

Be Free to Disappoint People

I knew I had some really tough choices to make.

My plate wasn't just full, it was overflowing. It was cracking under the sheer volume of stuff I'd continued to pile on top of it.

I was a hoarder; a chronic "yes" sayer.

It wasn't so much that I wasn't in tune with how much I could do, it was more of a fear that I'd disappoint someone by saying no, or I'd let them down.

I am, by nature, a pleaser. If you want to utterly break my heart, just say these words, "I am disappointed in you." I almost will never get over hearing that.

I can't stand to disappoint!

And yet, I knew that something had to give.

Either I would disappoint someone now by letting go of the majority of the responsibilities I was carrying, or I'd disappoint everyone when I had a nervous breakdown and couldn't do anything at all.

It had truly come down to that!

My sanity now or my health later on.

It was a tipping point.

I sat down and made a list of every single responsibility I had in my life: from being a wife and mom to being a blogger and Bible study leader, to being a volunteer at my local church ... I listed it all.

Then I took some time to reflect on what I felt the Lord had called my family to do. Not just me – yes, that was included

– but my family.

Where are we going?

What's our mission?

What's our goal as a family?

We plan our summer vacations better than we plan our families.

When we go on a summer vacation, we mark our route, we plan our hotels and meals, we plan our stops to sight see and our destination.

But what about our family's journey?

What is your destination? Where do you want to be as a family when your children are grown? What are you doing to get there? Are the choices you are making now helping you reach that destination, or are you just driving aimlessly down an unknown street hoping you will somehow arrive at your destination by pure chance?

Once I had a clear vision for our destination, I looked at my list of responsibilities and asked myself this question about each one: "Does this responsibility actively help me reach that destination or is it dead weight?"

If it was dead weight, it had to go.

But before I let it go, I had to do this one thing.

I had to give myself permission to disappoint myself and others.

In an attempt to please everyone around me, my plate was overflowing with other people's visions and other people's destinations. But where was mine?

Lost and forgotten down at the very bottom of the pile!

In essence, I was willing to disappoint God to please others.

“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10, NKJV).

There are two kinds of expectations we meet in life:

Expectations of ourselves. If you are type-A, you likely have very high or impossible expectations of yourself. When you set a goal, you set it higher for yourself than you would ever set it for anyone else. We have to succeed ... every time. No failure. And we have to succeed better than anyone ever succeeded.

This is a trap. It keeps us in a constant state of stress because of our zero-tolerance policy for ourselves.

When it comes to letting go of extra responsibilities, we often have to give ourselves permission to “fail” at pleasing others first. This is a very freeing activity. Once you realize that you are simply incapable of succeeding every time, you are free! You are free to disappoint others. You are free to walk away and not allow that disappointment to eat at you for days and weeks.

Does it bother you a little that someone was disappointed? Yes, and it should. We can’t walk through life calloused; but by bothering us, it doesn’t have to eat at us.

Expectations from others. It is natural that people have expectations of others. There are those who have a vision to fulfill a certain task and then there are those whose mission in life is to help others fulfill that task. These helpers derive incredible joy from doing what they do to help others. Their vision is similar and they have the capability to help others succeed.

The problem is when we don’t have the same mission or vision

as the one who has placed an expectation on us. We don't necessarily have the capability to help them reach their desired destination and we don't derive any joy from helping them reach their goal. But we take on the task because we feel pressure.

Not only is their expectation dead weight on us, we're dead weight on them, too. We are unsatisfied in doing a task we were never meant to do, and they are frustrated because we lack the capability and drive to do what is expected of us.

The kindest thing we can do is to free ourselves to do what we've been called to do and free them to find the one who has been called to fill the role that will help them reach their goal!

When we look at expectations from this perspective, we realize that we're not really disappointing someone by saying no to them, we're freeing them to find the one who will serve them best!

We're free to give our best yes to the task that God called us to, and they're free to find the one whose best yes is meant for them!

This truth has set me free!

And as we are closing the chapter on 2015, I am amazed at what a difference one year can make. Only 365 days ago I sat here with clenched teeth, tensed shoulders, pulsating veins and giant cup of coffee to make it through my day.

Now I sit here with my feet up, a smile on my face, a heart at peace as I am satisfied because I am right where God wants me to be.

I am still serving others, but in the very role God cut out for me!

Where do you want to be on December 31, 2016?

What steps do you need to take to get there?

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