

LIVE IN RECKLESS SERVICE

*Dance like no one's watching
Love like you've never been hurt
Sing like no one's listening
Live like heaven's on earth*

Dance Like No One's Watching

I like that mental image. What if we got out on the dancefloor and cut loose? What if we danced with reckless abandon no matter who was watching? What's the worst that could happen? A few giggles from the sidelines, maybe? That's okay. Let the wallflowers laugh while we get our groove on.

I can think of no better example of dancing with reckless abandon than that of King David as he and the people brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. After one disastrous and failed attempt that didn't meet with the requirements of the Law set forth for moving the Ark, David's second endeavor was done with absolute adherence to the Law and honor for God. Scripture says:

"Then David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod." 2 Samuel 6:14

I've heard it said that David was scantily clad during his dance. In preparation for this section, I've read convincing opinions to the contrary. I'm more apt to believe his undignified manner of dancing and twirling around in front of commoners and servant girls was what prompted his wife Michal's scorn than him dancing in his tighty whities.

In our last chapter we defined reckless as: *marked by lack of proper caution; careless of consequences.*

David's dance for God was his act of worship, an act of humble service. He went all in no matter who saw him and no matter the consequences. The highest position of honor as king didn't limit David in his worship or service. He got his groove on and experienced harsh criticism as a result. His wife's scorn was the price he paid for his reckless devotion.

Which brings me to my point: Someone is always watching. The dance of our lives is a billboard expressing our hearts for God. Like it or not, it's true. Our devotion and dedication to God is there on display for others to see. Sadly, so are those moments when we lack devotion and dedication to God. Sure, we may get away with a few things under the cover of darkness, but even when we don't realize it, our lives are making an impact on others, either positively or negatively.

None of us are an island unto ourselves. People surround us: parents, spouses, children, friends, co-workers, and neighbors. Consider this: someone is always watching who and what you're serving. If you're recklessly serving God, you might elicit scorn from unbelievers. That can be a consequence, an embarrassing and painful possibility. Or maybe someone's watching you, trying to decide if your God is worth them knowing. You have to serve and take that risk. You may not know until you reach heaven the souls you've impacted by your undignified dance.

Or you might be serving yourself with reckless abandon. That's super noticeable even when you don't think it is. If you are a church goer and professing believer, then it's a flashing red light for others that Christianity isn't worthwhile. If you're self-absorbed and world-focused, then you look no different than them. Why would they buy into your faith if your faith isn't serving you well enough to keep you focused on Jesus?

So I guess the statement "dance like no one's watching" isn't even a possibility. Someone is. God is. The one who sings His love song over your life is watching your dance—good and bad moves alike. Even when we get out of step, He's there as a gentle partner to get us back in line with the music.

It helps to look down at your feet occasionally to check your steps. Is the dance you're doing one worthy of the title Daughter of the King?

Not so long ago I took a stance on something, an area of freedom I felt I had. I analyzed it and found I was okay in continuing to do this particular thing. It wasn't even a big deal. Most people would roll their eyes that it even became a dilemma for me. Soon after taking my stance, I heard a small still voice say, "It isn't becoming of royalty." It wasn't wrong, but it wasn't becoming. It wasn't like David's undignified act; mine was just undignified. The voice wasn't condemning and never said not to continue. It was simply a gentle reminder that my freedom might allow for something that would cause others to see me as less than the daughter of the King that I am. So bam! That behavior is history. People are watching.

After his wife's condemnation of his dance, David said,

"And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight." 2 Samuel 6:22

David understood reckless service in a way his wife didn't. He did as the Spirit led him to do no matter how it appeared to others. He truly danced as if the only one watching was his King. I want to dance like that.

Love Like You've Never Been Hurt

For good measure I am including this section, but I won't elaborate. It deserves its own chapter.

To love others like I've never been hurt isn't much of a struggle for me. I still love. I'm guessing you do too. How can we not? Those who hurt us the most are often the ones closest to us. Love doesn't fade just because we're hurt. In *Live Your Love Story*, God's example of reckless love toward His children is what's required of us, that we love no matter the consequences to our own hearts.

Stay tuned until then.

