

Answer This Heavenly Call When You Feel Stuck in Routine

It's Sunday night, and the only light in our foyer is from the moon, stretching its arm-beams across our lawn and bringing the outdoors inside with its reach. The house is at rest. Finally. It's as if we all sighed—the walls, the keyboard, the well-loved doormats and me—when the last child turned off her light.

Time lapse would have revealed sparkling white dishes unloaded, piled high, scraped (licked?) and rinsed for a reload—all in 12 hours. Blankets, folded, then strewn across the family room and folded again.

My life sometimes feels like “rinse and repeat.”

What does a creative-type do when 90 percent of their day feels so—uncreative? When the margin for imagination appears to be small?

So, it's Sunday night and I sit down to my desk that faces the dark foyer. I see the moon through the glass French doors, aslant on the floor, except now the light is on in my office and the GE bulbs are crowding out the remnants of organic outdoors. My fingers click against the quiet. I've been planning to write tonight.

My music is set. I've listened to the same song on repeat for three years of writing. One single track.

I write the first sentence, read it in my head and I delete. Three times. Then four. I start on my next paragraph with hopes to circle back to the first after I've gotten into a flow. Except I'm in no flow. I'm stuck.

I don't have the kind of words that feel like they sing when I move from reading in my head to reading out loud—which I always do when I feel good about what comes out of me. I have words, but not music. Just clicking of the keys.

Ten. Twenty. Thirty minutes of this and I have a decision. I can push through with what feels like filling out paperwork in a doctor's office or I can wait to sing later.

This "stuck" isn't unique to writers, it's the influenza of all creators. It comes and goes as if in a mystery – at least that's how we treat it. Who knows when a glorious stint of writing books or composing songs or sketching or choreographing a performance might just one day ... fall sick? We creative-types can live under a low-grade anxiety about this flu that might come and leave us bedridden and unaware of what exactly hit us.

As a creator, "stuck" isn't a barrier getting in the way of what I'm supposed to do, "stuck" is the indicator telling me that something isn't quite right on my insides about how I perceive God and how I'm approaching what He has given me to do to bring Him glory. And this principle goes beyond creativity: "stuck" in life and in creating, in raising children and growing a marriage and cultivating a new ministry—it isn't something we need to begrudgingly just get past and over. It's the gift He has given us to pause.

I write because I love Him. And I write best when I'm most aware of His love for me.

This whole thing—the creating, the inventing, the mothering, the ministering—isn't transactional, in which He gives me a task and I perform it. He's not the proctor in the sky. He's a Father, wanting to continually grow deeper with His people. The work He gives us is merely opportunity for this communion.

These days, we are all tempted to work against a clock. We feel the deadlines like a metronome: always ticking, always

reminding. Because in many ways, creating has been whittled down to what can be monetized and followed and shared and spread wide.

From this perspective, “stuck” feels especially terrible. Every part of being stuck in every season feels exactly what the word implies.

But for us God followers, any time we’re stuck—He is moving. Hedging. Getting our attention, alluring the eyes we wouldn’t necessarily give to Him when we’re in a flow or when life is producing as it should.

“Stuck” is a gift for the believer, for the creative type, creating with Him. It simply means “there’s more dialogue with Me to be had, right here. Let’s sit and stay a while. Your project can wait, and it will be better for the waiting.”

Throughout Scripture, He has held up His people in prisons and deserts and way stations of their own making. Paul was held up from sharing the gospel because he was in chains. Stuck, we might have called Him.

“Invited,” God might say.

Your project can wait. And it will be better for the waiting.

(Life as you want it to be can wait. And it will be better for the waiting.)

The dialogue that happens with God in the waiting is what changes a person, what grows a person.

Now, it’s two o’clock on a Tuesday afternoon and I’m at a coffee shop. The plan is for me to write. Two hours before, I was prepping dinner and prepping kids for an afternoon at home with Daddy and prepping myself to create. Except on this particular day that ominous “stuck” overshadowed me. One option is to push through. The other is—to wait. To talk to God about what He might want to reach in my heart. (These

barriers to my creating are actually barriers to my communing with Him.)

Three hours later, and I'm home without a single sentence but with a heart just a little more engaged with His work in my life and His Word.

This is success. Not cranking out work towards a deadline, not prolifically producing, not being ranked as "best" in your field.

Success as a creative (as in most vocations) is engaging with the heart of God and having it bleed out into your work such that those who receive from it (when and if, in His timing, others may receive) are truly receiving ... Him.

{On a practical note, my best work has come after multiple delays and hiccups that seemed to be roadblocks but were what He'd created to slow me up so that I might talk to Him. And I mean in life—my best work in life—not just my writing.}

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