

Nice Girls Don't Change the World: Getting From Here to There
Reflecting God's Glory: Triennial XIII
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Setting the Stage

I want to tell you very honestly that standing up here and talking to a group is not my preferred way of relating. I would much rather sit down with each of you and hear your story, because I find women's stories endlessly fascinating.

It is so fun to listen to a woman talk about her life in a very nonchalant or minimizing way and be able to say, "Wait. Stop right there. That was such a profound thing you just said. Tell me more about that."

Or, "Oh, I'm so sorry that happened to you. That must have been so hard. But you survived. What a strong woman you must be."

Or, "Wow. I'm so glad I got to know you. I have so much to learn from you."

Obviously, I can't do that with each of you. But I'm hoping that the time we spend together will encourage you to do that with one another. We women have so much to offer each other if we will open up our lives and invite others in.

As I was thinking of this session, I prayed, "God, give me insight into these women." Two words immediately came to mind: Pain & Potential. I sensed God telling me that in this gathering of women there was a profound—and bittersweet—blend of pain and potential. I have to say that didn't really surprise me.

You see, I believe women are the greatest untapped resource in the world. I believe women have the potential to be incredible tools of transformation in the hand of God; we have the potential to "love this world to Jesus," as one of my friends describes our common calling as Christians.

But too often we get trapped in pain, in isolation, or in a mindset that undermines our confidence, limits our dreams, drains our passion, and keeps us from leaning into the freedom, joy and energy that God is offering us. It makes it impossible for us to live out the adventure of God's calling on our life.

I think that's one of the greatest tragedies in the world. It's a tragedy for every individual woman who misses out on her truest and best life. And it's a tragedy for the world that so desperately needs the love, wisdom and healing power of strong, fully alive Christian women.

The title of this talk comes from a little book I wrote called *Nice Girls Don't Change the World*. In the next few minutes I'll offer a brief summary of that book, but then we'll move beyond that in order to more directly address the reality of pain & potential in this room.

I was born a small-town Michigan girl and learned at an early age the art of being nice.

As a nice girl, I knew how to speak gently, smile sweetly, follow all the rules, be very good, and keep almost everybody happy almost all the time. I was really good at living up to people's expectations—at least I did my best to do that. (I suspect that some of you can relate to that.)

Becoming a pastor's wife was a perfect role for a nice girl. There were so many expectations to live up! So many people to keep happy! So I did my best to please everybody. And it worked...for awhile, anyway.

It worked until I just couldn't keep it up anymore. Until I realized I had no clue who I was inside my nice, people-pleasing shell. I had been living out the life I thought my husband wanted, my children needed, and my church expected—and it had left me exhausted, sick, and depressed. I was 39 years old and I wanted to die. I'm not exaggerating. Every night I went to bed hoping that I wouldn't wake up in the morning.

Finally, I went to a Christian counselor and said, "I'm so miserable I want to die. But I have two children I adore and I don't want to leave them motherless. Can you help me?"

A Long Journey

I spent the next 10 years—the decade of my 40s—rebuilding my life. Most women I've talked to manage to make major life changes much more quickly than I did, but I was really, really stuck in self-defeating mindsets and the journey out of that was very, very hard.

The first step I had to take was to get rid of the toxic God of my childhood. You see, I grew up imagining God as a harsh, demanding tyrant whose love I had to earn by being really good and working very hard. But at age 39 I began to think that maybe I had it wrong about God, so I turned my back on that harsh image and said, "God, if you're there, please reveal yourself to me in a new way."

And he did. I discovered a God who wraps his love around me everyday. Rather than being a harsh, demanding taskmaster, this true God offered a resting place for my weary soul.

A major step toward understanding this true God took place when a wise friend said to me, "For awhile, forget everything you've ever thought about Christianity—forget the Old Testament, forget Paul and the epistles—and just read Jesus."

So I did. For months, for years actually, I just read Jesus. In Jesus I found the Lover of my Soul.

