

In the Broom Closet of Prayer

I ran out of my pastor's office, absolutely terrified. *I've got to find a place to hide so I can hear from God.* At the end of the hall a door caught my eye. In desperation I rushed to it, ducked inside the tiny dark room and closed the door behind me. The room smelled of industrial strength disinfectant; I could feel the long handles of brooms and mops. My heart was pounding. I knew I had heard a Scripture once about getting into a prayer closet, so I whispered, "Okay, God, I'm listening. Quick! Help!"

What am I doing? I can't believe I'm hiding in the closet. I cried out again, "Lord, I've got to go out any minute and talk in front of two thousand people. I need a script. I didn't understand I needed a script. Lord, I need to hear from You." I was close to panic. I laid my head against the mops and brooms, breathing the dust and fumes from the cleaning products, as I continued crying out to the Lord. In just a few moments I would have to step up onto the

platform at our church's popular Saturday night service and minister for the first time in my life. Sweat dripped down my face.

"Lord, I'm listening. What do You want to say?" I strained to listen but I heard nothing. "Lord, are You going to talk to me?" Nothing.

Have you noticed that the harder you keep trying to hear Him, the more you seem to get spiritually constipated? It seems that nothing comes out.

All of a sudden I realized that my pastor was probably wondering where I was. *I'd better get out. It wouldn't be cool for people to find me hiding in a closet.* "Okay, Lord, when the coast is clear I'm going to step out of this closet and walk back to his office, and no one will even know that I've been hiding here."

With my ear to the door I heard my pastor ask, "Has anyone seen her? It's time to start."

One of the leather-clad musicians said, "She's down the hallway in the closet."

I then began pleading with God to rapture me! I could hear heavy footsteps coming toward me. I was trapped. All I could think was, *Can I just vanish? Can the earth open up and swallow me? What can I do? How did I get stuck here in this closet? I'm an artist; I'm a potter. I don't belong on a stage. Why did I agree to talk to an audience while seated at my potter's wheel? I obviously didn't understand what I was getting into.*

The predicament I now faced had started just five days earlier. This was 1971, and I was a hippie who came back to the Lord during the Jesus People movement. I had driven my funky broken-down van over the mountains to a Christian arts festival in Washington State. Great crowds of people from a five-state area had come to hear musicians and speakers, watch dramas and purchase crafts from artisans selling leather, jewelry, blown glass and pottery. We artisans were relegated to the lower field, a place of

significantly less prominence than the performing artists' and speakers' platforms.

I loved Jesus passionately, but I was struggling with a few things: I was still trying, for instance, to give up profanity and my two-pack-a-day cigarette habit. But in spite of my brokenness I really wanted to serve Him, and I wanted Him to do something with my life.

So I came to the Christian arts festival, set up a display booth with my potter's wheel and sat on the field and made vessels, but no one paid much attention. "You know, Lord," I told Him as the days passed, "if there isn't any life in this, then I don't want to do it. I don't want to be chained to the god of art."

I had just received my bachelor of fine arts degree and a secondary-education teaching degree from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. As a studio artist—a production potter—I had made thousands of pieces of pottery and had won many awards. I was at the top of my game. But after coming to Jesus I had grown restless; there had to be more to my life than just making pots. My heart ached for more of Him; I was in one of those destiny-seeking, uncomfortable transition times.

"Lord," I would pray, "I want You to use my life. What can I do? I see how You use the musicians, but I can't play an instrument. You use singers, but I can't sing. You use the pastors, but I'm not called to do that. I know You use people in the church nursery, but I'm not sure which end is up as far as kids. How can You use me? I'm just a mudslinger."

Then in the busyness of the festival, I resolved something in my heart. "Lord," I said, "I am going to fast and pray for the next three days, until the last day of the festival. I don't ever want to do pottery again unless somehow I can hear Your voice in this."

Not long after that prayer several children came and asked me to make them a pot. I told them that I would not be making pots again until the last day of the festival.

They said that was fine, but they kept returning to remind me of my promise.

During those next three days of fasting, the Lord led me to the words of Jeremiah 18:2–6, verses that began: “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.” I was transfixed. “Wow, Lord!” I said. “There are mudslingers in the Bible. You’re a potter! But, still, how can You use my life?”

The last day of the festival came. It was drizzling and cold, matching my discouragement. I was not any closer to understanding my calling than I had been three days earlier. The children arrived on schedule and found me in my pottery booth, surrounded by hundreds of pots I had made to sell. With one voice they chorused, “You promised! You promised!” I really did not want to go out in the bad weather. In my heart I was saying, *No, I lied. Can’t you see that it’s raining?* But I was trapped by my promise.

I took a piece of clay and with exasperation said, “Oh, all right. Come on.” I stepped outside the shelter of my booth onto the muddy field where my wheel was set up. *I shouldn’t have promised. This is ridiculous.* The children were practically jumping they were so excited.

