

let **her** out

cutting room floor



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cutting room floor

I contemplated adding the following writings into *Let Her Out: Reclaim Who You Have Always Been*, but ultimately, they ended up on the cutting room floor.

I hope you'll enjoy these bonus readings.

finding faith when I thought I had it already

IF YE HAVE FAITH AS A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED NOTHING SHALL BE IMPOSSIBLE UNTO YOU. ~MATTHEW 17:20

I wore this quote and an actual mustard seed around my neck during most of high school. The necklace was a gift from my parents. They have always been my #1 fans and raised me to believe I can be anything I want to be.

I was raised in a church-going family and I married a faith-filled man. Not until recently have I thought deeply about faith. One of the cornerstones to becoming a professional coach was to do “the work” I would ask clients to do on myself. Step #1 was to examine my core values. At the heart of my values lists have always been my family and leadership. This represents the people who are close to me and the work I am able to put into the world.

I never listed faith as a value on these lists. Part of me thinks it is because it’s inherent in who I am. Why would I need to write it down? Another part of me thinks it is because I have never stepped as fully into my faith as I could. Why step into it fully when I can show up to mass every week and sing from the choir loft? When I can teach my girls the words to the prayers and cover off general knowledge about the sacraments and religion? That should be enough, right?

But faith had a different message for me. Earlier this year when I was doing a three-week series for the young adult ministry at my parish, I had the participants do their own values exercise. They had to sort 30 small slips of paper into various piles according to how they matter in their lives. Eventually they narrowed these 30 words down to their top 5 values. This is a very common coaching exercise and participants always walk away with thoughts about how important a singular word – or value – is in their lives.

I told the participants that they could take the slips of paper home with them and do the exercise with a partner or family member. Those who choose not to take them home left them on the table. As I was collecting the envelopes and small slips of paper at the end of the night, I noticed that one slip of paper was on the floor. I picked it up and chuckled to myself. It was the word FAITH. I wanted to call out in a sarcastic voice “someone lost their faith”, but I didn’t. Instead, I put it into my piles of papers and took it home.

A few days later I was sorting through the papers from the church sessions and the FAITH slip of paper fluttered onto the floor. I picked it up and put it back in a stack.

I was cleaning my office a few weeks later and what was resting amidst the piles on my floor?

FAITH

I'm not one to be superstitious about signs, but this really stopped me in my tracks. I looked at the paper, looked up into what I view as heaven and the universe and said, "Ok, God, I get it. I need to have more faith."

This slip of paper is now in plain view on my office desk.

I'm not 100% sure what it means for me now. Mostly, the paper is a good reminder that I need to have faith. Faith in God. Faith in myself. Faith in my family. Faith in my community. Faith in something bigger than all of us combined.

For now, I'm journaling a lot about my values and trying on the various words, like faith, in the context of my life. Sitting with this word outside of a church pew and choir loft is bringing it into clearer view.

The lesson here is that I can push rocks up a hill all day long, but at major transition points, I'm reminded of the verse from Matthew. The smallest bit of faith can go a long, long way. I am the only person standing in my way from having this small bit of faith make a big difference in my world.

What value are you wrapping your head (and heart) around these days? You aren't alone. It's normal to wrestle with the things that are important – or that we want to be more important – in our lives.

the day I rode an entire bus route

As a freshman at Ohio State, I was determined to figure the place out on my own. Early during my first quarter I decided I wanted to go to church. Not one of the campus ministries that I could have walked to or gone to with my friends. A community church with non-college age congregants. What's a girl without a car to do in a metro area like Columbus in the age before Uber? Take the bus.