I found a Living Presence who says, "If you're weary, come to me and I'll give you rest. If you're empty, come to me and I'll fill you. If you're lonely, come to me and I'll be with you." I realized that I could bring my very weary self to Jesus and find the deep rest I needed.

I found a God/man who tenderly welcomed children. Even when other people wanted to send them away, Jesus picked the children up and sat them on his lap and wrapped his arms around them. And I realized that even when I feel as weak and vulnerable as a child Jesus will welcome me.

I met Someone who honored and lifted up women who felt invisible, devalued and misunderstood in a culture that considered them little more than a piece of property. I realized that anytime I feel invisible or devalued or misunderstood, I can go to Jesus and be seen in a way that no one else sees me.

I'll tell you very honestly, at that point in my life I needed to be welcomed, valued, seen and understood. I needed a resting place. I needed desperately to sit in that Presence of ultimate and unconditional love. I needed to know—and I still need to know, every day—that I am loved despite my failures, I am loved for the uniqueness of my true self, and I am loved as I sit quietly doing absolutely nothing to earn, or buy, or chase that love.

I absolutely cannot wrap my brain around what I just said. I don't know how Jesus allows me to experience his presence and his Love. But he does. Whenever I lean fully into the reality of my loneliness,

my insecurity, my fear, or my brokenness, I find Jesus there, loving me. That is a Mystery I cannot live without. It has become the foundation of everything else in my life.

I think that much of the weariness, loneliness and emptiness that Christian women feel comes from living in a world—and all too often in a church—that largely ignores the deep needs of our souls. But it doesn't have to be that way. God doesn't want it to be that way.

For some of you, the main thing you need to take home from this conference is the realization that Jesus truly is the Lover of Your Soul. He wants to be a resting place for you.
(Prayer—seal this moment)

Who Am I?

Finding rest in God's love gave me strength and freedom to take the next step on the journey, which was to discover who I was really was.

What was I good at? What did I feel passionate about? What gave me a sense of fulfillment? What did God create me to be and to do? As I explored those questions, I discovered that I had spent 20 years trying to be someone I wasn't. I was an introvert trying to be an extrovert by filling my life with people and allowing myself no solitude. I was an idea person consumed with details and logistics and administrative tasks. I was a writer who never had time to write. No wonder I was exhausted and frustrated.

You may wonder why I let my daily life get so disconnected from my true self. Well, bottom line, I didn't think I deserved to claim my time, my gifts, my strengths, my dreams, or my calling. I thought it was selfish to focus on myself that way.

But I have learned that I was wrong about that. God plants in each of us dreams and desires, strengths and passions—and he puts them in us for a reason. He wants us to make them available for his use. But we can't do that unless we know who we are and what we have to offer.

It took me a long time to re-discover my true self, but I'm so glad I invested the time and energy to do so. It freed me up to offer a much better, strong, happier self to my family, my friends, and my church. So everybody in my life benefitted when I began to be the person God created me to be. (We'll talk more about this in a few minutes.)

Don't Let Fear Stop You

But there was another major issue I had to face: that was fear. I realized that for years my life had been dominated by fear. Fear of disappointing people. Fear of not being good enough. Fear that I would determine God's calling on my life, take the risk of living it out—and then discover that I couldn't do it. Maybe I really *wasn't* good enough.

So for years I chose to stay in my safe little life where there was no joy and no excitement—but at least there was no risk of failure.

It took me 30 years of adulthood to be willing to risk failure. I was the ultimate slow learner! But I have discovered something extraordinary: Yes, when we take the risk of living our true lives, we may sometimes fail (I won't deny that), BUT along the way, every now and then we will stumble into the sweet spot of our existence where we know that this is what we were created for.

When that happens, we will be so glad that we didn't let fear keep us from taking that job, or signing up for that class, or inviting those neighbors for dinner, or volunteering at the food pantry, or writing that book—or whatever it is we felt a little nudge to do.

