



REAL WOMEN!

Epiphany!

R. E. A. L.
Women!
R. elevant
E. ncouraging
A. live
● L. ionhearted

Inside this issue:

Epiphany (cont)	2
Happiness is a choice	2
Leaders as Shape Sorters	3
My Reality (by Esther Dahn)	4

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A few weeks ago I experienced an epiphany of sorts—a revelation that was so simple, yet as they say profound. I awoke to the revelation that I was the Me I was going to be. That basically my personality, my ministry style and my gift mix was who I was going to be. In other words, my vessel **shape is formed!** I wasn't going to suddenly become a comedian, a stylish diva or a fitness trainer. The basics are formed, I am Me! (At the same time, I know that He will continue to perfect that which concerns me, and for that we ALL can be grateful!) But for the major part, I am the Me I am going to be! It must sound pretty silly to some of you, but for some reason, it brought a release into my heart that I didn't even know was needed!

I will explain. Last December Darryl was given a 1940's circa wooden ship model of the HMS Bounty. This model consists of a block of bass wood, roughly cut into the shape of the hull. Whenever he begins to work on this model, the basic shape of that block of wood—though smoothed and adjusted, will be the same form as it began. It will become the HMS Bounty. The manufacturer pre-shaped this block of wood to become the Bounty. The Potter of my life has made me the way I am—from childhood and has been smoothing and honing me to continue being a better me all along. **But the basic shape will remain the same.**

When this revelation came, I realized that I had been under a

whispering, black shadow cloud telling me, "When you become different than you are, then you will be really some one God can use". I recognized that He hadn't made me to be a person who will minister to a 30,000+ crowd, but that I might be encouraging and ministering to those that will, and that is a good thing. I didn't have to be "another person" to fulfill my calling and my destiny. 2 Timothy 2:20 says, *But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.* The clarity that God the Potter had formed and fashioned me to be used for His Purpose in the Kingdom has been clear for some time. The fact that He knows and has planned the specific purpose for my vessel shape and size was releasing! In The Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren discusses a persons "S.H.A.P.E.". This simple acrostic describes the different "combination of abilities" which makes up the optimum way God purposes us for His use.

***Spiritual Gifts:** given to each of us according to His plan and purpose to be used for Him and His Body.

***Heart** is the real you—it is your essence and resonates your passion, what you love and care for.

***Abilities:** the natural talents you were born with. Are you musically inclined? Can you run fast?

***Personality:** Your temperament, and how you express and relate to experiences and others

***Experiences:** those unique events that have added joys, sadness and lessons of life that you have had the opportunity to learn from, grow from and lean our God with.

The above list is adapted from The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren. If you haven't read it, or it has been awhile, take time to read it through. My first "spiritual gifts" test was taken over 20 years ago. I am not unfamiliar with any of these concepts, so why did this revelation minister so greatly to me? Some how I felt responsible for the "size" of my vessel. That if I only prayed more, sought Him more, read and studied more, then I could become a spiritual super giant—conquering the known world for Jesus. The relief I felt when I understood that the size of my vessel was the Potter's job was profound. My job and responsibility is found in the next verse. *Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor or as the New Revised Standard Version reads: All who cleanse themselves of the things I have mentioned will become special utensils, dedicated and useful to the owner of the house, ready for every good work.* ²² *Shun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*

If I pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with my brethren,



Vessels for His Use

(Continued from page 1)

I will become a vessel of honor. I will be prepared for whenever, wherever and whomever He sends me. My heart will be right and I am free to continue to be the Me, He made me to be. This sets me free to love others, like others who are not like me, because the Lord made them for their own purpose. There is no comparison, no competition, and no worry because I am the only ME He made! I need to be the best Me I can, so that puts me back to seeking righteousness, faith, love and peace. And I am Free! Won't you join me, in becoming the best you, you can be?

Written by: Martha Rodman

Epiphany Part 2

Another aspect of this revelation came when the Holy Spirit told me that when I allowed that cloud to influence my life, I was actually dishonoring the vessel He had made me to be. That was a sobering thought, as well. I was

in fact, telling the Potter that He had made a mistake in creating my "vessel". We do not choose our calling, the "size" of our vessel, I am not even sure if we can choose to be a vessel of silver or gold. That is really His decision. I know that I can co operate with Him, pursuing righteousness, faith, love and peace, fleeing things that oppose my fulfilling His Call and then rest in Him. The result of this revelation is that I am much more careful in what I think about myself, including my strengths as well as my weaknesses. I do not want to bring dishonor to Him, nor negatively influence others by my own struggles.

I need each of you to stand strong in Him, but I will love you and care for you when you are weak. I need each of you to walk with Him in the call and manner He has called you to be, but I will help you discover that call when you are confused. You won't be Me, and I won't be You, but we can be part of His Body and function well together, honoring the Head and enjoying the

peace and grace this brings to our individual lives.

