

Grabbing the One Thing That's Important to God

Editor's Note: Bo Stern's husband, Steve, has been diagnosed with ALS, an incurable degenerative disease.

This morning in my office, I'm listening to St. Matthew Passion, BWV 244 , Aria "Erbarme Dich" by Bach. It is a beautiful, haunting aria and in the voice of the soprano I hear longing and loneliness and passion and strength and weakness and so much beauty. What I don't hear is distraction. She is not singing while ironing or cooking or checking her email. She is singing as if singing this aria is the first and last thing she will ever do. She is singing like the words are her life blood and the melody her oxygen – like she was born to sing this one song at exactly this moment.

On this, my first day back to work in ten days, I am so envious of this woman I do not know. Though it's lovely, I don't long for her ability to sing. I long for her ability to focus.

I am re-entering a spinning world. I could list the things on my plate, but it would only read whiny and I know we're all busier than we'd like to be. Do you ever feel that your life is surrounded by wind chimes and one of them is always, always ringing? Just when you get them all stilled and stopped, a slight gust of wind sets them all into motion once again. That's where I'm at right now. Steve. Work. Kids. Writing. Speaking. Blogging. Creating. Building relationships. Ring, ring, ring. Sometimes I hear them in my sleep and I long to love each one separately, individually, with the time and attention they deserve.

I want to blog more consistently. I want to have more quality coffee dates with friends I love and with friends I don't yet know. I want to write another book. I want to promote the new book coming out...tomorrow (oh. my. word!) I want to say yes to every single invitation to speak because I know that people

are longing for hope in the middle of their battles.

However,

I cannot.

I must focus and focus hard on the One Thing that is set above them all right now. I know the answer here should be Jesus because it sounds good and also because He is, most certainly the ONE THING worth pursuing, but in terms of my life purpose right now, the name at the top of the list is Steve Stern. He needs me. He needs my family. He needs our focus as he enters a new stretch of road on this journey he on. This illness is an interesting thing because it is one journey that a person must and also cannot walk alone.

So, this morning as I looked at my list and heard the faint ringing of wind chimes in the background of everything else, I whispered to them the same thing Jesus has been whispering to me, "Be still." This is time we will not get back again.

This is Steve's one, true, beautiful life and I am here to witness it and to make it as beautiful as it can be. This, for now, is my life's work. My most important creative endeavor. And if the book doesn't sell and the blog gets dusty and lonely and my words all run out...I will still know that I have invested my energy in the right One Thing.

This isn't goodbye – I promise. I'm still writing and dreaming and speaking at Westside Church regularly (and I have said yes to a handful of conferences which I will post on the calendar soon!) But I am pulling in the reins on my life in an attempt to harness the notes of this aria into something that I hope will make Jesus proud and famous. My deepest desire is that in the end it will be said of us: sickness put up an fierce fight, but love won.

Bo Stern is a blogger and author of *Beautiful Battliefields* (NavPress). She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her Goliath came in the form of her husband's terminal illness, a battle they are still fighting

with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends, and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Oregon.