Earlier I said that I believe women are the greatest untapped resource in the world. I wasn't kidding—I believe that to the core of my being! When women are grounded in the love of God, when they're living according to their true gifts and passions, and when they learn to push through fear and just get on with life, they become world-changers. They become forces for good wherever they are—home, business, schools, neighborhoods, churches—wherever.

I call women like this dangerous women, because they're willing to move beyond what's nice and safe and comfortable in order to make a positive difference in the world. When they do that they become a threat—a danger—to whatever is wrong, evil, oppressive or unjust in the world.

That's why what we're talking about today is so important. It's not just about us and our little lives. It's about becoming free to join God in this incredible adventure of redeeming, restoring and remaking everything that's gone wrong in this beautiful world of His.

Now, doesn't that get you excited?

The question is: How do we get from here to there?

This is the question I've been asked frequently in recent years. Women have said to me, "Okay, I get it. I've been a nice girl, but I'd rather be a dangerous woman. I long to offer my best self to the world. But how do I get there? How do I move out of my old way of life into the freedom and passion you're describing?"

In the remaining time I'm going to briefly mention 10 steps that I and many other women have taken—or are taking—to move along the continuum from nice to dangerous.

I want to preface these steps with a quote from the 19th century female author, George Eliot, who said, "It's never too late to be what you might have been." Years ago someone gave me a journal with that quote written on the cover and it's been sitting on my desk ever since. I need to be reminded every day that it's never too late to grow, to change, to move closer to God's calling on our lives.

Okay, let's fly through these 10 steps.

1. Listen To Our Hearts

We need to pay attention to our feelings, our emotions, our authentic responses to life.

Most of us have been brought up in a social and religious culture that mistrusts emotions, that teaches us to control our wayward heart with our disciplined head, to bury our bad feelings underneath good thoughts. So we say things like, "I shouldn't feel that way. I shouldn't be angry about this. I shouldn't be jealous of her. I shouldn't be sad about that loss. I shouldn't give in to this depression." I shouldn't, I shouldn't, I shouldn't.

So we try to buck up and think the right thoughts and do the right things. We end up going through motions that look right on the outside, but nothing changes on the inside, where we still feel empty or frustrated or sad or angry or depressed.

I had to learn what author Matthew Elliot learned: "that our emotions were given to us by God to drive us to our best. That is the great power in listening to your heart."

In other words, our emotions tell us things about ourselves that we need to know in order to become who God created us to be. We need to allow ourselves to honestly answer questions like these: Am I pleased with how I'm living my life? Or am I frustrated? Angry? Depressed? What brings me energy? What drains my energy? What are my dreams for the future? What needs in the world move me to tears? What activities and endeavors bring me joy? What creative outlet brings me deep satisfaction?

This type of honesty is not about self-indulgence. It's about dealing with what's true inside us. It's about making thoughtful, prayerful decisions about how to live with joy so we can bring our "best selves" to the people we love. As we pray about our honest feelings, or talk with trusted friends, our spouse, or a counselor, we can decide how to respond to those feelings constructively.

Once we get honest about our feelings, we need to look for creative solutions by asking questions like these: Are there activities I can eliminate from my schedule that will help me to feel less stressed? Are there responsibilities I can give up that will give me more time for activities I prefer? Is there a class I could take that will help keep my dreams for the future alive? Is there a volunteer job I could do that would be fulfilling? Can I creatively shape a life that's more satisfying for me?

For me, one feeling I had to deal with was jealousy toward other women, which, of course, I tried to deny. But when I finally admitted it and prayerfully explored why I felt jealous of certain women, I realized it was because they were using their gifts, abilities and strengths to make a difference in the world, and I wasn't.

My feelings of jealousy helped me see that I needed to pursue ministry that was meaningful for me. I had to quit wishing I could live like those other women, and start actually doing it—which involved facing my fear, exploring my passion, becoming more disciplined. It was a lot easier to wallow in jealousy than to actually make the changes I needed to make, but the harder path was by far the better path, and I have no regrets about taking it.

