

Vantage Point

LESSONS LEARNED

What do you mean you want to serve in full-time ministry? Don't you know you're a single woman without a seminary degree? Are you sure you know what you're getting yourself into? Why would God choose you?

These are some of the questions that had run through my mind over the years. I wanted to know if I'd find a position in full-time ministry despite these issues. God's Spirit would show me His plans and give me clear affirmation. Yes, God had chosen to use me. But first He had some things to teach me.

For most of my adult life, I have served in some kind of ministry capacity. In college, I gave my life to Christ and began my journey of faith. Along the way I became involved in a local ministry, where I received training, discipleship, encouragement, and friendship. I really began to grow during this time.

Eventually, I caught a vision that would take me to a new home two hours away. There, I hoped to start a single-adult ministry. God, however, had another plan. I ended up at a small church of about a hundred people. It was a church led by a group who, within weeks, decided they didn't want my involvement. Not only was I a woman, I was single, confident, opinionated, direct — well, you get the idea.

To make a long story short, I stayed and got some valuable lessons. I learned that God can use anyone, anywhere, and in any way — but first, I had to learn to be faithful, available, and teachable. This church was the first of many training — and growing — opportunities God had in store for me.

Today, I'm the director of a ministry I'm passionate about, but the journey here took almost 10 years. It was filled with many bumps, but God used the difficult situations to draw me closer to Him.

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by Kris Swiatocho

I learned to be humble, even though I didn't see eye to eye with leadership and when the thought of serving under someone younger than me was almost unbearable.

I had to learn to really trust God. This wasn't always easy. But I found out that He would give me more opportunities once I proved I could take care of what I had already been given. It was Luke 16:10 in action: "Whoever is faithful in very little is also faithful in much, and whoever is unrighteous in very little is also unrighteous in much."

I also discovered true forgiveness during this time. I had to learn how to forgive myself for my past mistakes and move forward. And I needed to forgive others who had hurt me and to seek forgiveness from those I had hurt.

My ability to show and understand mercy also grew stronger. I learned that not everyone is at the same place as me spiritually, and that's OK. I learned to live out 1 Timothy 1:16: "But I received mercy because of this, so that in me, the worst [of them], Christ Jesus might demonstrate the utmost patience as an example to those who would believe in Him for eternal life." Each of us is on a journey that is uniquely ours. I've realized the extent of God's love for me, and from that, I've been learning to love myself and others more.

Learning to wait on God in all things, including friendships and romance, was one of the toughest lessons that came out of those years. But I've been reminded that God's words to the Israelites in Jeremiah 29:11 apply to me as well: God has a plan to give me hope and a future.

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