God has made some pretty unique individuals who are seeking His will and His plan for their lives. They may be shaped differently than us, but as I am thankful for their gift to His Kingdom, they will grow and develop in His ways as well.

We need each other. That is the way He planned it.

Father, I ask that you bring these thoughts in to reality for my sisters. Those who struggle to like themselves, to feel a part of your Body, bring them peace. Those who want others to be like them, help open their eyes to the blessing of variety. Teach us to learn from each other, to help each other and to love each other as you do us. We desire to be vessels of honor. Thank you for that privilege. In Your Name, Amen

Statement of Faith:

We are becoming Relevant, Encouragers who are Alive to God and His Spirit, even to the point of Being Lion-Hearted!



Happiness is a Choice:

1. Today I choose to look for God's handprint on my life. (I know He is there for me today!)
2. Today I choose to love my family for who they are, not for who I would like them to be. (They are so wonderful as they are, anyway!)
3. Today I choose to do something special for me. (I am worth it!)
4. Today I choose to cast all my cares upon Him who cares for me. (He has BIG shoulders!)
5. Today I choose to do something nice for some one else, whether they need it or not! (It helps to get outside myself!)
6. Today I choose to forgive those who do not meet my expectations. (Maybe my expectations are wrong anyway!)
7. Today I choose to walk in His grace. (It is the only way to walk and live!)
8. Today I choose to believe His Word—all of it! (It is written for me!)
9. Today I choose to believe His Church is His plan. (He loves the church, so should I!)
10. Today I choose to sing out loud! (Even if it is in the shower) (Artwork by Elizabeth Haslet)



Leadership Encouragement

Leaders are Shape Sorters!

Dear Leaders—do you remember playing with shape sorters as a child? Those puzzle preschool games where a child matches a heart shaped piece with the heart shape hole, or a square with a square etc. With five grandchildren 6 and under, I knew what the Lord was talking about when He talked to me about the role of a leader as a “shape sorter”. Every leader is faced with situations where they need people to fill the needs of the group. In the game, there is one right piece for every hole. Not the same in real life. Sometimes it is very obvious where a person fits, but normally it takes some time and wisdom to put the right person in the right place.

People who find their right place are happier, the ministry goes easier, and more fruit is born. Often times an individual doesn't even know where they should fit. As a leader it is most important to take the time to help your puzzle piece discover their shape.

If we want to equip our followers to do the work of the ministry we must understand their ministry shape. What has God formed them to do? There are several ministry gift tests available and many leaders make the available to their congregations. Churches that employ spiritual gift testing help their people discover their gift mix. The wisest leaders not only exposes their people to these tests, but actually take the time to go over the test results with their individuals and help them to find the best ministry fit. Many leaders struggle with spending the time and energy it takes to do this, but those that do, find their followers much happier when they are put in to their proper position.

In most congregations or even in smaller settings like worship teams, children's classes etc, there are usually more holes than there are pieces to fit those holes. This creates the tension, do we fill the hole with a body no matter what their shape, so we can “meet the need”, or do we let the hole stay empty. It depends on the situation. Sometimes the wisest thing is to let the hole stay empty—but not with frustration and irritation that “nobody wants to fill this hole”—but with faith.

Praying and believing that God will prepare the right piece. Most times it is the leader who does the preparing, especially if the piece is still a bit undiscovered for those gifts. Walking close with a person after you put them into place, helping them with the fitting can be crucial to the success of the puzzle piece fitting. Most places do the 20/80 paradigm, where 20% of the people do 80% of the work. Encouraging people to fit into their place will help move this number in your group to a higher percentage. We can get so used to this 80/20 percentage that we stop looking and asking for the rest of the group to join in, or we get angry and frustrated with the 80%, but don't express it and write it off to “people are just too busy” or “not committed”, resulting in frustration and burn out on the 20% who are doing the work. Most of these 20%'ers are probably people with the gift of helps thrown into their gift mix. God bless every one of them. As a leader shape sorter please learn that there are times and seasons in everyone's life. Positioning people in such a way they can gracefully step down, or take a break without pressure is ideal. When breaks are needed, look for ways to use this opportunity to bring others on board. We must teach involvement without browbeating, guilt tripping or harassment.

Ephesians 4:11 *Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.* ¹² *Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.* ¹³ *This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.*

It is the responsibility of every leader to equip the next generation for their part of the Body. If you are saying, “*I don't know how!*” Take the time right now to ask the Father to begin to teach you. Be an example of the believer. Teach by example and then use words! Set yourself to be a learner of your own gift mix. Meditate on how the Father taught you. Pass it along.

Honor the gift mix that God has placed in

your followers. Romans 12:4 *For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function is something we must remember. Not everyone has been given your gift mix. Take the time to review about the spiritual gifts that you do not possess. We can forget that not everyone is like us.*

If you are in a leadership position and you feel mis-placed, go to your leader and discuss it. Perhaps they see something you do not. Ask them to train you or to help you feel more confident in the fitting.