On the other hand, some of our feelings may indicate an area in which we need to grow in patience or obedience to God. There may be circumstances that we simply need to learn to accept as the reality of our life, either for a season or permanently, and we need to lean more earnestly into God's grace and strength.

But until we become honest about our feelings, we can't even begin to discern what we need to accept and what we have the freedom to change.

2. Discern and Pursue Our Authentic Passion

We should each have something in our life—an activity, a ministry, a volunteer position, something—that we feel so strongly about that engaging in it energizes us. Some people are blessed to find this kind of passion in their jobs, but many people have to look outside their profession to find this.

If you've been ignoring your feelings and just going through the motions of life—like I had been doing—you may have no clue what would awaken the passion in your life. So, where do you start? I've observed 4 paths that have helped many woman in this regard.

1. Turn your pain to poetry. Look to the painful areas of your life to see if the seed of passion might be buried there. (Have you experienced sexual abuse, homelessness, a painful divorce, the death of a child, depression? Perhaps you will discover your passion as you minister to other women who have experienced that same trauma.)
2. Pay attention to your tears. I believe God speaks powerfully to us through what makes us cry. (My daughter Shauna is training for the Chicago marathon because every time she heard about

- an ordinary woman taking on a physical challenge, she found herself in tears. I have a friend who gathers business clothes for women in poor communities, because she found herself in tears each time she heard about single moms who can't apply for jobs because they can't afford the necessary wardrobe.)
3. Inexplicable emotional response to some issue; you don't know why but every time you hear about the trauma of junior high students, you well up with concern for them, or you hear about young mothers who are overwhelmed with life and you just wish you could help them. (My friend Linda understands the challenges of young mothers; she raised five kids while her husbands traveled extensively for work. Now she has become a surrogate grandmother for two little girls whose mom works on the staff at our church. Linda's passion for serving young moms has transformed that entire young family.)
 4. Experiment—try something new and see how it feels.

The key to discovering our passion is that we have to get in motion; we have to do something. Even if it's the wrong thing, we'll learn something from it. At least we'll be able to say, "Well, no, that's not it." Then we can move on to the next experiment.

In a book on navigating the challenges of midlife, I read this quote: "If nothing changes, nothing changes." That pretty much sums it up. We can't just sit around waiting for growth and transformation. We need to do something. Analyze how it feels. Then do something else.

If nothing changes, nothing changes!

3. Pay Attention to Your Energy Level

Years ago I was trying to sort out this issue of passion with the counselor I was seeing. At one point he said, "When you talk about editing this book for Bill, your face goes blank, your voice goes monotone, and your shoulders droop. Just talking about doing this drains your energy. But when you talk about going to South Africa to visit women who are suffering from AIDS—which many people would think is a lot harder than editing a book—your face glows, your voice becomes more animated, and you sit up straighter." Your body knows what you want. Listen to it. Do what your body has energy to do.

That had a profound impact on me. So many times I got completely confused when I tried to think things through, but when I examined my energy level, the truth was perfectly clear.

4. Learn to Play

This may sound like an unimportant tangent but trust me, it's not!

When I was just beginning this process of rediscovery, my counselor said, "What do you love to do? What's fun for you?"

I said, "Are you kidding. I don't want to get up in the morning, and you're asking me what I love to do?"

"Yes, I am. Because life is hard. It's demanding. Sometimes it's draining. You need to do fun things to relax and recharge."

That was a huge challenge for me, because I had so lost touch with what I loved to do. I had to work hard to learn to play again.

I had to think back to what I liked to do when I was little. I talked to friends about what they do to have fun. I experimented. I took art classes. I started reading poetry again. I got roller blades. I had my old flute refurbished and started playing Bach sonatas again.

