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### **My Calling to Serve My Father**

As a young child attending church services, I constantly found myself sitting in the front row of oddly comfortable hard wooden pews. These pews were placed directly front of the overhanging larger pulpit which jutted out from the chancel. This pulpit was special because it was reserved for the delivery of sermons. Beginning at age 8, gazing up at that pulpit whenever the pastor would preach, I heard the words, “You are going to do that.” And I did “do that;” I did preach from that very pulpit twice while in high school, knowing full well that those experiences were not the end of my call to ministry; they were merely part of the beginning. I did not know exactly what form my call would take, I did not know what assignments I had in store, I did not know the testing which I would experience, but I knew that God had spoken; He had placed an anointing on my life, and confirmed it through others, which *He* would be faithful to see through.

### **The Beginning - The Environment Which Nurtured My Call**

Raised in a Christian home with parents who had determined that they would not allow family sin patterns to enter their home, I grew up secure in the knowledge that I was loved by an Everlasting Father, given “things” to steward and to share with others for His glory, must be obedient to answer when He spoke, was responsible to shine His Light so that others may enter into it, and, as the precious daughter of King who held everything in the palm of His hand, was cared for beyond my imagination. In this setting, I learned to listen and respond to the Holy Spirit, that everyone is precious in His eyes and worthy of being loved, and that I could do anything He asks me to do because He would always be there before me, with me, and long after I left. I learned that God gifts His children, regardless of gender, so that they are better equipped

to serve Him by serving others. I was given Ephesians 6:12 as my life verse and had several people used of God to confirm my call to ministry. Through activities such as music, leading children/youth programs, peer to peer evangelism, and living/working at a Christian camp, I gained skills such as teaching, creativity, flexibility, writing, listening, counseling, boldness, evangelism, leadership, organization, determination, follow-through, camping, music, time-management, etc.

### **The Middle - The Environment Which (Almost) Broke But Also Nurtured My Call**

The gifts and abilities which God had been growing into my life would be increased as I moved into college, marriage, and family. I attended a Christian & Missionary Alliance (C&MA/Alliance) college, Toccoa Falls (TFC), which would not allow women to study pastoral ministry, so I settled, alongside many other women, for a youth ministry track. I married my high school sweetheart. We had twins followed by 3 singletons and, because we loved to be with our children and could not bear the inflexible demands placed on our lives by traditional school paths, I homeschooled all five through high school graduation. God used this assignment to increase my teaching, creativity, writing, flexibility, time-management, organization, and listening skills.

During this time, I became a member of an Alliance church (something I said I would never do due to their belief concerning women in ministry) so that I could begin a Young Adult Ministry with my husband. In time, I would begin an American Heritage Girls Ministry and become the Director of Music at my church, leading the worship team and the choirs.

As my children began graduating, I learned that I could complete my BA in Youth Ministry at TFC online, so I pursued this avenue. During my time at TFC, I also completed consecration with the Alliance and then went on to complete my MA in Biblical Studies at

Alliance Theological Seminary (ATS). My years serving at the church increased previously mentioned skills, sometimes with difficult methods, and always growing me in the direction that Christ would have me grow.

But herein lies the brokenness and pain: I served in an Alliance church that believed women could not be gifted in the same way as men. This belief became increasingly strict over the years to the point in which I, as the Worship Leader, was not allowed speak from the front of sanctuary unless it was to invite people to sit/stand, or, on occasion and with prior permission, read Scripture. I began to question God's call on my life, thinking that I had heard Him incorrectly and that I had no right to serve fully in ministry due to my gender. This pushed me to a place of entering into, once again, a study on women in ministry which led me to the conclusion that God *had* called me to ministry and had *not* altered that call. I came to understand that He repeated Himself so very many times when I was young so that I could reflect back on that now and know beyond a shadow of a doubt that His anointing on me had not changed. Ephesians 6:12 once loomed before me as confirmation that although there were those who wished to hurt me, my God was bigger.

