

It's time to preach!

by Aretha Flucker

There is a profound risk in being who God has created us to be. There is a risk of faith. There is risk of trust. There are challenges that crop up in every area of our lives when we say yes to showing the world the full magnitude of who we are – beautifully unique beings created to do amazing things on this earth.

The society in which we live is infused with situations, people, spaces and circumstances that seek to diminish who we are. Whether it is being ostracized from spaces that do not support our beliefs, being marginalized for presenting ourselves in the ways in which we see our true selves, being overlooked for positions and promotions simply because of our race or gender, or any of the myriads of situations that can create a calloused heart if we allow them, we must constantly contend with the nuances of simply existing.

In the face of life's challenges and seemingly endless tears, anger, confusion and frustration, hope and positivity can easily be lost. However, one of the things that continues to give me encouragement is the support system I get from my brothers and sisters like those I connected with at the "Nevertheless She Preached" conference Sept. 23-25 in Waco, Texas.

These awesome individuals are co-laboring in ministry to do the work of teaching, preaching and whatever God has called us to. Regardless of what career paths we have chosen to embark upon or what our ministries may look like, we all find commonalities in the commission God has given each of us to be abundant with love and to give generously. This generosity is not always with finances and resources, but also with our time, our passions, kindness, patience and our gifts.

Not only did "Nevertheless She Preached" encourage me to keep loving abundantly and being generous, but the speakers also reminded me that I am not on this journey alone. One of the things that deeply resonated with me and inspired me on my journey were the different voices that came through the panel, sessions and lectures. Each presenter had a wealth of experience and passion to share with us. Each speaker had a unique framework of experiences that birthed her viewpoints and theology. The vulnerability, transparency and resiliency threaded in the presentations deeply touched and inspired me. To say the least, these women are dynamic daughters of God!

As I think of the candid conversations and laughter we shared at "Nevertheless She Preached," I am ignited in honoring my call to ministry. God has called and commissioned me to eradicate injustices and to be a part of the change this world so desperately needs. Our conversations on intersectionality, feminism and so much more added fuel to my fire.

As long as there are people on this earth who are confronted with racism, sexism, ageism or any of the "isms," there is much work that must be done. As long as there are faith communities that

do not accept all people or individuals within their faith communities and do not take seriously the call to be disciples of Jesus and embody his teachings, there is work to be done. Jesus embodied the Word of God to show us how to be the face of God and to always love every single one of God's people without inhibition or prejudices.

So, it's time to preach! It's time for each of us to lift our voices and use the pulpits and platforms available to us, to shift the atmosphere with love, and to seek justice in all spaces. Despite any obstacles that may exist in the world, we were built to change this world!

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