I discovered that it really is very important to play—that we can actually experience God’s love for us in a powerful way as we engage in things we love to do, in things that nourish our souls and bring us joy.

When I was young I loved to read literary fiction, but at some point I concluded that that was a waste of time, and gave up all fiction. But in response to my counselor’s suggestion I started reading a great book—*My Name is Asher Lev*, by the Jewish writer Chaim Potok. I remember right where I was when I started reading it, because I read about three pages and burst into tears. I cried because it was a great book and I got to read it. And while I was reading I sensed God saying, “I created you to understand the power of words and to love great literature. I’m so glad you’re reading this book.” It was a powerful experience of God’s love for me.

For some of you, this might be the most important realization for you to take home today: that God wants you to enjoy the simple pleasures of life. In fact, he wants to use them to tell you how much he loves you.

5. Honor Our Season of Life

Most of us wish we could “have it all” or “do it all” all the time. But that’s just crazy; it’s not possible.

Recently I was talking about this with my daughter, Shauna, who is 33. She said, “I have to keep reminding myself that there are things I’m going to be able to do in ten years that I shouldn’t try to do now, when I’ve got a very busy preschooler and a book contract to fulfill. I’m not going to give up on those dreams, but it’s ridiculous to try to pursue them now.” That’s wise.

Shauna and I have a friend who is the mother of three little girls, she’s married to a very busy man, she and her husband are committed to opening their home and extending hospitality, which takes a lot of her time. But she also has a passion for people in need, so she started volunteering at Willow’s care center—food pantry, legal services, ESL classes to people in our community who are going through a difficult time. She doesn’t serve there 40 hours a week—that would be totally unrealistic for a young mother—but one morning every week she’s there. She has this passion, and even though she’s in a very demanding season of life, she’s keeping that passion alive.

Some of us are in a very different season. When I hit 50 I was jolted by the force of age—and the realization that there were certain things I had to do *now* or I’d never get to do them. It really was time for me to push through fear, take some risks, and throw myself into life before it was too late. I needed that jolt of aging to help me get unstuck.

I have a friend who is not quite as old as I am, but she’s catching up. For years she dreamed of becoming a nurse, but she had a good job and it just never seemed the right time to make a change. But then she lost her job; while that was terribly upsetting, it jolted her into taking the action she’d considered for years. She went back to school to become a nurse. A month ago she aced her final exams in chemistry and biology and she can’t wait for the next semester to start.

Sometimes our season of life tells us to slow down, relax, you don’t have to do it all now. Sometimes the season tells us that it’s time—right now—to take action. And if we do, we’ll be glad.

We just need to understand which season we’re in and honor it.

6. Stop Going It Alone

We always need friends, but even more when we’re trying to make changes in our lives.

This has been really challenging for me. I'm an introvert, so I don't have a strong felt-need for people. And, when life gets hard, my first tendency is to withdraw, to isolate. I'm convinced that if I sit alone in my house for long enough, I'll be able to sort things out and move forward. But it never works; when left to my own devices I just spiral further and further down.

I need friends. The harder life gets the more I need to lean into them. I am so grateful for friends who notice when I'm withdrawing, and they call me up and say, "Where are you? How are you doing?" I need that.

There have also been times when I have needed a "professional friend"—a counselor—who could help me sort things out. There is no shame in this. We go to experts to help us with our finances and our medical concerns. Why not seek wisdom for our emotional and relational needs?

7. Quit Comparing & Honor Our Limits

I am surrounded by the most incredibly energetic people on the planet—which mostly means my husband. Sometimes I think he's bionic! For years I tried to keep up with him, and when I couldn't I thought there was something wrong with me. Why can't I maintain his pace? Why can't I speak as effortlessly as he does? Why can't I carry the amount of stress he carries?

Most of us compare ourselves to somebody and we come up short. We need to quit doing that and figure out what it means for us to live a sane life—a life in which we're challenged but not overwhelmed, in which we're stretching and facing our fears, but we're not trying to be somebody we're not. I guarantee that if we keep comparing ourselves to someone else, we won't be able to figure out how we need to live.