The day before my church excursion, I figured out where there was a United Church of Christ and compared that to the COTA (Central Ohio Transit Authority) bus route. Sunday came and I put on my church clothes and made my way to the bus stop. The bus approached and I was confident that in less than 30 minutes, I was going to be in the sanctuary. I was watching the streets and stops as best as I could. I was used to country roads set at square mile distances in Republic, Ohio, which threw my sense of direction off. On country roads, you can zig-zag your way back if you go too far. Not an option on the COTA bus. Time passed. I didn't see the streets I was looking for. More time passed. By then, I realized I probably wasn't going to church that day.

Finally, the bus driver made it to the end of his route and I was the only passenger left. He asked me if I was okay and if I needed anything – it was time for his break. I told him as calmly as possible that I was fine. When he left the bus, I freaked out for a moment – I had no clue where I was. Then a calm came over me because I realized just as what comes up must come down, that the bus would make a loop and bring me back to campus.

I spent the last half of the bus ride writing on a small piece of paper I had in my purse. It might have been a gum wrapper for all my memory serves. I don't remember the exact words, but on that paper I gave myself motivation and encouragement that even if the path I go down doesn't take me where I want to go, that I would make the most of the situation. In my case, I spent the return trip to campus watching people, looking at the scenery, and having faith that I was going to be fine on this large campus. I might not have made it to church that day, but I had my faith tested. I kept that small piece of paper in my wallet for the next four years as a reminder of my bus ride.

The lesson is that your intended destination can often lead you down an unintended path. Appreciate and soak in the journey. There was a reason for me to get on – and stay on – the bus that day. A secondary lesson from this experience was that it is okay to ask for help. I had it in my mind that I couldn't trust "big city" people in the same way as those from my small town. Later that year, after I got to know the bus drivers who took me to and from downtown Columbus to my internship, I realized I could have avoided riding the entire bus route if I had told the driver where I wanted to go when I got on that

day in the fall. People are generally willing to look out for one another – you simply have to be brave enough to ask for help. That bus ride taught me that I didn't have to face the large campus and city by myself. People were just as helpful in Columbus as they were in Republic, Ohio.

empty spaces

When I was growing up in Republic, Ohio there were a few places that I felt were truly sacred. One was the empty sanctuary of the Republic United Church of Christ.

When we celebrated the life of my Uncle Bob in that church, sitting in that full sanctuary, not only did memories of Uncle Bob flood back, but so did the days of sitting in that sanctuary all by myself.

I took piano lessons in the church for many many years. Because of this, my sister and I had a key to the church. Oftentimes, we would either get there before the teacher or would remain there after until our parents came to pick us up. That left ample time for solo performances and imaginary concerts.

There was something special about being in that sacred space all by myself.

Last week, after the pews had emptied and everyone was settled into lunch in the fellowship hall, I was able to take a quick moment by myself in the sanctuary. While it's been upgraded (hello flat screen TV; whitewashed walls and rock inlay); it still felt like home. I told my husband on the way home that the Republic United Church of Christ feels more like home than any church we've ever been part of. I think it's because I spent so many hours – many of them by myself – in that place.

The quest for empty spaces continued for me as I got older. Once I graduated from piano lessons in the sanctuary to the local college, I had to find other empty spaces.

In high school, I would retreat to the empty auditorium and put on similar solo performances. In college, I would try to find the quietest room in the farthest away library on Ohio State's campus to study.

Recently, I ran across a completely empty space at my work building and my curiosity about who abandoned the space quickly turned to visions of plugging in my computer and getting work done in this newly discovered empty space.

I wrote most of this on the empty deck of a cruise ship. I got up way earlier than my family on the first day at sea, and was itching to get out of the room. When I left, I experienced a nearly empty space. No one was up hitting the buffet, going shopping, or making their bets at the casino (well, they might have been, but that is not my scene.)

Maybe it's something about being raised in a completely wide open space that has me seek them out as I venture through this crowded world.

As a child, I would take walks by myself to the woods. I would swing for hours on our swingset all by myself.

In an empty space I have the freedom of being by myself and being fully myself without any eyes on me.

