

Letting Go of Joy-Stealers

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Letting Go of Putting Yourself in a Box

Ask yourself what box or boxes you have put yourself in. Here are some common ones:

- I'm too old to do that—or too young
- I don't have the right education
- I don't have the right experience
- I don't have enough money
- I can't carry a tune
- I'm not good at mathematics
- I'm not good with people
- I'm too shy to do that
- I'll never be able to learn all this
- I don't have the right looks
- I'm too big—or I'm too small!
- That's not my gift



What have you been telling yourself you cannot do for some reason like this?

I've often put myself—or allowed someone else to put me—in this/these box(s):

Ephesians 2:10:

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Proverbs 29:18a (KJV): *Where there is no vision, the people perish.*

If you've never had a vision of what you could do, if you've never aspired to something so big that it scared you, then you may be missing some incredible joy.

Philippians 1:6: *Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

If your "vision" is of God, you can be confident that he began it and he will carry it on to completion. It may take more time than you thought it would; it may look a little different than you imagined; but if it is of God, all you have to do is just take the next step!

Is It of God?

How do you know if this passion or vision is a God-thing or not?

Here are seven signs that I believe will help you answer this question:

Sign Number 1—It won't go away.

If God has a plan that will take you out of your comfort zone—out of some box you're in—it will not go away. And as you pray about it, it will get stronger, not weaker.

Sign Number 2—Your motivation will be to serve God and others.

God doesn't give us passions or visions just to make us feel good about ourselves or help us achieve our personal goals. There will be sacrifice involved on your part; it will require you to give of yourself in new ways.

Isaiah 58:6-8: *"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard."*

Mark 9:35: *Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.'*

Sign Number 3—There will be a need for it.

If God is leading you out of your box, it's because someone needs you out of that box, doing what God has for you to do.

Sign Number 4—God will open doors for you and confirm it through his Word.

You will have to be persistent, but God will open some doors for you and confirm in some ways that this is of him.

When you get out of your comfortable box and start pursuing the passion God has given you, you need a promise from his Word to hang on to. Ask God for it. It's there for you.

Sign Number 5—Your spiritual leader(s) will counsel and/or encourage you.

Sign Number 6—God will give you the right people to help you.

You'll need help and guidance. If it's a God-passion, those people will come your way.

Sign Number 7—You probably won't be qualified to do it.

If God is trying to take you out of your box and move you into a new vision, most likely your first obstacle to overcome will be that you know how totally unqualified and inadequate you are to do it.

1 Corinthians 1:27 – 29: *But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.*

Getting out of your box and moving into unknown territory will be absolutely too much for you to do! So that's why God chose you. Your recognition of your inadequacy will force you to depend on God, to be humble, to be teachable, and you will always know it was all about God.

It's a learning process.

Here are some of the things I've learned and am learning.

- Not all of my bright ideas are God's passion for me.
- Some passions have a waiting period while God prepares me.
- Not everyone will share my passion and some people will discount it or try to discourage me.
- Perseverance is a large part of pursuing my passion.

- Passions take lots of hard work and there are some days when you want to quit.
- Passions sometimes have a lifespan, a beginning and an ending, and I have to be sensitive to know when it's time to move on.
- When one passion dies, another comes along.
- A God-given passion is always a joy; it is fulfilling; it is in itself rewarding.

It really won't matter exactly what your passion is, because if it is a God-given passion, you will be passionate about it. And it won't matter to you if nobody else in the whole world recognizes it or not. It's burning inside of you and nothing else will satisfy you but to pursue that passion.

Remember this when it comes to pursuing your passion and getting out of your box:

1. If you don't go for it, it will fade and you'll miss the blessing. Use it or lose it.
2. You will be held accountable to the Lord for the passions he has given to you.
3. The more you pursue your passion, the more ability and gifts you will have to accomplish it.
4. When you pursue your passion, your self-esteem issues will fade away. Knowing your identity in Christ a by-product of following God's will for your life.
5. When you step out of your box, God will start working on polishing you to be the godly person he wants you to be.



Please, for the sake of the Kingdom of Christ and the glory due to Jesus Christ, let go of whatever box you're in that prevents you from the good works God has planned for you to do. When you get out of that box, you will move into the abundant life that Jesus promised for those who love him.

What passion or vision are you aware of that you would love to pursue:

If you can't identify a vision God has given you, are you willing to pray for one? _____

Letting Go of False Guilt

You will be amazed at the freedom you will know when you can put false guilt behind you.

What is false guilt?

It is a guilt we impose upon ourselves. False guilt is:

- what we feel when we keep remembering and regretting what God has forgiven and forgotten!
- what we feel when someone appears to be disappointed in us.
- what we feel when we have to say "no."
- what we feel when we try to please people and fail.
- what we feel when we live with unrealistic expectations of ourselves.
- what we feel when we allow others to dictate what and who we should be.
- what we feel when we are unfairly accused of something.
- ??

It's a feeling, not grounded in truth, but nonetheless strong and real.

One of the first signs that you are dealing with false guilt is that you just can't pinpoint exactly why you feel guilty. When you cannot pinpoint a specific reason for your guilt, it is highly likely you're dealing with false guilt.

Determining the Source of False Guilt

Much of our false guilt is from people who indicate their lack of satisfaction with us in some way. Also, much of it is self-imposed. We imagine that others are blaming us, even when they are not.

What are other sources of false guilt?

Learning to Manage False Guilt

The first and most important step in learning to manage false guilt is to recognize it as false.

The second step is to replace wrong thinking with right thinking. When you're dealing with false guilt, you must, by choice and by a set of your will, push that wrong thinking out of your mind.

One way to do this is to start counting your blessings. Begin thanking God for the good things in your life. Refuse to allow the thoughts of false guilt to have a place in your mind.

There Is No Condemnation!

Romans 8:33-34 (Phillips' *The New Testament in Modern English*)

Who would dare to accuse us, whom God has chosen? The judge himself has declared us free from sin. Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us!

Do you have a right to condemn yourself if Jesus doesn't condemn you? Can anyone else truly condemn you, if Jesus doesn't?

To condemn someone is, in today's vernacular, to "lay a guilt trip" on them. Substituting that phrase for the word "condemn," this passage would read:

Who would dare to accuse us, whom God has chosen? The judge himself has declared us free from sin. Who is in a position **to lay a guilt trip on us**? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us!

Wallowing in false guilt is living in condemnation. It is the devil's trick!

Remember, if God is not condemning you, you have no right to let anyone else condemn you—not even yourself.

Romans 8:1: *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Isaiah 43:25: *I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.*

There is great relief ahead as you learn to let go of false guilt and stand firm in the freedom that Christ gives you.

Galatians 5:1: *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

Letting Go of the Fear of Trusting God

I spent many years "doing my own thing," as we say, not obedient to God's voice in my life.

As I look back on that time, I now recognize that the underlying problem in those years was that I was afraid to trust God with control of my life.

I testify to you that God is trustworthy. Furthermore, he's infinitely better at running your life than you are!

Closing

The joy of serving Jesus Christ is second to nothing else, and I'm praying that you've learned a pathway to move on from what has kept you mired in a mudhole or two. We've talked about letting go of:

- Hurt feelings
- Comparing yourself to others
- Needing the approval of others
- Wrong attitudes
- Petty fears
- Worrying
- Unrealistic expectations
- Putting yourself in a box
- False Guilt
- And... the fear of trusting God.

There is no instant, one-time fix for setting you free from these things but you have to start somewhere, right? Find a handle on truth that you can grab on to and hang on for dear life as God the Holy Spirit changes you from the inside out and you truly are then able to live in the freedom Jesus has purchased for you.