I bet every one of you can think of one person you compare yourself to in a destructive way. I just want to challenge you to "let that person go." Let them be them, and you just be you.

8. Say No A Lot

I have concluded, after years of personal research, that it's extremely difficult to discover our strengths and passions and what we want to do with our lives. It's a major challenge to get to the point of consistently saying, "Yes!" to our goals, dreams and calling.

But it's even harder to say "No!" to the things that don't fit in with our goals, dreams or calling.

Saying no is probably the hardest thing most of us have to do.

Two months ago I resigned from the board of a humanitarian organization. I joined the board against my better judgment, and every time I had to get on a plane and travel 4 hours to attend a meeting, it came at a bad time; half the time I couldn't even make it to the board meetings. But it took me two years to get desperate enough to resign. That's just crazy. But we all do things like that.

The fact is, in order to say a few important "yeses," I need to say "no" a lot. That's hard for nice girls because we know everybody likes to hear a yes. But we can't afford to give into that pressure.

No is an under-rated and profound word that most of us need to use far more often, so we will be free to say Yes when the right time comes.

9. Realize the Power of Tweaking (Not Tweeting!)

Sometimes we get paralyzed because we think the only way to make positive change is to make massive changes, to take huge steps forward. We think we need to quit our job or move to another state or

change our marital status. Sometimes that's true, but more often than not, what we really need is a little step that will just get us unstuck.

Every spring I decide I want to be a gardener. So I come up with this big plan for flowers and veggies and planters and trellises and vines—a spectacular garden. Then I realize I don't have time to do that, I don't know how to do that, and if I tried I'd probably get totally overwhelmed and make myself miserable and never want to see another tomato or pepper or hosta or coleus in my life.

This spring, I experienced the same internal calling to plant a garden, but before I created a grandiose and unrealistic plan in my imagination, I talked to a friend who actually knows something about growing vegetables and flowers. Together we came up with a plan to do container gardening. She took me to the garden store and helped me plant my containers. Obviously, it's a very small garden, but it's a garden. It's more garden than I've ever had before. By the end of the summer I will either be eating fresh lettuce and tomatoes, or I will have decided that gardening is not my thing.

But either way, I will be further ahead than I am now, because I decided to take a little step. That is a great life lesson!

10. Join The Global Sisterhood

As I have traveled during the last few years I have been shocked to discover how many of the world's tragedies and injustices disproportionately impact women and girls. Did you know that:

- Over sixty percent of people with HIV/AIDS are women
- Seventy percent of the world's extremely poor are women
- Almost 80 percent of all refugees are women and their kids
- Every year, millions of women and children are sold for the sex trade or to work as slaves

Overall, women and girls are the least valued, least fed, least educated, and least protected people group in the world.

Last October I had the opportunity to visit the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is arguably the worse place on earth to be a woman. A horrible civil war has been going on there for the last decade and one of the weapons used by soldier in this war is rape. So thousands of women and little girls have been raped, and it continues. When I was there, I talked with woman who have been brutally raped, and I talked with pastors and church volunteers who are ministering to these women. The average person in the Congo lives on less than \$2 a day, so these pastors and volunteers are themselves desperately poor, but they are ministering heroically to these women.

I've learned during the last few years that something good happens in me when I engage with my global sisters. When I visit them, or talk with them, or pray for them, or give money to them, I gain a new perspective on my own life. I am enriched.

There is a reason for this. It's because the very same Jesus who loves me also loves my global sisters and calls me to be in relationship with them. In Jesus I found the Lover of my Soul. But I also found a Radical Call to Compassionate Action in the world.

At Jesus' first public appearance he said, "I have come to set the captives free and to preach good news to the poor." And through his teaching and life of servanthood, he slowly and methodically turned the values of the powerful Roman Empire upside down.