Sing Like No One's Listening

This is more representative of my problem but not it exactly. I struggle to keep singing if no one *is* listening. Before I explain that, let's visit Mary and Martha. Yes, we know their story, but hopefully, we can look at it afresh, with a heart willing to gain new insight and eyes able to see our own actions and motives.

Go now and read Luke 10:38-42. Seriously, go read.

Let's look at the heart of the two women. I've shared before that I am a Martha by nature. I sympathize with her. I can't read these verses without my Martha's hands agreeing with her. I think, "I feel ya, sister. Somebody has to do the work, and there's Mary hanging out with Jesus."

But I'm also Mary. In case you cheated and didn't read the passage, I'll at least provide this: "And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word" (v.

39). I want to emphasize “heard His word.” I can’t tell you the hours I sit with Jesus in his Word and talking through prayer. I’m not trying to impress you. I’m trying to make a point. Those hours I’ve spent is where healing and freedom have occurred.

Isaiah 61 should be familiar to you since I used it again in last month’s chapter. All those things Jesus came to do: preach, heal, liberate, free prisoners, comfort, console, give beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, and give a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, happened for me at the feet of Jesus. He didn’t barge into my house, tell me to put down my bottle of Windex and listen up. I willingly sat at His feet, read, listened, surrendered, and all the other active ways I’ve given myself over to Him over the years. Even now, with Mary’s heart, especially now with Mary’s heart, I still devote time to Him every day. I never stop listening, learning, and worshiping. Mary’s heart would be too empty without Him.

The Hands of Martha:

I recently met with a friend who told me how God has her camping out in Mary and Martha’s story. I love when He does that, keeps you hovering around a particular passage until He squeezes every ounce of revelation into your understanding, or at least as much as you can bear at the time. God used that conversation to spark our next thoughts for this chapter.

She said her camping trip stemmed from a recent outrageously busy season for her at work and commitments with her church family. Much was required of her. She was transparent enough to admit her real thoughts, which are much the same as most of us: *If I don’t do it no one will!* When her busy season subsided, God revealed to her that, through it, she had been Martha. He even brought to mind one particular task she had accomplished with the mindset of how others would look at her for the good job she had done.

I appreciate a friend who is willing to admit that of themselves. Those are usually insights we keep to ourselves.

Her admission wasn’t at all foreign to me since I’ve been Martha-ing all over the place here lately. When I read their story, I still naturally wonder who would have prepared the meal if Martha hadn’t. What if she would have just sat at Jesus’ feet. Wouldn’t all the guys have been raising Cain that there was no food on the table at dinnertime? Wouldn’t everyone have blamed Martha? Oh wait, there was that feeding of the five thousand thing that happened with this group. If Martha would have sat at Jesus’ feet and later everyone was found to be hungry, Jesus would have provided something. I don’t know, they would have called for kosher pizza or something. I just know a heart to love trumps hands to serve every time. The heart has to be right before the hands are truly effective.

The Heart of the Fruit:

I’m working on a new story. This idea of the heart of the fruit is something I wrote about recently. Ruby, my new favorite character, is helping Mike. He’s struggling with doing something in an area of service he doesn’t want to do. She tells him, “If your heart’s not in the ministry, then it’s meaningless—fruitless.” And, “Whatever fruit you produce needs to contain your whole heart. If it doesn’t, it won’t nourish others. Plenty of people serve in ministry out of obligation, but it’s the ones with the right heart who actually bear fruit.”

If Martha’s heart had been right, she wouldn’t have needed to tattle. Ultimately, she wanted recognition for what she was doing. It wasn’t as much about what Mary was doing that made her sister spitting mad. It’s the fact that Martha was doing it all herself and not getting credit. If her heart had been in her service, she would have met her guests’ needs without raising a ruckus.

I’m a ruckus raiser. I’m not sure that I really am now, but historically I have been. I’ve done too much, volunteered for too many things, and then gotten angry that no one else was helping. The truth I can see more clearly now is this: If my heart was in my work, if I was truly called by God to serve, then it shouldn’t have mattered who else was or wasn’t serving.

