

Dr. Amy Cuddy is a social psychologist and associate professor at Harvard Business School,

but her claim to fame is a 20 minute TED talk she gave in 2012.

TED is a global set of conferences run by a private nonprofit, under the slogan "Ideas Worth Spreading."

TED talks have made stars of many unlikely people, but perhaps no one more so than Amy Cuddy,  
whose talk promised personal transformation through body language.

Her presentation "Your body language shapes who you are" is the second most viewed TED Talk  
of all time, with over 35 million views.

Basically she says that we know body language affects how others see us, but it may also change how we see  
ourselves. One could call her theory a scientific variation on "fake it til you make it."

Because she shows how "power posing" — standing in a posture of confidence,  
even when we don't feel confident — can affect testosterone and cortisol levels in the brain,  
and therefore might have an impact on our chances for success. Dr. Cuddy says:

"When you pretend to be powerful, you are more likely to actually feel powerful."

For indeed, fear & lack of confidence, can get in the way in this life. Fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of bad  
things coming our way. Lack of confidence in one's ability or power to face challenges or move into the future.

All this can keep us from fulfilling God's hopes for us, from becoming who He has gifted us to be.

Perhaps a power pose now and then can restore some confidence and lower anxiety,

but friends we've got something sooo much better!

We Christians don't face our fears on our own, nor must we overcome them by our own power

or by "faking it til we're making it!" We have a heavenly Father who knows our fears

and has something to say about them – some way to help us through them, beyond them!

Two of our three lessons today start with the declaration – "Do not be afraid!"

once on the lips of God to Abraham and once on the lips of Jesus to His disciples!

In fact this phrase is a hallmark of Good News throughout scripture – a prelude over and over again to  
announcements of God's mighty and saving deeds and promises.

Just think of the angel and shepherds from early in Luke – the angel said: “Do not be afraid, for see – PAGE 2

I am bring you good news of great joy for all the people!

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.”

It is the starting point and anchor for everything else in both passages today!

“Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

And our response to this promise, like Abraham, is faith. Today’s lessons – all three – are about faith.

Faith is a word we know well, throw around often, know is important but now and then we need to talk about and define it so that we get the most from it and through it.

So let’s look at two dimensions of faith this day –

faith as holding fast to the promises of God and faith as moving us forward into the future.

First, faith is holding fast to the promises of God – this must be first and is first in both the Abraham story and Jesus’ interaction with His disciples today – DO NOT BE AFRAID – followed by promise –

I am your shield – your reward will be great – it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom!!

Faith is letting God be God, letting Him give us good gifts—give us the Kingdom. We do not achieve salvation; rather, it is a gift we receive from outside ourselves. Receiving this gift is what started your Christian life & mine too, thru baptism into Jesus’ death& resurrection the kingdom is already ours—it is not some future goal.

Yet letting God be God is not easy – our sinful selves want so to put ourselves in there somewhere!

Two Biblical examples of faith help us today. They are Abraham and Sarah.

Genesis and Hebrews report that by faith they received the power of procreation, they received a child!

There may be no more compelling Biblical evidence that everything depends on God than this story!

“... from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born...” Sarah and Abraham were no longer spring chickens.

Yet when God took old Abraham out under the night sky & said: “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able ... so shall your descendants be.” Abraham BELIEVED the Lord!!

That’s the first dimension of faith – trusting God’s gifts, standing firm on the His promises even when they are yet unseen, seem impossible, are beyond our comprehension, beyond our ability to effect or achieve on our own –

because it is God who makes them – God who is trustworthy and true to keep them,

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God whose good pleasure it is to give good things to His children!

And that's who we are – God's beloved children forever!

And that brings us to the second dimension of faith – faith moves us forward!

When by faith we give up faking it – pretending to act or be powerful and confident on our own –  
pretending to find security and satisfaction in our earthly treasures - when we assume  
a trust pose instead of a power pose – faith moves us forward with confidence & courage.

When we trust God to handle our fears and anxieties we truly become free from them; and thus freed from –  
we are freed for a new life of confidence and courage. Courage to risk, dare and do what God calls us to,  
not because we have to, but because we can and out of thanksgiving, because we want to!

From our firm foundation of faith in God's promises and gifts – we are free not to fake it but – with a nod to Nike  
– to JUST DO IT! Jesus said: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also!”

Just do it – re-center your priorities and place your treasures in godly things – just do it!

By faith - love your neighbor, care for creation, reach out to those in need, give for the sheer delight of it,  
forgive even as you are forgiven, embrace the future, and receive all good things in humility and gratitude.

Why? Because this is what God has freed you for.

We all do long for freedom from fear, courage to face challenges & more confidence. Perhaps Dr. Cuddy is right,  
the outward action of power posing helps us call up our inward reserves of courage and confidence  
and thus we can become more courageous and confident on the inside.

But we Christians have something even more full proof and good – because it doesn't depend on us!

Faith makes us more courageous and confident! The outward gifts we receive from God –  
identity, promise, forgiveness, purpose, new life now and eternally – change us on the inside!

Therefore, we are able to more and more by faith move forward in this life journey and – just do it –  
put our treasures, time, talents, faith in God and godly things and as we do our hearts will go there also –  
will grow in love, turn more and more toward God and neighbor,  
be prepared for action on behalf of God and ready for that day when our faith will be sight!

AMEN