secret: if you can convince *yourself*, you’ve won most of the battle.
4. Endure a period of difficulty that tests your resolve. Was it easy for me right away? Absolutely not. I had dinner with a young speaker several years ago. He had been marketing himself for about two months during the holidays. He was wondering why things weren’t coming together and when they would start. Most of all, his spouse was asking these questions. I assured him that the efforts he was putting in now

would pay off and pay off sooner if he doubled his efforts. I think he wanted assurance more for the home front than himself. His efforts paid off and today he is very successful. In every new endeavor you will run into pitfalls and dry spells that will make you question whether or not you made the right decision. How do you think Moses felt when the first miracle he performed for Pharaoh didn't succeed in freeing the slaves? (It took ten in all to convince the Egyptian leader – and then he tried to get them back). Do you think Billy Graham was an overnight success? He wasn't. What about when Abraham Lincoln became President of the United States and 13 of the states seceded before his first one hundred days in office? George Washington lost most of the battles he led his troops in the first two years of the American Revolution – and most of his army didn't want to re-enlist at the end of those two years. You will endure a time of testing and self-doubt as you begin your new journey, but it is to be expected. I made less money that first year than I had made the year before, but I knew I was doing what I was meant to do. My new-found friends who were speakers were good about staying in touch with me and encouraging me.

5. Fight the giants that stand between you and your dream. I like to tell the story of David and Goliath in many of my presentations. It is a familiar story from the Bible about a young man who happens up on a situation where a literal giant, named Goliath is threatening an entire army. The army cowers before Goliath, but David approaches the situation with a completely different attitude. I always say attitude is everything. Well, you have to have ability but it was David's attitude that brought him to the battle line that day. See, the army saw Goliath and said, "He's so big; he will kill us!" David saw the same Goliath the army saw and said, "He's so big; you can't miss him!" The giants that stand before you and block you from your dream are either terrorists or targets. It is all in the way you choose to view them. For me a giant was asking for a fee that represented my self-worth. Most new speakers fear asking for a high fee because they don't think anyone would pay to hear them. I overcame this fear when a friend heard just two minutes of a presentation I gave and said, "Jim, you are worth X amount of dollars, easily." I trusted his advice and began asking for that amount and do you know what? I started getting it! It turns out one of my biggest giants was my low perception of my worth. I was my own giant. Next, I got coached in shifting those false beliefs to successful thought patterns. I will bet for most of you reading this article, the same is true. Face your giant within and conquer it by telling it that it is lying to you. Tell it to go away and bother you no more! For many, professional coaching helps you shift your beliefs about your own limitations and become successful. That is why I started mentoring speakers and coaching them to breakthrough results in marketing. I wanted them to see the same results I saw through mentoring and coaching to skyrocket my career.
6. Reach your full potential as you achieve your dream. There is nothing like the feeling you have the day you realize that you have reached your dream. You will know you are there because a peace will descend upon you. You will begin sleeping better each night. I still have dreams and goals that I attain to. I can tell when I reach them because I sleep better at night. My friends and family can sense I have attained each

dream by the attitude they see me carrying around. Most of all, people are being helped by your fulfillment of your dream in the Universe. Some people call it “karma.” Others call it the fulfillment of your life’s mission. You have found your purpose--- your “One Thing” and it permeates your life. Whatever you call it, you know you are there when the results you see in others outweigh the money you are being paid to do it. Do you think Mother Teresa was doing charity work for the money? Do you think Dr. King was on the forefront of the civil rights movement for the financial gain? These were people who had a dream--- a mission from God that burned in them and they were at their best when they were fulfilling it and reaching their full potential.

The good news for every Dreamer is that each stage or obstacle along your journey is intended to help you break through to the fulfillment you desire. It is my desire that you reach your goal and fulfill your dream. As you read this, think of ways you can begin your journey to reach your dream.

What obstacles, internal and external, await you? What giants do you have to face? Where will your primary support come from? Most of all, what is your plan to reach your dream?

What have you put in place to get to your goal?

There is no better time than **NOW** to start working on a support network, mentoring and coaching to make your dream a reality.

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