



Discover and Embrace Your Calling

Every person alive has a past.

Some are more painful than others. Some are less painful than others. But everyone has a past, which is the story God orchestrated AND divinely designed in his or her life.

We hear so often to forget the past, maybe because it's too painful or maybe it's because we simply want to move past it. But rather than simply forget the past, God wants us to understand that He either caused or allowed the events of our past to happen – for the sole purpose of equipping us for ministry in a way that was specifically destined just for us.

God wants every person to know that He loves them unconditionally, but also, that He has called them to a unique purpose to fulfill in this life – not in spite of their past, but because of it. And you know what? Sometimes looking back is exactly what we need to do to move forward into a life of divine purpose.

Rather than focus on the pain of the past, we can focus on what we learned, how we have been redeemed, and that we are overcomers because of Jesus Christ.

We can focus on how God has equipped us to comfort others with His hope and peace based on the experiences of our past, just as we are told to do in 2 Corinthians 1:4, *“He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.”*

We can keep our pain rooted deep into our heart, or we can let it go and allow God to replace our pain with purpose, and use our past experiences for His glory. God never wastes our pain. Only we do that. Let's choose to show the enemy that redemption in Christ always wins.

I encourage you to spend some time in prayer and ask God to help you work through the following five steps to help you overcome the heartaches of the past, trust God with your future, and discover your divinely designed purpose.

Tracie



Five Steps to Help You Discover Your Divinely Designed Calling Based on the Experiences of Your Past

1. STEP ONE

Refuse to live like a victim.

The definition of a victim is – PREY

The definition of a victor is – CHAMPION, WINNER

Life is hard. People hurt us. Situations are messy. Pain is inevitable. Hearts are broken. Disappointments happen.

And as a result, our hearts become wounded and our spirit gets crushed. We gradually allow the lies of the enemy to convince us we worthless, unforgiveable, unusable, unlovable, of little value, and soon believe we are doomed to living a life without purpose or joy. We feel like a victim in more ways than, and assume we are justified in feeling that way.

But since Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, we do not have to live like a victim anymore. If we refuse to accept His priceless, life changing gifts of love, mercy, grace and forgiveness – all the things He died on the cross for – then we are denying the value of what He did for us. He died so we would have eternal life, but also so that we would know our value in Him without a shadow of a doubt.

We are choosing to remain a victim instead of choosing to live as a victor. Who wants to live as prey, when they can live as a winning champion? Choose to today live as a victor in Christ and not a victim of a broken world or a life of hard knocks.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Search for bible verses and passages that reiterate Christ' love for you, using your Bible's word key, or websites such as www.biblehub.com, www.biblegateway.com, or www.crosswalk.com.
- Commit to memorizing the verses that speak to you the most. Ask God to help you let these truths sink into your spirit and erase your victim mentality and self condemning thoughts with thoughts that support how much you are loved by Him.

2. STEP TWO

Let God heal your scars.

Many women have been told the same things their entire lives – don't cry, don't show too much emotion, try to be strong, keep your pain to yourself, keep your weakness under wrap, don't people get to know the real you.

The only thing we achieve by living by these misguided principles is assuring we live behind the protection of a mask.

We fear being judged, condemned or criticized, so we try to act like we have it all together. In front of others - but also, in front of God. Romans 8:26 says *“And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.”*

This verse proves that God already knows our hearts, and knows our needs. He knows what we fear and He knows how to help us overcome those fears. He not only knows, the Holy Spirit intervenes on our behalf.

God can see the invisible scars painful circumstances of life have left on our hearts, and He also knows He has the cure to heal them. Love, peace, grace, mercy, joy, and forgiveness are just a few of the healing balms He offers.

Those scars that are peppering your heart don't have to be painful anymore. Will you surrender your deepest hurts or shame to God, and let Him fill those holes with peace and joy instead?

ACTION ITEMS:

- Surrender your scars to God right now. Ask him to remove the sting of regret of pain that have pierced your heart, and for him to replace your pain with peace and comfort.
- Consider sharing your experience with someone who might be walking a path you have already traveled. Being transparent with others opens the door for God to heal your heart while you serve as a vessel for Him to heal their heart as well.
- Find several verses about fear and write them on notecards or sticky notes. Hang these notes around your house, such as your bathroom mirror, refrigerator, or car dashboard. Continually read your chosen verses and let them become an anchor for your soul to keep you from focusing on your fears.

