

Break Out of Your Box

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Air Dates: November 24 – 28, 2025

Day One

What boxes have you put yourself in? I want to talk about our tendency to limit what God wants to do through us and for us because we put ourselves in boxes.

I've been involved in ministry to women for many years, and I'm a woman myself, and I've seen too many of us build boxes around ourselves and draw lines in the sand that keep us from being all God designed us to be, and keep us from doing some of the good works he put us here to do.

Ask yourself what box or boxes you have put yourself in or you've allowed someone else to put you 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 math.
- 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.

You may be in your own unique box. Think about it: what have you been telling yourself you cannot do for some reason like this? It's time to break out!

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

I'm convinced many of us are missing out on the good works God prepared for us to do because we've allowed others to put us in a box, or more likely, we've put ourselves in some boxes. We just can't believe God wants us out of the box and will equip us to do what he intended from the beginning of time for us to do.

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

Has God given you a vision of what you could do? Have you ever asked him for a vision of what he wanted you to do? If you've never aspired to something so big that it scared you, then you may be perishing spiritually.

Day Two

Are you in a box? I'm talking about breaking out of our boxes so we can be all God created us to be. This is from my book *Get Over It: Letting Go and Moving Forward with God*. In the parable of the talents Jesus taught us if we don't use what he gives us, not only will he not give us more, we will lose what we have! (See Matthew 25:14-30.)

As I look back on how God led me to this ministry, I realize it began with a passion to minister to women like me—women who went into the workplace regularly. I started where I was, with a Monday night Bible study in my home. Then God put a vision in my mind of how good it would be to have a radio program directed to women like me, and though I had no connection with anyone in radio and no experience or credentials, I prayed about starting a radio program.

After spending about 18 months praying about it, I decided it was time to put feet to my prayers, and I decided to find out how to start a radio program. On that very day, God miraculously put me in touch with a radio station who offered to put my program idea on their station, and within a few months, we were on the air. I believe God placed a passion in my heart and since it would not go away, even though it took me way out of my box, the passion became a vision, God opened some doors, the vision became this radio ministry, and God has kept us going for more than forty years.

Your experience will be different from mine, but if God has given you a vision and you're willing to step out of whatever box you are in, God will guide you step by step and will lead you to new avenues of service that shatter all the stereotypes and boxes you or anyone else has tried to impose upon you.

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 (Philippians 1:6).

God won't give you a vision or a passion and then mock you or frustrate you. If it is of God, you can be confident he began it, and he will carry it on to completion.

Day Three

Would you like to break out of your box? I'm encouraging—yes, even urging you—to break free from whatever boxes you've built around yourself or whatever boxes you've allowed someone else to put you in and move into the freedom of doing what God has planned for you to do.

Once you break out of the boxes keeping you from moving forward with God, it begs the question: How do you know if your passion or vision is a God-thing or not? Here are six signs that will help you:

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 (that must be step number one), 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. If it's from God you will be motivated out of a love for God and for people, and it will be all about serving.

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. It won't be because you just want to do something creative or different. It will be to meet a need.

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

If this vision is a God-thing, you won't have to push and shove and beg and plead. You will have to be persistent, but God will open some doors for you and confirm in some ways that this is of him.

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.

Day Four

Have you ever had a passion to do something for God that was so big, the very thought of it just overwhelmed you? I'm talking about breaking out of our boxes. I believe far too many of us Christ-followers miss the good things God has for us to do because we see ourselves as unqualified and inadequate for the job.

Here's the amazing, good news: You are unqualified to do what God wants you to do. The Apostle Paul told us why this is true:

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 (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

Your recognition of your inadequacy is a good thing, because it will force you to depend on God, to be humble, to be teachable, and you will always know it was all about God. Earlier this week I told you how God opened doors for me to begin this radio ministry, even though I had no experience with radio, no mentor to help me, no book telling me how to do it. I was totally not qualified to start a radio program, but it was God's vision for me, so I just kept walking through the doors he opened, and now for many years I've been privileged to be a part of what he is doing through this ministry.

Some of you have similar stories, and you're in that good place of doing what God put you here to do. But here's what I'm discovering: There's more. I can't be satisfied with where I am; God keeps pushing me out of my box. For example, I played a part in starting a ministry for sexually trafficked women, and that vision overwhelmed me. I had to break out again and pursue a vision that moved me way beyond my abilities and giftedness. God chooses to use unqualified people who are willing to break out of their boxes, trust God, and move forward.

Let me hasten to say breaking out of your box certainly does not mean you can make foolish or quick decisions. You must do the homework and due diligence required. But I pray you'll stop telling God all the reasons you can't do it and ask him what the next step is. I hope you'll stop making excuses and ask God to help you break out of your box!

Day Five

I've been sharing some thoughts about getting out of the boxes we put ourselves in. Boxes that keep us from the abundant life Jesus came to give us. Boxes that keep us from doing the good works he put us here to do. I've urged you to ask God to give you a vision of what he wants you to do and then stop making excuses. Break out of your boxes!

I want to share some of the things I've learned and am learning along the way as I've stepped out of my box to follow God's leading in my life.

- Not all 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 I wish I'd never had a passion. (But not many!)
- Passions sometimes have a lifespan—a beginning and an ending—and I must 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 rewarding.

Remember this when it comes to pursuing your passion and getting out of your box: If you don't go for it, it will fade, and you'll miss the blessing. Use it or lose it. If you don't pursue it, not only will you miss the blessing in this life, but you'll also miss the reward in eternity. And the more you pursue your passion, the more ability and gifts you will have to accomplish it. God is not going to waste talents on you if you're not going to use them. He's waiting to see if you are serious about pursuing the passion he has put inside you.

For the sake of the Kingdom of Christ and the glory due to Jesus Christ, stop putting yourself in a box which 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 Jesus promised for those who love him.