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Let Go

By Staci Stallings

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Although there are a lot of careers in this life that could teach someone to let go, I think that writing has to be near the top of that list. Maybe that's because I write, or maybe that's because it really is. Whatever the case, this understanding was made clear recently when a writer friend of mine asked the question, "How could I not see the holes in my manuscript that my critique partners caught and pointed out? They were so glaring."

As a writer, I completely understand the frustration in this statement. If you are a high school writer only, you may not. While teaching I saw plenty of high school writers. They wait until the last conceivable moment to start, write down everything they can think of on the topic at hand in no particular order, then race to the teacher's desk to fling the paper at her, hoping it's good enough for passing. These people are not the writers of which I speak.

I'm speaking about the writers who think all the way through every word they put down, who cross out, delete, rewrite, re-think, edit, re-edit, and hone every inch of a manuscript before they let anyone else so much as hear the idea presented in it. These are the writers who research until their eyes bleed, think until their brain hurts, and generally torture themselves over every single word because it doesn't just need to be "good," it needs to be "perfect."

Then after they can see no other place in the entire work of oh, say 80,000 words, they heave a sigh of relief and acquiescence and place it into the hands of someone else to read. In high school, these are the kids who have been finished with the first draft of their 250-word essay 40 minutes before the bell rings, but who are still crossing things out and rewriting them even as they slide toward the teacher who's saying, "That's it. Turn in your papers."

It's painful for them to turn their work over to someone else. It's like a mother leaving her first baby with a sitter for the very first time. They hope and pray the reader will be gentle. They hope that when the paper is returned, there are very few red marks if any at all. And above all, they hope they haven't made any grievous errors that will make the reader think they are a complete imbecile who should never have been given a pen and paper in the first place.

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This is the kind of writer my friend was and then came the shocker. She had missed something, and not just something but a huge gaping hole in the story and how she told it. When that happens to a writer of this ilk, devastation sets in like a hurricane across a soul. Even the mildest criticism is like a knife to the gut. Immediately after the devastation blows through the rains of doubt begin to pour. "Maybe I'm not supposed to be a writer. Maybe I just don't have what it takes to do this."

To some extent there might not be a way around this feeling totally; however, I don't think it is completely inevitable. You see, I have found a way (not foolproof but pretty close) to weather this storm and let the manuscript grow as God intended it to. It's called, "Let Go."

That's the short version of having a "Leave Everything To God Opportunity." These types of

opportunities are all around us. They are in the panic of a mother when her child is sick. They are in the stress of a business owner who just placed a major bid and then realizes or suspects he missed something. They are in the quiet reaches of our own souls every time we feel that maybe we haven't quite done enough in a given situation.

Here is what I told my author friend, and here is my advice to you. When you have a "Leave Everything To God Opportunity," realize that if you could do it alone, God wouldn't have made everyone else. Each of us has our own, unique experience that we bring to a situation. In short, each of us has a piece of the puzzle to fill in. As writers, we must realize that just because we couldn't see the piece that someone else lays before us that doesn't mean we don't have skill, talent or desire, it just means that they have a different perspective, a different piece to fit into the mosaic of the work.

Instead of abhorring the pieces that someone else fills in, bless them. They just made your puzzle make more sense than it ever could have without that piece. Then thank God for bringing that piece into your life. When you begin to do that, you can then begin to slowly let go earlier and earlier in the process, and the puzzle can come together while you are building it rather than you having to knock it all apart and rebuild it later.

It's not easy for any of us to do, but when you think in terms of "Leave Everything To God Opportunities," the storms of life begin to look less frightening and more manageable than ever before. So try it today. Let Go, and see if He doesn't hand you a piece that on your own you couldn't have known or found but one that makes the whole puzzle fit in a way that it never could have without it. Then celebrate because you have now found the key to how God intended all of us to live, and that key will unlock doors you never imagined could open to you.

Let Go. Let God, and enjoy every "Leave Everything To God Opportunity" that comes your way.

None

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