3. STEP THREE

Have confidence in who you are in Christ and allow Him to help you push past your fear of judgment.

Low self-esteem has become the number-one issue plaguing Christian women today. And fear of judgment and condemnation surely runs a close second.

In hundreds of subtle ways, our culture, family, friends—even our thought life—conspire to undermine our confidence. We grow up in families void of affirmation and love. We have sins in our past we aren't proud of. We have listened to the harsh, critical words of others which cut deep into our souls. We don't like what we see in the mirror, and we assume God has plenty of workers who are much more Godly and qualified than we are.

So we stay stuck because our confidence is bottomed out. We allow these lies to keep us spiritually paralyzed; never being confident enough to step out in faith and believe God has a purpose for us.

You can break out of this rut by simply embracing who you are in Christ. It won't happen overnight – but it can happen.

Do you believe God wants to use you not despite your past, but because of it? If you do, your confidence will soar, you can push past shame and refuse to let them hold you hostage.

ACTION ITEMS:

- The voice you are most likely to believe is your own. Take time to write down all the critical things you generally say to yourself. Are these words of criticism, or words of affirmation? Are they untruths you've been led to believe, or truths that can be backed up by God's Words?
- Replace any critical comments you say to yourself with a promise from God's Word about your value to Him.
- Ask Jesus to become the more prominent voice in your head every day from this point forward. Seek His face and a relationship with Him, because when we consistently seek His opinion of us, instead of our own, our perspective of who we might change. And along with that, our confidence can increase.

4. STEP FOUR

Uncover your qualifications and gifts by looking at how your past has equipped you for purpose.

Whether we like the experiences we have endured or persevered through or not, in some way, they have equipped us in a unique way to minister to others in the name of Jesus. Spiritual gifts surveys might tell us what we're good at, but it won't tell us God's purpose for our lives. Purpose comes from the heart, and is based on the experiences life has taught us.

ACTION ITEMS:

Consider the questions below. In your quiet time, take time to ponder each one, asking God for insight and discernment about how He has prepared you to serve in His kingdom.

1- What are my deepest desires?

What brings me the most satisfaction? What is that private thought that I have been entertaining for a long time but never thought I would have the courage or faith to make it a reality in my life?

2- What are my most persistent thoughts?

These thoughts don't just come to you by accident. God speaks through our conscience and through our thoughts, and He has placed eternity and desire for His kingdom in your heart. They reason they keep coming back is because God has prepared for you in advance to act on them.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in ADVANCE for us to do. Ephesians 2:10

3- What does God keep speaking into my spirit that I've tried to deny?

What calling have I felt called to do but haven't really wanted to pursue?

4- What brings me the most joy? What excites me the most?

What brings a smile to my face and makes my heart swell with satisfaction, triumph and happiness?

5- What is it that makes me most happy about how people react to me?

When you are doing something we love, people can tell. Our passion becomes contagious, and they often get pulled into our enthusiasm. What can I do for Jesus that truly makes my heart smile, and how could I continue doing that or take it up a notch?

*Check out Tracie's free resource on her blog, *30 Questions to Unlock The Power of Your Testimony*, to further help you uncover how God has equipped you for great purpose and a unique way to minister to others.

5. STEP FIVE

Determine how you can best express spiritual gifts

Once you uncover how God has equipped you to minister in a unique and individual way based on your experiences, determine how you want to express that gift and bring glory to God.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Do some self-reflection. Consider what makes you most happy and fulfilled.
- Think about a dream in your heart. Could God have put there? How might that dream be used in such a way to spread the love of Jesus?
- Consider the below ideas for ministry, while recognizing this is a very brief, non-inclusive lists of opportunities to share the gospel and fulfill one's purpose. What jumps out at you? What does God illuminate in your heart? How might He be calling you to step out in faith and serve Him with your talents, gifts, experiences and wisdom learned from a life full of perseverance and learning?
- speaking
- writing
- blogging
- hospitality
- ministering in hospitals
- rocking babies in the church nursery
- decorating
- helping behind the scenes at church
- shepherding
- cleaning houses for people who are unable
- leadership in your church/neighborhood/school
- women's ministry
- cooking
- leading bible studies
- witnessing to co-workers
- sharing your God-story
- reaching out to strangers
- teaching children
- ministering to people in prison
- missions

How might God be calling you to turn your past into your purpose for His sake, and for yours?
