

Need a Do-Over? Cling to This Eye-Opening Truth

I couldn't wait for the first day of fourth grade! This was the year I would finally be allowed to play an instrument in the elementary school band. When the day arrived that my mother and I met with Mr. Boland, the band director, I looked at all of the available instruments and shook my 9-year-old head in disagreement. They all just seemed too ordinary to me.

My sister had already played the flute, and my best friend chose the saxophone last year. I had heard that the girl up the street was choosing the clarinet. Wasn't there anything other musical instrument I would be allowed to play?

Mr. Boland wisely said, "Well, it seems that you might be a good candidate for the oboe. We've never had anyone play the oboe in the elementary band."

And so, the oboe it was for me! I spent the next three months practicing every night in the family kitchen, much to my parents' chagrin! The oboe, when it is played well and expertly, can produce a beautiful and exquisite sound. However, when an amateur musician is attempting to extract music from this double-reed instrument, in the early attempts, all that can be heard is screeching.

The months quickly passed, and it was time for the annual Christmas concert at school. The fourth-grade band would be making their long-awaited and much-heralded debut. Mr. Boland had promised everyone that our class was the finest group of young musicians he had ever had the opportunity to direct!

Our premiere piece, since we were only performing one, was the Christmas classic, "Good King Wenceslas". We had practiced every Friday morning before school for weeks and nearly had it memorized. Mr. Boland had even given me, the oboe virtuoso, a

small solo in the song. My solo would come at the very end of the symphonic offering.

Mr. Boland raised his baton in the air, and we began the familiar melody. My heart was racing out of my chest as I prepared for my 8-measure solo. Just before I was due to begin the simply melody, something happened. The bass drum started to race away with the song, and the trumpets lost their place in the music. I didn't know whether to play or not!

I frantically looked at Mr. Boland for direction and he smiled at the band with a bit of a twinkle in his eye and simply motioned for us to stop playing. Then, he whispered to all of us who were aghast at our dreadful mistake, "Let's begin again. You can do it. I believe in you."

The second time through was flawless. We could have performed on Carnegie Hall that cold, winter night. When we finished, our parents gave us a standing ovation. (Of course they did ... they were our parents.)

After the concert, as we were waiting for our parents to pick us up in the band room, Mr. Boland asked the fourth-grade musicians to take a seat. We were all nervous that we had let him down and that we would no longer be known as his "finest."

Mr. Boland was a quiet Irishman with bright red hair and a family full of little Irish people. That unforgettable evening, he pulled a pencil out of his shirt pocket and showed us the end that was not used for writing.

"Can anyone tell me what this is?" he simply asked.

"It's an eraser," answered one of the saxophone players.

"And can anyone tell me what it is used for?" he probed.

"To erase something that was written wrong," replied a percussionist.

"Yes," Mr. Boland said as he put his pencil back in his pocket. "And, once it is erased, you can never see it again. I want you to erase from your memory the first version of our song that you played tonight and only remember the second version, because your parents and I will only remember the second, perfect rendition of your lovely Christmas carol."

Do you need a do-over today? Do you need to get out that eraser and delete a past mistake or failure? Do you need to take a deep breath and start over again?

I want you to know the conductor is smiling at you with just a bit of a twinkle in his eye. He believes in you and loves to give second chances to anyone who is brave enough to take them!

God, the Father, knows what you are capable of and doesn't want your mistakes to hold you back from trying again and again and again. We all wish we could press rewind from time to time and just have an instant do-over. And the glory of serving Jesus is that you can. He is the God of the second chance, so don't allow your past to hold you back from being the person you were created to be. {eo}

Carol McLeod is an author and popular speaker at women's conferences and retreats where she teaches the Word of God with great joy and enthusiasm. Carol encourages and empowers women with passionate and practical biblical messages mixed with her own special brand of hope and humor. She has written five books, including *No More Ordinary, Holy Estrogen!*, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart* and *Defiant Joy!* Her most recent book, *Refined: Finding Joy in the Midst of the Fire*, was released last August. Her teaching DVD, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart*, won the Telly Award, a prestigious industry award for excellence in religious programming. You can also listen to Carol's "Jolt of Joy" program daily on the Charisma Podcast Network. Connect with Carol or inquire about her speaking to your group at .