In that empty church sanctuary, I probably played my greatest performances. When I had the boombox jamming in the backyard of my childhood home, I likely tried out my best dance moves with only the three fields surrounding our property as witness.

To me, it feels a lot like that “dance like no one is watching” quote.

The challenge is: How do you give the greatest performance when you aren’t in this empty space? How do you be all of you in all the places when all of the eyes are on you?

I’m still figuring this out. It’s getting easier. Three years of blogging, a year of online videos, and years of being on stage make it more natural. But given a choice, I’d rather hunt down the empty spaces than flock to the busiest spot in town.

Where were your sacred spaces as a child? How are you finding similar spaces as an adult?

For me, I’ll probably always wake up a little earlier so I can experience the peace and tranquility of a space that will soon be teaming with people.

For you, maybe it’s finding a new stage to sing your greatest performance.

Whatever it might be, do what you can to be all of you in all the places – empty or otherwise. Give your greatest performance every day.

own your race

I wrote and rewrote this three times. I guess I needed inspiration to hit at the right moment, and it did as I was running in the Columbus Half Marathon yesterday.

The first half of the race I was feeling great. I was beating my planned time, the cold didn't bother me, and spectators were out in full force. When I saw one spectator's poster around mile 8 as I started to feel a little wobbly, I knew I had the message. The sign said: REMEMBER YOUR WHY.

My WHY was to have a fun race. To enjoy 2-ish hours running. At that point, I wasn't enjoying it too much. I was torn between pushing as hard as I had been for the first half, likely resulting in serious pain, or slowing down and enjoying myself. That's when I decided I could slow down.

It was time to OWN my race.

Similar inspiration is what I was seeking as I was running one day in the late summer. I was mid-way through a 9-mile training run on a brutally hot, humid day and the running path and parks were busy. As I was approaching people along the path, all I wanted to do was say:

"Can you please cheer for me? Don't you see I'm dying here? Come on, help a runner out! I'm almost home."

I wanted them to know that I was on mile 6 of this brutal 9-mile run and their encouragement would mean the world to me.

But no one cheered. No one doused me with water. No one really noticed me at all.

And that was when the "ah-ha" hit me. The people on the running path had no idea whether I was on my first or tenth mile. It didn't matter to them whether I was a new runner training for my first race or if I was simply out for a daily workout. Likewise, I had no idea if they were out for a leisurely stroll or if this was their first time out of the house after an illness or injury. I didn't know their story and they didn't know mine.

We were each running our OWN race.

As I was running with 18,000 other people yesterday, I realized that we all have a "why" for our race. Some were out for the first time checking something off their bucket list. Others were veteran runners. Some were running for a cause. Others were running for their own lives.

The difference between my summer training run and yesterday's race is that we had people cheering us on. Complete strangers came out and rallied for us. They gave high 5s. And donuts. (Seriously – I took the donut at mile 12!)

How often are you on the final stretch of a project or close to your next promotion and all you want is a little cheering squad? At the same time, how often do you look at other people, envious of their new job or project assignment, without knowing that this was the final stretch of their marathon?

We are all running a race. We are all at different points of that race. Some of us have recently crossed a finish line, when others are only lacing up their shoes.

Whether you've got a cheering squad at your side or not – OWN your race.

What would it be like if you could simply cheer others along – whether they are at the start line or the finish line?

Will you join me in cheering for one another even when we are oblivious to the course of one another's race? This might help make our big world feel like a smaller place. It might also be the encouragement we each need to OWN our race.

be your best self

AN ESSAY FOR THE 1998 OHIO JUNIOR MISS COMPETITION

In the colorful world in which we live, I am like a box of crayons. On the outside, I am bright and full of promise, while my best qualities are found inside. Open the lid of the box and you will see my true gifts. The red, orange, and yellow represent the fire and energy in my life. The blue, green, and purple are the peace and care I possess. The brown, black, and gray represent my strength and power. With all of these colors, I brilliantly shade the canvases in all areas of my life.