Now I had to deal not only with making a pot in the rain but with my bad attitude. I was frustrated and angry, and I especially did not feel like being out in a muddy field. But I wrestled to get my heart right because I reasoned that the Lord would surely take me to the woodshed later if I was not nice to the children.

So as the rain dripped in my eyes, I plopped the lump of clay onto the potter’s wheel and began to center it. Suddenly I heard the Lord’s voice. It was not a big holy moment. The heavens did not open and the angels did not begin to sing. But, although I did not realize it yet, God had just ambushed me by using those little children to push me through the “birth canal” and into what would eventually become my destiny.

As I spun the wheel I heard Him say, *I will center you and take away your double-mindedness. I know you.* As my hands started to go into the foundations of the clay, He said, *I will build a foundation that is based on the Word of God. When you were in your mother's womb, I knew you and loved you.* Revelation started to flow through my whole being. My hands became His hands. He added the living Word of God to every motion.

You are beautifully and fearfully made.

I was listening to Him talk and thought, *Wow, Lord, that is really good!*

He responded, *Well, if it's that good, why don't you repeat it?*

So, still concentrating on my pot, I simply repeated what I heard. I said things like, "I know your destiny, and I know your birthright. Your form was not hidden from Me. Your name is written on the palm of My hand." As I spoke, the revelation of the Lord fell on me. A crowd started to form around me out in the rain and the dreariness. People started to laugh and cry.

As I pulled up the walls on the pot, I repeated His words: "I will shape you and pull up your walls, almost to the breaking point. But I know who you are. I know your shape; I know your form; I know your function. My fingerprints will be seen on you."

I ended up making two vessels that day, and when I got off the wheel I was trembling. I knew the Lord had given me a profound gift. I knew He had spoken through me. I did not know this was prophecy. This was the early seventies; there was no language about prophecy yet.

A few days later my pastor, Pastor Shackett from People's Church, phoned me and said he had heard that I was doing stories on the potter's wheel.

"I only did two at the festival," I explained. I knew that our church had Saturday night concerts and that they featured local talent before the main band performed. He asked

if I would be willing to share my story on the wheel that next Saturday. Naively, I said I would.

When Saturday arrived, I showed up at the church with my potter's wheel, wearing my blue and white striped overalls and my clunky hiking boots. Pastor Shackett had asked me to come to his office where the musicians who would be performing that night were hanging out. They were all wearing their sleek black leather jackets and looking cool. "Hi, guys!" I said and tried to look cool, too. It was really hard, though, to project a cool image the way I was dressed.

My pastor turned to me and asked, "Do you have your script? Are you ready?"

I was taken aback. "Script? What do you mean by a script?" You see, my major was fine arts, not theater. I had never dealt with scripts.

Now *he* was taken aback. "Well," he said by way of explanation, "you have to have a script."

I felt my face beginning to flush. All the band members were looking at me. "Okay," I said. "What—what is a script?"

"I thought you were going to tell a story on your potter's wheel."

"I am."

"Well, didn't you write down your story and memorize it?" With an intense look on his face, he asked, "Haven't you done that?"

"Well, no. I didn't know I was supposed to."

"You have to have a script! What were you planning to do?"

"Well, you see," I stammered, "God, He talks to me, and I listen and then just repeat it."

He looked shocked and the words fairly erupted from him. "No! You can't do it that way!"

"You're right," I said, panic rising. "I can't do it that way."

So that is how I came to bolt from his office and run, *kalump, kalump, kalump*, down the hallway, looking desperately for a place to hear God and pray. And into the broom closet I hid, muttering, "I need a script. I need a script. I didn't know I needed a script. God, I should have asked You what I was going to talk about."

When I heard Pastor Shackett's voice in the hall, I kept hoping that the earth would open up and swallow me. Instead he knocked on the door. I responded as nonchalantly as I could, "Yes? Come in."

He pulled open the door and said sternly, "No. You come out! We're late." He towered over me. At that stage in my life I was shy and afraid of authority figures. He was a combination pastor-father figure, which added to my panic and embarrassment.

I followed him numbly to the edge of the huge stage. A few guys carried my potter's wheel for me. I bit my lip and fear gripped my heart as I watched them take it all the way to the other side. *Oh, Jesus, why did they take it over there? How am I going to go all the way across the stage?*

Pastor Shackett turned to me and said, "Let's go."

I took a step out from behind the curtain, got about ten feet onto the stage and made the mistake of looking out at the audience. I should tell you that when I had come to the church three years earlier, about two hundred people had attended. I usually took a seat in the back row, afraid even to speak to anyone. I had finally worked my way up to about the middle section. Because of the Jesus People explosion, the attendance had mushroomed and the church had built this new auditorium that held two thousand people.

