

What God Would Have You Do While You Wait for Your Calling

Years ago, my husband got a new job, and we moved to a new town. As we joined a new church, I thought, *I'll never get to serve God again. These people don't even know me. They especially don't know what I'm good at.* In my previous church, I had led the children's choir—a role I dearly loved. But not surprisingly, that role was filled in my new church.

So rather glumly, I set aside my love for children's choirs and focused on a ministry where the workers were few: the toddler room. There I made friends with a couple of other young moms as we corralled kids and passed out animal crackers. I also made several friends in my Bible study group.

One night, these new friends invited me to join them for dinner out, and guess who I happened to sit next to in the restaurant? The children's choir director! I was delighted to meet her and gushed on and on about how much I had loved my little choir back home. To my great surprise, my new friend did not share my sentiment. In fact, she confided to me that she longed to pass her directorship on. I wanted to burst out in song right then and there. Instead, I smiled quietly and began praying. After a few months, I was given the privilege of leading kids to worship God in song.

A Longing to Serve

Do you ache to serve God in some new way? Are you frustrated by the lack of opportunities you have to serve God in your church or ministry? Perhaps you secretly think you're better equipped than the person in a particular role. Maybe you have more experience or more natural giftings. Maybe it seems like she just wants control.

It can be a tight balance to humbly make yourself available without becoming pushy or self-promoting or controlling.

It also takes humility to pursue an opportunity that you have no experience with. Maybe you long to serve on the worship team or tell the Bible story for the elementary school kids. Or perhaps you dream of starting a new ministry for unwed moms. Yet you wonder if God would approve of your efforts to expand your ministry reach—especially since it's *His* ministry.

New Leaders

The New Testament is peppered with examples of experienced church leaders making way for new leaders to get started. Repeatedly, we see church leaders validating and recommending newer or younger leaders. For instance, Barnabas validated Paul's conversion story, when the Jews weren't sure they could trust him. (Acts 9:26–30) Also, Paul chose Timothy as a partner, based on the recommendations of the brothers at Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:2).

But what if you don't have a "Barnabas" offering to validate and recommend you? Should you be proactive about widening your reach? Should you ask to be recommended to lead a Bible study or speak for a retreat? Or should you sit on your hands and wait for God to open doors?

I would argue that we should do both. Here are some guidelines that I've found helpful:

1. Focus on the opportunities God has given.

Rather than putting so much emphasis on the ways you hope God will use you, commit yourself to the tasks He's already given you. Be responsible. Serve well. Be passionate. Pour yourself into the opportunities God has granted—whether that be teaching the Bible story to preschoolers, speaking at a small Bible study group or ministering to your own family. Put God in charge of the timetable for expanding your ministry, and be

faithful in the little things.

2. Listen to input.

Because of our pride, our insecurities and our selfishness, it's often incredibly difficult to see ourselves accurately. We need others in the body of Christ to hold up a mirror and tell us what they see in us. Sometimes this means being encouraged to try a role we feel inadequate for. Other times it means being redirected away from a role that we aren't gifted or ready for. Relying on input of other believers is one way of letting God point us toward the good works that He's prepared in advance for each of us (Eph. 2:10).

3. Be patient.

Friend, if God is stirring you toward a particular ministry, take heart. If God truly has gifted you to serve in this way, the church will not be blind to it. You may have to let someone know what you'd like to do (which often requires a certain measure of humility). But you also might need to wait. Put your hope in God, and make yourself available. Sweetly serve where you are and pray that God will open doors. In the meantime, learn the lessons God has for you in waiting.

4. Ask leaders for help.

If you long to lead worship, ask the music director about the steps for being involved. If you are passionate about leadership, ask your leader if you could shadow her for a day. Learn from the people who are more seasoned than you, and invite their input and help. Then (and this is important), do what they tell you to do! I've found that sometimes people want my help but not my input. They want me to help them *into* a ministry role, but they don't want my help in *becoming* what the role requires. We want to always be women who take advantage of the help leaders are gracious enough to provide.

5. Trust God with your networking strategy.

In college, I had a boss who became a longtime mentor and friend and who has also become an author. When I first tried my hand at writing, this man was kind enough to encourage me and give input on many of my first writing pieces. I also had a college roommate who married an editor for a ministry magazine. Her husband accepted my very first magazine article for publication.

Looking back, it amazes me to see the network that God put in place for my writing. I didn't choose my summer job or my college roommate based on the people who could one day help me with my writing aspirations. I didn't even know that I wanted to become a writer at that point! Yet God was strategically placing people into my life to help get where He wanted me to go.

And you know what? He's doing the same thing for you. Whether you want to direct a children's choir or help with decorations for the ladies' tea, you don't have to be pushy or self-promoting. You can trust that your God has a plan for His church, and you're part of it. {eoa}

© 2001-2017 *Revive Our Hearts*. **Shannon Popkin** is a speaker and writer from Grand Rapids, Michigan, who enjoys blending her love for humor and storytelling with her passion for God's Word. Shannon's first book, *Control Girl: Lessons on Surrendering Your Burden of Control From 7 Women of the Bible* was released in January, 2017. Shannon is happy to be sharing life with Ken, who makes her laugh every single day. Together, they live the fast-paced life of parenting three teens.