

Debora M. Coty

## Chapter 1

### Qualified or Not, Here I Come

*“But Moses pleaded with the Lord, ‘O Lord, I’m just not a good speaker. I never have been, and I’m not now, even after you have spoken to me, I’m clumsy with words’”*  
(Exodus 4:10, NLT).

After 430 long years of captivity, God chose Moses, a fumble-tongued, murderer turned nomad, to speak on His behalf and lead the Israelites from their bondage—to become their long prayed-for emancipator. What was Moses’ reaction? “Who am I to go?” (Exodus 3:11, CEV). In other words, “What on earth are you thinking, Lord? You should find somebody else; I’m the wrong person for this job!”

There it is—the Moses Mantra: I’m not qualified for this job, Lord!

The Bible is full of people who, by outward appearances, weren’t qualified for the work to which God called them. Saul, a donkey herder, was chosen by God to be the first king of Israel. David, a musical shepherd, was called to be the next warrior king. Rahab the Gentile prostitute was hand-picked by God to become an important link in the ancestral (Jewish) lineage of Jesus. Mary was a carefree teenager when she was chosen as the nurturer of God’s own son. Paul, a dreaded vigilante against Christians was appointed to become the greatest evangelist of all time. A mere fisherman, Peter, was called to become the foundation of the worldwide Christian church.

Could it be that we of *other* professions could possibly be called by God to further His kingdom via the written word?

Shortly after my first three magazine articles came out, a conversation with an acquaintance at church stopped me cold.

“Did I overhear you say you’ve been published?” the wannabe writer asked, drawing her tall frame close to peer down at my short, stubby self.

“Why, yes,” I naively replied, smiling in anticipation of the accolade sure to follow.

“And what exactly qualifies *you* to be a writer?” (She knew I was an occupational therapist and piano teacher.) “Did you major in journalism in college?”

“Well, no...”

“Were you an English major?” she asked in an impeccably crisp tone. “Or Literature, perhaps?”

“Not exactly.” Had someone suddenly cranked up the furnace?

“Then how, may I ask, are you qualified to be a writer?” She stood glaring, arms crossed and lips pursed.

For once in my life I was speechless. Struck by a bolt of divine inspiration, I shook my head. “I guess I’m not. You’re absolutely right. I’m *not* qualified to be a writer. But let me tell you something really funny—there are three editors who *think* I am!”

When I first felt God’s still small voice nudging me toward writing, I heralded the Moses Mantra loud and clear. Me, write? I’ve been working in other jobs for twenty-five years; I’m too old to learn something new. You’ve got the wrong gal, Lord. It’s been w-a-y too long since English class—I wouldn’t know an ellipsis from an eclipse. My participles would dangle like fishhooks and my metaphors would be messier than my son’s bedroom.

But that little voice inside wouldn’t be quieted.

You know the rest. It's your story, too. That little voice inside you wouldn't go away either, and so here you are, pursuing your writing dream. Just like Moses, your excuses melted away and your mantra instead became: Whatever you will, Lord, that I will do.

And with every slash of the pen and tap of the keyboard, God reminds us, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV).

**Prayer:** *Still small whisperer to my soul, fill me with your power and your peace and guide my written words to always glorify you. Amen.*

**Reflection:**

During the past year, when have you uttered the "Moses Mantra" (also known as: I'm not qualified for this job, Lord!)?

What aspect of writing is God's still small voice nudging you to pursue—devotions, short stories, magazine articles, books, poetry?

List three specific steps you can take to become more qualified in this area.

**Pearl of Wisdom:**

"Every time you write, you add more to your abilities as a writer. Don't worry so much about being a beginner. As a matter of fact, statistics show that 99.973% of writers start out as beginners. No need for you to ever have to justify or apologize for being a beginner. The beginning? It's actually a very exciting place to be. It's a place full of promise, anticipation, hope—everything thrilling!"

~Rhonda Rhea, speaker, radio personality, humor columnist, author, *Amusing Grace*

**Pearl of Wisdom:**

"If you're a new writer just starting out on this incredible journey, face the fact that it easily can be a one-step forward, two-steps backward adventure. Fortify yourself with

plenty of prayer, patience, and perseverance—unless you're the exception, you'll eventually need a lion's share of each. Be prepared to deal with the bitter as well as the sweet. But don't let the frustrations and disappointments ever overshadow your joy in and your appreciation for the gift you've been given. And don't forget that it is a gift. Nothing more, nothing less."

~BJ Hoff, best-selling author of *Mt. Laurel Novels*, the *Mountain Song Legacy Series*, *An Emerald Ballad Series*, and the *American Anthem Series*

**Pearl of Wisdom:**

"Stay determined, even after you get published. Preston Sturges, the legendary writer-director, once said, 'When the last dime is gone, I'll sit on the curb with a pencil and a ten-cent notebook, and start the whole thing all over again.' Try to keep that attitude, no matter where your writing goes."

~ James Scott Bell, writing professor at Pepperdine University, fiction columnist for *Writer's Digest*, author of numerous books, including *Write Great Fiction: Plot & Structure*

**Pearl of Wisdom:**

"I used to compartmentalize my writing from my Christian life. I wrote secular romances with sex and profanity, and because I was publishing everything I wrote, I told myself God was blessing it. But He wasn't. God never blesses sin, and my writing was not only sinful, I believe it led others into sin. After 32 books published, the Lord orchestrated things in my life to draw me back to Him. I finally realized that He wants every area of our lives. He had given me the gift of writing so that I could glorify Him, but I was using that gift to do just the opposite. I got down on my knees and repented, and told the Lord I didn't want to write anything else that didn't glorify Him. Since that time, He has blessed my work immensely. I wish I'd committed my writing to Him years earlier."

~Terri Blackstock, best-selling author

**Pearl of Wisdom:**

"A good writer must be a reader first. Every book I've ever written is the product of a lot of study, prayer, and reflection, most often generated by reading classical and contemporary writers."

~Gary Thomas, author, *Sacred Marriage*