During my childhood, being my best self meant staying in the lines and matching all of the colors. Now that I have reached young adulthood, being my best self has taken on a whole new meaning. In school, striving for academic excellence keeps me alert. By taking innovative approaches towards science projects, term papers, and mathematical equations, I've become a better scholar. Taking leadership roles in the classroom allows not only for me to get a new perspective, but also for my classmates to increase their basic knowledge. When I participate fully in extracurricular activities, I develop wisdom not attainable in the classroom. Through stage productions, music contests, and marching band, I have learned about the power of performance. While on the quiz bowl team, yearbook staff and track squad I have learned to blend my colors with my teammates to create dynamic hues.

Being my best self is also a way for me to reach out to my community. Through 4-H, church groups, and National Honor Society, I learned to give unsparingly of my time and talents. Helping those in need is a way for my colors to be enriched. Whether I am planting flowers in my village, leading my church in song, or visiting with nursing home residents, I am growing. I have discovered my best self. Through setting both realistic and challenging goals, the discovery occurred. As I set forth to reach my goals, I realized that they are the outline of my life and that my job is to fill in the spaces with color and vitality. This color has been added through extracurricular, community, church, and school activities.

Have you found your best self? Do your colors cover the entire spectrum? Being your best self demands you to open the lid and find the colors and qualities that you possess. Do you have a red crayon to represent the love you give to others? Do you have a green crayon that symbolizes the nurture in your heart? Is your black crayon unbroken to show how strong you are? By assembling this box of crayons, the coloration of the world will change in your eyes. Once you have filled your box with a rainbow of colors and have discovered your true gift, your best self will emerge. The once drab and dreary places will come and live with vivid hues as you become involved in your community and classroom.

Exploring new places, experiencing new things, and meeting eccentric people occur

as you strive to outline the portrait of your life. Once you have this outline drawn, the color must be added. Because you are the owner and controller of your box of crayons, you decide how magnificent your portrait will be. What is greatness to you? Are you an eager student, community server, an active participant in all areas of your life? In order to stand out from the crowd and shine in the spotlight, you must possess all of these characteristics. As you develop strong leadership, scholarship, and character, your colors will continue to emerge and you will ultimately be your best self.

As you and I continue to be our best selves, we inherit more admirable features and our crayon collections grow. Of what benefit are our crayons if we keep them to ourselves? They are of no advantage as long as they remain in the box. Teamwork is the key to being our best selves. If you toil endlessly on your own portrait, it will be great, but the labor is not necessary if we work together. When we share our colors, a deeper meaning of life is found. I can individually earn straight A's and perform superior musical solos, but a team victory and group production are much more fulfilling. Combining our colorful ideas and different creative perspectives produce is not a single or portrait, but a magical collage. This collage brightens our communities in schools.

When you and I work together to produce a living masterpiece, a vivid explosion occurs. Being your best self is meaningless unless together we are a best selves. During a basketball game, 10 players splash color on the court. They face defeat and victory together. We need to be a team. In a constantly changing world, we have to join hands with the sick and lonely. We need to face poverty and crime together. We know that the feeble and poor must see a yellow sun in order to face each day optimistically. Angry and troubled people in our world need to see a blue sky in order to feel tranquility. We possess these colors. We fill the empty spaces and produce pleasing pictures with our crayons.

We now need to set forth in shade the world's canvas. After we have discovered our best selves and combine our crayon collections, the lifeless atmosphere surrounding us will erupt in magnitude of color. It takes each of our individual colors to produce this glorious picture. We shall spread our pastels to amplify the world's beauty. Our neon colors will glow to represent excitement and vigor. Above all, the classic red, blue, and yellow will spread throughout the earth because they are the base of our best selves.

Take the time to examine your box of crayons. The more you look and the deeper you search, the better you will become. Let us take our colors and create a wonderful masterpiece. With our varying shades, we will continue to be our best selves.