

Combat Stress and Emptiness With This One Powerful Statement

Empty and wordless. These were the two words which slipped out of my mouth the day before the Proverbs 31 Ministries annual She Speaks Conference last weekend.

Due to the rollercoaster I've been on for the past year and a half because of the end of my marriage, stress over finances and ongoing difficult circumstances, worrying about my children and trying to figure out this new life on my own, I was feeling tired and spent. Although my faith is stronger than ever before and I focus on being positive and happy every day, something in my heart was still heavy. I was well aware that spiritual warfare is fierce every year leading up to the week of She Speaks where an army of 800 women are equipped to go out into the world and make God famous, yet I was still perplexed and felt a weird sense of inexplicable void.

Yet in one spoken comment, it all became clear.

I was talking to my precious friends Micca and Sharon the day before the conference and sharing the hard things I was facing and having to deal with. Things that had recently broken my heart in ways I didn't think it could break anymore. Things that had made me justifiably angry but which were threatening to steal my peace. As we talked, tears I am usually successful at holding back and hiding began to well up in my eyes. Without hesitation, I inadvertently said to them, "I just really need your prayers. I feel empty and wordless, and I need God to do something amazing in my heart this weekend."

Empty. Wordless. Neither of which is good for any believer, because God wants us all to be fulfilled and full of words to share His goodness with others. But these feelings are

especially troubling for someone who makes a living writing words. Emptiness causes a lack of motivation to write, and wordless means no words are getting on paper—and when a completed new book manuscript is due in just a few weeks, this is a big problem.

Until that very moment I hadn't been able to describe the void I had been feeling. But those two words bubbled up from somewhere deep inside my soul and spilled over my lips. We all three stopped right there and bowed our heads as Sharon poured out a beautiful, powerful prayer over me that caused those emerging tears to slide down my cheeks.

Over the next three days at the She Speaks Conference, God did do something amazing—as always! I got to spend time with incredible godly women who have been in my life for over a decade as we do ministry together and who have become close dear friends. I got to love on and encourage countless sisters in Christ who had come to the conference with hearts full of dreams and a burning desire to learn how to do what God had called them to do. I had the privilege of teaching several workshops about Christian writing and speaking. I rubbed shoulders with hundreds of women whose passionate faith was contagious and who worshipped God with arms held high in praise and worship. I received many words of encouragement and love from women I have never met before but who follow me online or have read my books, each one speaking words of affirmation and kindness that filled my heart more than they could ever imagine.

But it was one sentence in a keynote message spoken by my friend Chrystal which God used to open the door for me to find victory over those two words.

Chrystal shared a story about a time when she was on a bike riding tour/adventure, went down a hill too fast and crashed. She was hurt and bleeding and needed immediate medical care, but she wanted to finish what she had set out to do. She

wanted to just push through and ignore the pain, broken bones and blood and keep persevering towards her intended goal of finishing the bike ride at the final destination. But the paramedic insisted she get medical attention at the hospital, so she had to stop and do what was best for her.

She said afterwards it dawned on her that all too often, we try to keep pushing through life, ignoring our pain, and just do what we planned to do or what we have to do. We keep our eyes on our goals instead of tending to our wounds. We try to convince everyone we're doing just fine, when inside we are empty, broken and in pain. She said sometimes we need God to wake us up and say, "Girl, you are bleeding! Pull over and get some help!"

Upon her saying that powerful statement, it was as if God immediately whispered to my heart, "Tracie, you are bleeding. Pull over and get some help." The thought startled me, and more tears filled my eyes. I suddenly realized I had been living on autopilot, never stopping to acknowledge my own needs, much less tend to them. I had been working countless hours every week for months trying to meet all of my obligations for my full-time job, my publisher, my children and my bills. I had been burying hurt, fears and stress so deep in my heart they had worn holes in my spirit, causing my peace and joy to secretly seep out and leave me empty. I had been so busy trying to stay strong and positive, carry the weight of all the burdens of life and parenting all alone, ignore my pain, and act like I'm "fine" that I was slap worn-out and not fine at all.

I realized I was bone-weary from the inside out, and in a sense, bleeding.

Chrystal referred to Jeremiah 31:25, which says, "For I satiate the weary souls and I replenish every languishing soul." The Message Bible translates that verse as "I'll refresh tired bodies; I'll restore tired souls." I desperately

wanted refreshment and restoration in body and soul, especially after also hearing my friend say, "If you're running on empty, what do you have to give anyone?" Great. Point. Especially for someone in full time ministry. Mercy.

I knew I had been running on empty—barely even running on fumes, honestly—for far too long. I desperately needed physical rest and soul rest and longed for God to replace sorrow with joy. Yet again.

It suddenly became obvious that the reason I couldn't seem to get any words on the blank paper was because I had been trying to ignore the pain and bleeding and just persevere and pour myself into ministry, my sweet kids and all my responsibilities and obligations. I needed to be filled before I could pour out. I needed to be healed before I could finish the tasks I set out to do. I needed to be honest with God and honest with myself about the wounds I was nursing and intentionally seek joy and rest in Him and through Him. I needed to pull over, for just a minute, and let God tend to me.

Today, although the same worries and concerns exist, my heart feels so much fuller! I am filled with how much God loves me. I am filled with gratitude and praise for how I see Him meeting my every need in the exact way it needs to be met, being no more and no less than I need. I am filled to the overflow with the joy my kids bring me, how much I love them and the close friendship we all share. I am filled knowing He hears my prayers and the deepest desires of my heart and that one day He will answer those prayers in the ways and timing He sees best. I am filled when I allow Him to replace my anger, even when justified, with the peace only He can give.

I have confidence God can stop the bleeding and dress my wounds in the way He knows will bring perfect healing and abundant joy.

I no longer feel empty, because God filled the empty spaces in my heart with sweet friends, words of affirmation from total strangers and confirmation of His love, His presence and His call on my life. He filled me with renewed hope and excitement for the journey He has me on and what the future holds. He helped me refocus on all of my blessings instead of problems and regenerated my soul. He filled with me the excitement of expectantly waiting to see what He will do next. And He filled me with an overflowing desire to spend more time reading His Word so He can put words on my tongue and my fingertips.

And—as you can see—I already have some new words to share. Smiles.

I'm getting back on the bike (aka computer) and typing away this week on my manuscript, and I would appreciate your prayers as I work towards the deadline. God continues to help me live out the messages I am writing about and as I write this next book, titled *Love Your Life Again*, which will release next summer, I am confident He is going to help me finish the task one day and one step of faith at a time. I pray I never forget to pull over when I need some special attention from the Greatest Physician of all time.

If you've been feeling empty and wordless, is it possible you need to pull over? Might you be bleeding and need some holy attention? Do you need to be honest with God about your pain and allow Him to tend to your wounds right now, instead of trying to push forward on autopilot? Do you long for God to fill your heart with more of Him than you've ever known, so you can be filled with words of praise and worship that can spill out into the hearts of others?

Sweet friend, it's okay to pull over, admit we're wounded and bleeding and ask for help from the only One who knows what we need. It's OK to let him get in the pilot's seat so you can have a rest. God is always there to help us not only heal but get back up, fill up and step up to start living the life He

wants us to enjoy. Take care of you before you try to take care of everyone else. {eoa}

*To learn more about how you can begin experiencing this transformation in your life too, purchase a copy of Unsinkable Faith: God-filled Strategies for Transforming the Way You Think, Feel and Live by **Tracie Miles**.*

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