So now all four thousand eyes were staring back at me. I froze. I was as motionless as the proverbial deer in the headlights. I could tell that I had a silly grin on my face, but inside I was screaming, *God, get me out of here. I promise I'll be good. I'll never sin again. I repent. Forgive me for the past, the present and the sins I haven't even committed yet.*

Why was I so stupid to say yes to this? I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I'm so totally disqualified. This was so stupid. Stupid, stupid, stupid.

I heard Pastor Shackett's voice. "Why isn't she moving?"

I thought, *I don't know. Why am I not moving?* It was as though my feet were stuck to the floor. As I continued to look at the crowd, I started to see black and white before my eyes and felt that I was going to either pass out or wet my pants, or possibly both.

Suddenly I saw an open vision of the Lord beside me, and I heard Him say, *You know your clay, right?*

Still motionless, I responded, *Yes, Lord, but just get me out of here. I promise I'll be good.* And then He began walking toward the wheel. It was as though I clutched the hem of His garment and let Him pull me across that long stage. Finally I sat down at my potter's wheel and managed to say, "Hi!" to the audience. I did not know what else to do, so I began making a pot. I put the clay on the wheel, and as I added water and began to center the clay, I heard the living, audible voice of the Lord.

Oh, My child, I will never leave or forsake you.

My first response was, *What took You so long? What are You trying to do, kill me? I felt as though I would die of fright!* But I didn't want to get too mad because I didn't want Him to stop speaking. So I listened to His voice, and once again I portrayed God's heart while making a beautiful vessel.

As my hands went deep into the clay, He said, *I will pull up your walls and I will shape you and When you were in your mother's womb I knew you.* As I formed the clay into a pitcher, He said, *And you shall be my mouthpiece. I will glaze you blue with revelation and with the gold of My glory. I will send you to the nations to bring forth revival to My people.*

I shared His words for approximately fifteen minutes. Then I rose. As I walked back across the stage, I felt embarrassed that the audience stood and applauded loudly. It sure was not because I had stage presence. It was because

the Holy Spirit came. The roar of the crowd filled the auditorium but I was so shy I could not even look up. Pastor Shackett wanted me to go back out and take a bow, but I shook my head and retreated backstage.

That is the story of how my journey into Master Potter Ministries began, birthed out of a broom closet many years ago. The Lord had told me that He would be opening doors for me, and that He wanted me simply to speak His heart. As I mentioned, I did not know this was prophecy. All I knew was that God would talk and I would listen and people would respond. He ambushed me that day in a muddy field, and my life was changed forever. I learned that God's dreams for me are much bigger than my dreams ever could be.

Yet I have not fully arrived. I am moving constantly toward my destiny. And so are you! God starts with us every day right where we are—using all of where we have been. The problem is, we lose sight of the movement in our calling. It is almost as if we begin living in pastel shades, not vibrant colors. We sometimes become satisfied with a muted version of what we are supposed to be. This is why we grow frustrated or disillusioned about fulfilling our destinies.

Do you realize that your life is not a mistake? God has ambushed you, too! It starts with God's dream for you. Everything starts with a dream. Creation started with a dream. And because we are created in the image of our Father, we are called to be creative dreamers.

Dreaming is wild and fun. In our heart of hearts, we would never choose a life that has no adventure. It is because of our fear and our smallness that we wind up seeking only what is "safe." We learn to value comfort and security. But what we call security is really insecurity and mediocrity. God wants us to take risks, to know the thrill and exhilaration of dreaming big.

Do you remember the parable of the talents? When the master returned, he commended the two servants who had

taken a chance on increasing his holdings. "Well done!" he said. Another way he could have put it was, "Well risked!" God never punishes us when we dream big. When we are risking, we are coming alive. He looks on with delight when we walk over to someone in a restaurant or at work and pray for that person to be healed. Our risks thrill His heart. He wants us to dream big dreams. We can be in careers, retired, in school or stay-at-home moms or dads and still be entrepreneurs, holy revolutionaries and strategists. He is calling us to be "007" special-ops agents behind the scenes for Him. There are no limitations. With Jesus our potential is unrestricted.

Why is this so important for us to understand? Because the world is in crisis at every level. We are in an hour of great shaking and transition in our society. Daily we face terrorism, financial instability, attacks on the family, governmental upheavals, even destructive weather patterns. God has prepared us for this hour, which is full of great adventure and potential but also great danger. Each of us needs to pray and get fresh revelation with understanding for this critical time in history. We need to hear strategies from the counsels of God.

The enemy sees your potential. He knows that your life has God-ordained destiny. *Your dreams are dangerous to him.* If you embrace God's full purposes for your life, you will be a powerful weapon to defeat him and bring freedom to many.

What are the strategies the enemy uses to kill your dreams? That is the subject of the next chapter.