But I've created plenty of ruckuses in my life. I need to learn from this chapter too. I fear I'll have Martha's hands and mouth again someday if I don't learn and grow. I can look back, red-faced, at some of my past behavior. I was and can still be immature when it comes to service. I've heard the first step in recovery is to admit there's a problem.

The Heart of Mary:

The camper friend of mine, the one hanging with Martha and Mary, said there's a phrase from that passage that God's prominently using with her: *just one thing*. Mary knew Who that "One thing" was—Jesus. My version of this passage says:

"But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:42)

The last words of Jesus in this verse, "which will not be taken away from her," take me back to Hosea, our focal passage from last month. This is an excerpt from Live Your Love Story:

"After all the effort He's put into chasing me down, He's not going to stand idly by and allow me to slip away. Remember, part of the Hosea verse was this: "And no one shall deliver her from My hand" (v. 10). Even good things like ministry can't come between us. I have to remember the "my Husband" relationship trumps the "my Master" relationship, in that the being is more important than the doing. Without the being, the doing will always be off balance. I can play the harlot to ministry when done with Martha's hands and not Mary's heart.

Consider with me a woman with both traits, one with the heart to *be* like Mary and the hands to *do* like Martha. Now that's a force to be reckoned with, a woman after God's own heart who can love and serve with reckless abandon. I wanna be her. Do you?"

It was this last paragraph that spurred me on for this chapter. I want to be a woman with Mary's heart and Martha's hands. Imagine the reckless abandon a woman like that can experience in everyday life.

Earlier, I said I would explain how I struggle with singing when no one is listening: At times I don't feel heard. Hours are spent with me pouring out words onto pages. Much of what I do is technology based, online and behind the scenes, so I don't actually see or hear a response. That leaves me feeling like I'm calling out and no one's listening. Feelings lie, though, I know that.

In order to keep my heart in check, I have to continually ask: Am I singing just so people will listen, or am I singing for an audience of One? For me, it always has to come back to "just One thing"—Jesus and what He's called me to do.

Recently, I was out on my back porch spending time with Him. A noise erupted, one that drew my eye outdoors. Here's an entry from my journal that tells the story:

"You just taught me a valuable lesson through a little bird. She landed on the railing of the deck, a tiny little thing. Then she let out a call so loud that I had to see her beak move to be sure such a loud voice came from such a small bird. Still she's calling, this time from the tip top of the umbrella. Her message seems urgent as she turns this way and that way to call.

Observations:

- No one seems to be listening as she sits all alone. There are no crowds of birds and bees and butterflies gathered around and still she lifts her voice.
- Other birds call in the distance, different messages than hers. She doesn't seem to even notice, or if she does, their difference doesn't faze her. She keeps her message her own without trying to sound like all the other voices.

- She has no idea that You and I sit behind her listening, with me learning from her freedom to be who she is and sing her own song.
- She always, at least, has an audience of One.
- Maybe she's praising You, her Creator and Sustainer, for the beauty and peace of the morning.
- Maybes she's singing out her gratitude of living here in this courtyard, a place of protection and provision.
- When needed, she sings out. When not, she goes about her business of being a bird.
- She stays in her lane, singing her song for the day."

My little bird, we'll call her Mary, sings from her heart and allows nothing to stop her. No matter who's listening or not, no matter that her song sounds different, she just sings. Her heart is filled with love for and gratitude toward her Creator. That's her motivation.

Isn't it incredible how God can use nature to speak to a discouraged heart? His message to me was simple: Keep singing little bird, even when you don't feel heard. That's a little phrase that keeps coming to mind, spurring me on when I'm in a slump.

Do you need that same encouragement to keep singing? I know there are times you get your feelings hurt when you're overlooked and undervalued. Even when your heart is in the right place, it's never easy to keep running your race when discouraged. Paul gives good advice when he says, "...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith..." (Hebrews 12:1-2).

In order to live and love reckless, you may be called to continue to sing, continue to give, continue to serve, and continue on in active obedience at risk to your own heart. Run the race, Beloved. The prize may not be recognition here, but your audience of One is ever listening.