He threw the moneychangers out of the temple because they were exploiting the poor.

He said that when we feed the hungry or clothe the naked it's like we're doing it to him.

He said to love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us.

Frederick Buechner summed up Jesus beautifully when he wrote this:

“If the world is sane, then Jesus is mad as a hatter and the Last Supper is the Mad Tea Party. The world says, Mind your own business, and Jesus says, There is no such thing as your own business. The world says, Follow the wisest course and be a success, and Jesus says, Follow me and be crucified. The world says, Drive carefully—the life you save may be your own—and Jesus says, Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

“The world says, Law and order, and Jesus says, Love. The world says, Get and Jesus says, Give. In terms of the world’s sanity, Jesus is crazy as a coot, and anybody who thinks he can follow him without being a little crazy too is laboring less under a cross than under a delusion.” *Listening to Your Life* p. 95

I love the fact that Jesus changed the rules and ushered in an upside-down Kingdom. I love the fact that the early church was known for the way it loved, not just within the little band of believers, but beyond it. I love that they met daily to sing and pray and honor the presence of Jesus in their midst, and then they shared their material resources so freely that none among them had any need. I love reading in histories of the early church that when deadly plagues cut a black swath through communities, all the healthy people left except the crazy followers of Jesus, because they knew they were called to care for the sick—for the least—and they weren’t afraid of the consequences, even death.

I love the theme of this conference, *Reflecting God’s Glory*. I love that you understand that part of reflecting the glory of the God who hates injustice is that we actively join him in fighting against it. I have a policy not to travel or speak in July, because this is time set aside for my family. But when I heard this conference was going to have a Hall of Justice, and that every woman here would be challenged to respond to God’s call to make peace, and reconcile, and heal, and buy fair trade products, and steward the earth, and embrace the marginalized, and offer hospitality to strangers, and right wrongs, and just generally do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with God, I thought, “I want to be part of this conference.” This is the kind of conference women need!

What is mine to do?

None of us can do everything. None of us can respond to every need. But we can—and must—earnestly pray, “**God, what is mine to do?**”

There are two reasons we need to pray that prayer. First, sometimes we need to hear God say, “That’s not yours to do. I know you care about that, but I have someone else to lead that charge, fulfill that responsibility, or advocate for that change. Let them do it.” I need to pay attention when I hear that, because I care about so many issues. At times I have completely sabotaged my life and made myself miserable and sick because I didn’t listen to the still small whisper saying, “That’s not yours to do. Trust me. Let it go.” We need to listen when God says that.

But, there are other times when we need to hear God say, “Yup, that job—or ministry, volunteer position, advocacy role, fundraising project, whatever—is yours to do. Maybe that surprises you or scares you, but I know what I’m talking about. If you do it, yes, you’ll have to stretch and grow, but you’ll never be sorry. Trust me. This is yours to do.”

What might happen in the world if we each opened our hearts and our minds to everything we see and hear and learn at this conference, and then say, “God, what is mine to do?” Can you imagine what might happen for good and for God in the world?

There's a quote that I have taped to the lamp on my desk, because I need to see it every day.

"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do." (Edward Everett Hale)

So what if I'm just one little person? And you're just one little person? We're God's daughters. He's given us strengths and passions and a calling. And what we do with that matters, in our lives and in the world.

Conclusion:

You and I are so blessed. We have a God who wants to meet us in our pain. A God who is willing to embrace whatever is real in us—anger, frustration, depression, hopelessness—whatever. He is willing to meet us there, and guide us on a journey of healing, transformation, authenticity and freedom. In the midst of that He slowly and lovingly leads us toward new passion, new dreams, new calling, new potential. He draws us toward a global sisterhood—the global church—through which we can bring His love, His healing, His beauty, goodness and redemptive power to the world.

He offers us the ultimate resting place for our soul. He invites us into a life worth living. He empowers us to be world-changers.

I don't know what could be better than that!