

What Keeps You From Walking in Your Calling

Watch night is an African-American tradition dating back to Dec. 31, 1862, when slaves from across the nation gathered in churches to pray and await the possibility of freedom. It started the night before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by Abraham Lincoln.

Those slaves waited patiently, hoping the document would be signed and loose the bonds of slavery in America. They believed their freedom was contingent upon one man. Yet, the Bible declares that Jesus Christ alone has the power to give us freedom: “‘Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed’” (John 8:36).

I don't know what it's like to be a slave in the fields, but I have had some areas in my life in which I wasn't as victorious as I could have been. Fear, intimidation, regret, self-pity and inner pain were among my slave masters.

For years I sat on my God-given gifts and wouldn't take a microphone, worried about what people might think of me. I allowed the fear of man to bind me with chains no less oppressive than the physical shackles that cut the feet of those dear slaves.

It's amazing to me how we, as Christian women, often fail to realize that our freedom is not contingent upon what anyone else says or thinks about us. Many of us continue to sit in churches like those slaves, waiting and hoping for the day when someone comes by to release us to walk in the fullness of our gifts and callings in God. But we need not wait any longer.

On the Brink of Liberty

Today, you stand at the brink of freedom, for your

emancipation has already arrived in the person of Jesus Christ. Your Emancipation Proclamation was signed 2,000 years ago in His precious blood. Every morning holds fresh opportunities for you to reach up and realize the hope of your high calling (Lam. 3:22-23).

You and I don't have to wait to enter into the promises of God's liberty. Because of Christ's blood, we are free to enjoy the privileges of sonship, which include walking in the fullness of His high calling and realizing all His benefits.

We can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13). Neither the opinions of people nor the agenda of demonic forces can hinder us. "No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me," says the Lord (Is. 54:17).

If He's called you to sing, sing! If you know you can preach, preach! If you can exhort, help someone! You are not bound. Christ has set you free! What are you waiting for?

Consider for a minute what it is that keeps you from walking in the place of calling and blessing you know in your heart belongs to you. How long will you sit on your gift? Your gift was given to you for someone else, not for you.

Trapped in the Shadows of the Past

Perhaps you've been hurt by circumstances that have broken your spirit and destroyed your confidence. As Spirit-led women, let's forget about the woundedness of the past. Life is too short to wallow in the mud of self-pity. We're in a war, and we've all been hurt.

You have to get up, brush off your knees, dry your eyes, hold your own heart together and make a difference in someone's life. It's only when you begin to give to others that you'll sense the freedom God has birthed in your own soul.

Too many of God's daughters sit in pews Sunday after Sunday, silenced, shut down and weighed down by regret. If you fit into this category, you're not alone.

It grieves me to see women hiding in the shadows of a busy church, shamed and saddened by secrets from their past they wish to conceal. Christian women should be restored to their place of wholeness before God so their testimony draws other women back to the Lord. Yet many of us are still trying to keep our secrets instead of giving them to the Lord.

Every valley you've walked through can become a bridge of blessing for someone else. Your experiences, no matter how stained with sin, give you authority and empathy to speak into someone's life in a way no other individual could. You can look into the eyes of a woman deep in sin and say: "Baby, if He did it for me, He'll surely do it for you. He's no respecter of persons."

He will turn your shadows of shame to a pathway of blessing for others. Give God those places of regret. Let Him turn them into your crown. Doing so will take getting real with yourself and others, and it will require some self-examination.

Genuine freedom will require you to get to the heart of the matter—your heart. Breaking the chains of bondage on the outside may take some deep healing inside. Don't be afraid to seek that healing. You'll need it to master the balancing act ahead.

A Woman's Balancing Act

As women, we are expected to be able to split up our time to meet the needs of all the people depending on us and still have something left over. Many women grow weary and give up. Others see the juggling act as far too overwhelming and never start. These women wait for the day to arrive when the demands wind down and they can find time for God and His calling on their lives.

Sometimes I feel like a character in *Fiddler on the Roof*, a musical set in the small Jewish village of Anatevka, Russia, in 1905. It tells the story of a Jewish milkman, Tevye, his wife, Golde, and their five daughters. The film version opens with a fiddler standing on top of a roof, playing furiously.

Like the fiddler, I often find myself performing a rooftop balancing act, standing on top of the magnificent platform God has provided and attempting to fiddle without falling. How do I, as a woman, strike a balance in my heart between leading and following?

This is part of the balancing act we must master. It takes knowing how to embrace the potential God has placed inside of us, discerning when to take charge in leadership, and then knowing when to lay low long enough to hear the Spirit's admonition to slow down, calm down and follow.

A woman's success both in ministry and at home requires great balance. Don't be an extremist. Submit all that you do and think to the Lord daily in prayer, and learn to hear from Him.

Stand on the Rock of Jesus Christ, and you will become an emotional rock upon which others can depend. Some of us are so extreme in our emotions that no one knows what to expect from us from one day to the next. Today we're happy, but tomorrow we may be angry, rejecting everyone in sight.

Learn how to be consistent and temper your statements with love. Get control of those rampant emotions with God's help. You'll find it's possible to control even the most passionate of temperaments with work and prayer.

A Secret Place

Through the years, I have learned to set aside a place in my heart and mind to which I can retire from the push and pull of life, a place I carry around with me wherever I go, a place of serenity and peace. Depending on the busyness of my day, I may make it there only once. On other days I am able to escape

more often, but only in brief 10-minute periods. Once in a while I have the pleasure of relaxing in my special place for extended periods, delighting in the peace of God that passes all understanding.

Escaping to my private, internal retreat allows me to meet life with renewed confidence and courage. Escaping to yours will do the same for you. Seek that hidden place of peace with God, and determine to find in its serenity the strength you need to begin a new way of living. Move beyond your comfort zone and believe that God will use you as He never has before.

God Has Need of Thee

Let the Lord reveal the endless opportunities you have to serve Him. He has given us only a few years to walk with Him in His harvest fields, so why would we want to make excuses for not helping Him reap?

Let's forget about fear, intimidation, regret, shame and self-pity. Forget about the disappointments from the past. I know the beauty that's in you, and I know the pain that's there, too. God keeps every tear we cry in a bottle, but sometimes you've got to take your bottle and dump it out for someone else (Ps. 56:8).

Determine that you will not waste your gifts another day or even another moment. God has a great plan and purpose for your life, and all you have to do is say yes. What are you waiting for?

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