There's a human element to us all that longs for acknowledgement and validation. It's not just pride that drives that need. It's also self-doubt. When you're not being recognized, it's easy to question if you're even doing the right thing or serving in the right place. That's one reason it's vital to know to what and where you're called to serve. You have to *know*. You need a verse that validates that call, especially for longer-term assignments. Sure, serve outside your call for temporary assignments at a once-a-year event like VBS. That stretches and grows you and builds the body. But when it comes to true ongoing areas of service like leading a small group or working with children or students, you need to serve where God has placed the call on your life. Only then can you stand on the truth that you are where you're supposed to be even when you seem to be doing it alone and unnoticed.

There's no better imagery than in the book John where Jesus admonishes us to wash one another's feet. When you kneel to wash the feet of another in service, you're never alone and always noticed. The One who modeled the most selfless of all acts of service in His trek to the cross is there kneeling alongside you, fueling Mary's heart as you serve with Martha's hands.

So keep singing, little bird. If they listen or don't, just keep singing your reckless love song to Jesus.

Live Like Heaven is on Earth

Finally this: Heaven *is* on earth. God, through His Spirit, indwells the believer. God is with us, Immanuel, a title that's not at all reserved for Christmastime. You. Are. Loved. by the God who came to save you. That has to influence every area of your life to keep you singing and dancing. All that you do in this life should be an outpouring of the Love that is within you.

There's a verse that has so impacted me over the past year that I find it continually applying to random circumstances. In the next chapter of John after Jesus washes His disciples feet, he says to them:

"...We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23)

God the Father and Jesus the Son have come to make their home with you, moving in the midst of your daily life, walking where you walk, and living where you live. What better way can we describe heaven on earth? What better reason to live reckless lives ourselves than to know God is reckless enough to love and live among a people like us?

LIVE IN RECKLESS SERVICE TAKEAWAY

LOOK WITHIN:

Are there areas of your life that don't deserve a place on God's dancefloor? Besides God, who might be watching?

In what ways are you most prone to getting off balance? Examples: work, ministry, home and family life. Explain your answer.

Are you more Mary or Martha? What is the proof?

Do you long for more recognition in your areas of service, whether in ministry or work or home?

In what ways do you feel overlooked or undervalued?

KEY POINTS:

- Someone is always watching your life's dance.
- Having the heart of Mary with the hands of Martha is a powerful recipe for reckless service.
- Sing when no one is listening; serve when overlooked.

PRACTICE THE DANCE:

How can you apply the Key Points of this chapter to your day-to-day life and to your day today?

LEARN THE LYRICS:

- Read the story of David's two attempts at moving the ark of God in 2 Samuel 6.

Who put out their hand to touch the ark? _____

What happened to him? _____

David's first attempt wasn't reckless in the way we are considering here, in a positive light. He didn't inquire how to move the ark as prescribed in the Book of the Law. A man died due to David's lack of knowledge. Reckless, as we are called to be in service, requires knowledge of what God asks of us.

What are some things God has asked of you that goes against what seems like common sense?

Write the first part of 2 Samuel 6:22 here:

What are ways you have been considered "undignified" in service or worship (in a good way)?

- Read Luke 10:40.

What does your version say was Martha's problem? Mine says she was "distracted with much serving."

Is your service a distraction or are you called to where you currently serve?

- Read Luke 10:42.

Look at your own heart and ask: Is just One thing needed? Are you seeking Jesus above all things?

- Read Hebrews 12:1-2.

It's not just sin that entangles us. My version says, "lay aside every weight..." The weight can be your expectations of what result should come from serving others. Or the weight can be your hope of unreceived appreciation.

What is most weighty in your service? What most bogs you down?

NEXT STEPS:

Use your journal to complete and pray over the following:

- Take some time and explore your personality and passions. How are you uniquely designed? What do you love to do? What gives you joy?
- How can you use your unique design to serve the body?
- Examine your areas of current service. Are you serving out of a heart for that ministry or only because you see the need?

STRIKES A CHORD:

What have you learned through this topic that requires further reflection?

SING YOUR OWN SONG:

“...We will come to him and make Our home with him.” (John 14:23)

Build upon this prayer: You have come and made Your home with me. Even when I feel overlooked, I can know you are looking over me.
