

How You Can Stifle Your Gift

Last week at the Kidmin Conference in Chicago we heard the story of a young woman named Mandy.

Mandy is a gifted singer who had a dream of teaching at the collegiate level. In this video interview, she took us on the journey of being accepted into an accomplished school before she even completed her tryout. She spoke of the fun and freedom she experienced as she started her journey toward her dream.

But it wasn't long before she noticed some changes. It became progressively more difficult to hear accompanying instruments. Her hearing was fading away.

Within months Mandy was profoundly deaf. Her dreams were shattered. She left school, moved back home and (as Mandy put it) simply stopped living.

Over the following year, Mandy journeyed to rediscover how to live with this new disability. And though it took time she discovered that she could still sing. Today she performs but she performs for a different purpose.

Mandy spoke so honestly about her struggle to make sense of why God would allow this to happen. In many ways, she is still in that struggle. But what shines through it all is her gift to sing.

What struck me so deeply about Mandy's testimony was not *how* she overcame but *why*. Though I don't know that she would respond to the question "Why?" in this way. You'd have to ask her. But here's what God spoke to my heart as I listened to Mandy sing.

This gift I've given her is not for her benefit. If it were, she'd be able to hear it. No, I didn't give this gift to her

so she could enjoy the sound of her own voice. I gave her this gift so she could be a testimony of who I AM. Her ability to hear does not mute the voice. She needs to sing. She's intrinsically compelled to sing. It is a gift that must flow from her to those around her. As a testimony of Me. To stifle the song within her is to stifle My divinework in her.

That word was a gift to me. Why? Because I have a gift that I've often discounted. Set aside. Ignored.

There are not great opportunities for women to speak/preach within the church. There are many theological discussions surrounding the controversial topic. I'm not opening up that conversation here.

But I am more settled today with the idea that God gave me a gift ... the ability to teach, to take an audience on a journey through God's Word. Not so I can hear the sound of my own voice ... not for my own recognition ... but for God's glory. When I submit this gift to the authority of my Lord, then I'm compelled to allow Him to use it in whatever capacity He chooses.

Returning to Matthew 25:14-30, I'm driven by this truth. The Master has entrusted me with talents according to my abilities. To bury the talent is to improperly steward what He's given me. To stifle the gift is to stifle the divine work He is doing within me.

I want to be the faithful servant. Simply that. Nothing more.

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