If you are a leader who knows you haven't placed quite the perfect puzzle piece into the needed spot, take the time to help that individual do the best they can, by giving them the tools they need for the trade.

Shape sorter leaders, yours is not an easy job. But, as you seek Him for the welfare of those you are leading, as you be an example of the believer and are patient to train them up in the way they should go—your puzzle pieces will be properly fit and you will be able to enjoy the fruit of your labors!

continued from page 4

My Reality

(by Esther Dahn)

The Lord also led me to keep a Thank You journal. I was to write 5 things on a daily bases of what I was thankful for. In the beginning I couldn't find even one thing to be thankful for but eventually I was doing the five. I started looking for things to be thankful for. I have to say I have lapsed a bit, but I still make sure that I do it 2 to 3 times a week. As I was lead by the Holy Spirit to give this testimony I felt an attack from the enemy but the Holy Spirit reminded me that, “I overcome the enemy by the blood of the Lamb and the by words of my testimony. I am so grateful to my King for digging me out of that grave and breathing new life into me



Building Together Across Generations

My Reality

By Esther Dahn

R.E.A.L.

Women

(Esther gave this testimony at Living Word Fellowship a few weeks after Darryl had ministered on Breaking the Yoke of Oppression. The Sis Toni she refers to is Rev. Toni Quinn, who is head of the Women's Ministry at LWF. We need to be reminded as well as remind others of these true realities. I know this article will be a blessing to you.)

My reality is that I am engraved in the palm of God's hand. My reality is that no one can pluck me out of my Father's hand. My reality is that God is my helper, I will not be afraid, what can man do to me. My reality is that Jesus is God. And my favorite, my reality is that Jesus lives forever praying for me. And so on. I was prompted by the Holy Spirit to give this testimony after the awesome word that Daryl gave a few Sunday's back. You see there was a time in my life when I was under that heavy yoke he spoke of and those reality statements that I just stated were the keys that the Holy Spirit used to free me from those yokes. They were and still are my lifeline and without them I would not be here.

Heb. 12: 4 says, "The word of God is living and active (powerful in KJV) sharper than any double-edge sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit joint and marrow; it judges the thoughts and the attitudes of the heart."

There was a time I needed the reality of the power of the Word of God to be exhibited in my life. I was under heavy depression and I had no clue how I got there and worst of all I didn't know how to get out. I felt stuck, alone and helpless but I knew God was powerful and His word was life changing. Still, I saw none of this power or change in my life. I became angry often because I did not know how to express myself. If I did know what to say I didn't because I did not want to sound crazy, or so I thought. I believed all the lies of the enemy and I became very self absorbed. I focused more on what I was going through instead of seeing the Lord at work. I held everything inside, which just made me feel as if I was six feet under. It was like I lost my voice, I was screaming inside but no one heard. I only knew that the Holy Spirit was around because I saw another day.

The things that were going through my mind ranged from the foreclosure of our home to our waiting on the Lord for a child, to us moving back home to mom. I felt like a loser and the enemy made sure I was aware of this every second of the day.

I thank God for a praying husband and a praying church for I am sure that is how I made it out. All I can remember was, recounting to myself one day, how the Bible was filled with folks who had encounters with God and were changed. I mean He changed them to such an extent that He even changed their names. Now that's change. Abram to Abraham, Jacob to Israel, Simon to Peter, Saul to Paul and so on and I came to these two conclusions. Either God's words only changed people in the past and it's not able to change lives today OR I needed to open myself up completely to Him so that His word could change my life. I went with the latter because one thing became apparent to me and that is that the most beautiful gift God has ever given man beside Christ was still active in my life. It was a muscle I had not used in a long time. That gift was the power to CHOOSE. Right there I made this confession, "**Holy Spirit You are inside me and I need you to change me from within and from this day forward I have resolved to trust Your word completely**". It would be nice to say I only did this once but it was a daily thing.

The first thing that the Holy Spirit taught me to do was SMILE. No matter how bad things seemed when I smiled I knew He was in control and that everything would work out. He taught me to take my mind off of me and place everything on Him. He taught me to take control of idle thoughts and focus more on Him and that is where the "reality" statements that I said earlier came into being. I have over 30 of these statements in my notebook. I gave myself mega doses of the word of God, not everyday but between 5 – 10 times a day. The enemy wanted me to **feel** as though nothing was happening but I had made a choice to trust the word of Christ completely. During these times I remembered what Sis. Toni always said, "What's with this feeling business?" Thanks so much Toni for yielding to the Lord's leading. (continued on page 3)

Energetic

Enthusiastic

Entertaining

Enabling (in a good way!)

Exercisers!

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The Email Version of

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