### **The Now - The Environment Which Is Stretching My Call**

I tell people that I had it out with God one night and that He won. What He did was reaffirm His call on my life and ask me to step out in faith toward what He had been preparing next. I look back on those years of increasingly intense pain to see God's hand at work guiding me and building skills into my life which can stand any earthquake that would like to shake them. I am grateful for the time that leveled me to experiencing the struggles for those whom God has placed on my heart to reach. As I serve at a church, live in a family, and attend a college that teaches and encourages me to follow where God leads and nowhere else, I still struggle with

stepping out in boldness, and often question my abilities, but I never question my “right” to be called as I have been.

### ***Dimensions of My Design***

I welcome the path of my life with extreme gratefulness for the myriad of skills which God has built into my design through the incredible experience I have been gifted. I can do anything He asks me to do because He will provide me with what I need to do it. I need not falter, but must always step in. Topping my list of skills that I would like to develop are writing, encouraging, mentoring, teaching/training/speaking, influencing/persuading, and supervising/managing. As I see where God is moving my assignment to teaching in undergraduate as well as graduate settings, to writing, and to empowering those, especially women, who are living under oppression and have not been set free to serve, it is clear where my desire to increase in the above skills is applicable.

### ***Core Work Values***

My core work values include time/flexibility, influencing people, helping others, creativity/innovation, self-expression, balance, and challenge. This is not surprising as I love organization, I love to have all the information prior to beginning, but I also thrive on “in the moment” altering of or coming up with plans that help people or events to thrive. My core work values have been ingrained and increased in me since childhood, are a direct reflection of my parents’ living example, and are values that are necessary in writing and/or teaching/leading others.

### ***Preferred Roles***

My preferred roles fall right in line with my transferrable skills (the dimensions of my design) as well as with my core work values. These include leading, managing,

mentoring/coaching, teaching/training/speaking, organizing, and reconciling. I serve comfortably in these areas and see where they intersect naturally with my life.

### ***IS/NTJ***

I am an ***Introvert*** (though very well-balanced), I am a ***Thinker***, I am ***Judging***, and I hover solidly between ***Sensing*** and ***Intuition***. I am described well with both the ISTJ and the INTJ personality types. The dominant qualities of both types intersect with my skills, my values, and my roles. The combined career paths of both personality types, which include abilities in concentration, fact, logic/analysis, ability to organize, making use of depth of concentration, ability to grasp possibilities, use of logic/analysis, and ability to organize, feed well into the career assignments to which I am headed: writing, empowering, and teaching.

### ***Compelling Interests and Spiritual Gifts***

My compelling interests include books/literature (on theology, women, worship), Christianity (theology, healing, spiritual growth), communication (writing, speaking, drama), education and teaching, and social issues (women, those who are oppressed). These intertwine well with my spiritual gifts of faith, leadership, shepherding/pastoring, teaching, and miracles.

### **Conclusion – The Future Where God is Leading Me**

I currently serve as the Missions Pastor at an Alliance church which empowers women in their giftings and encourages me in empowering all people to serve in theirs. I am writing more, with a desire to tell my story and to help release others to follow God's call on their lives, age and gender notwithstanding. I am completing my MDiv in Mission and Theology at ATS, teaching a class for Crown Ministry Training Institute, and will move forward to complete my PhD so that I can teach at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The skills with which God has blessed me were not given for only a moment or only one assignment in life, but have been

increased incrementally, and are still being increased. I have had the joy of serving in many different assignments and am growing where I am currently placed while embracing His leading to prepare as I move into the next. I know where I have been, and I am trusting God as He moves me forward into where He would have me go. He has anointed my life with a call to confidently serve Him with a broken heart for chained souls, He has confirmed it through others, and *He* will be faithful to see it through as I live in the mission He has given me “to live obediently, stepping out to boldly love others, while firmly rooted in the knowledge that I am in a spiritual battle which seeks to claim souls.”