

August 28, 2007

Janet—

I've been writing—as an adult—since 1985, selling my first book for the secular romance market in 1990, with publication the following year. I wrote 15 books for that market before, in 1996, after the death of Sean, my youngest son, I began to reconsider my life—and work—in an entirely different context. A more God-given and blessed context.

After a time of prayer and consideration, I finally decided to turn my focus to writing for the Christian fiction market. As I did, there was a gradual but definite difference in my approach to my work. Always before, it had been fulfilling and, at times, even exciting work. Bit by bit, though, it became far, far more. It became the friend of my soul.

Still, it took me a while to realize it's the ministry that blessed *me*, not *me*, the ministry. Over and over since I've begun writing for the Christian market, and since I've tried in a more conscious way to give it over to God, I've found this to be so true. With each book I write, I learn so much about myself and God. About His depth and richness and love, of the gift of family and friends, of all this wonderful life has to offer. In the end, the God-given talent that He has always meant for me to share with others—through the writing of my books—has graced *me* most of all.

My first book, *DAUGHTER OF JOY*, was an exploration of one woman's journey to find joy and hope again after great tragedy. It was, in many ways, also part of my own journey after losing Sean. The inspiration of that book, by the way, was based on a line from a condolence card I received after Sean's death—"For every joy that passes, something beautiful remains. . ." I learned a lot about grace and second chances in *WOMAN OF GRACE*, my next book in that series, of being a source of inspiration and light to others in *LADY OF LIGHT*, the third book, and of God's faithfulness to His people in the fourth book, *CHILD OR PROMISE*. In both *EMBRACE THE DAWN*, one of my two Scottish historical women's fiction novels, and *GIVER OF ROSES*, my first fantasy for the Christian market, I delved deeply into surrendering one's will to God. I seem to revisit that issue in many of my books, probably because it's one of my more trying and ongoing personal struggles.

In *Friend of the Soul*, a book on the spirituality of work, Norvene Vest claims there are three basic principles about work as a holy task, enfolded in the context of prayer: 1. Work as vocation—being called to what we do; 2. Work as stewardship—taking care of and honoring what is given; 3. Work as obedience—serving one another.

That book was a real eye-opener. What I had so long taken for granted in the best of times and, in those creatively dry or discouraging moments resented—if not actually despaired of—was, if approached as vocation, stewardship, and obedience, no matter *my* view of the work, of equal value to all other work in the eyes of the Lord.

The Latin root for vocation is *vocare*, to call. The earliest meaning of the word was that a person was "called" by God to his or her work. I used to imagine, however, that only the most holy or very special of people were actually called to great and glorious things, called to a sacred vocation. I no longer believe that. *My* vocation is to write books to glorify the Lord.

Not because I'm so special. Not because I'm so great and glorious. Nonetheless, it *is* my call, what I should "live to do". The central concept of vocation, after all, is that God has a need and a purpose for each one of us to fulfill. If we do our best to honor that, no matter the eventual outcome, our work blesses us.

Human work, as a primary means of caring for God's world and an aspect of our Christian spirituality, is rooted in Jesus' model of stewardship. Jesus himself worked—as a carpenter, then as a teacher and healer, and finally with His suffering and surrender in that last week of His life. Indeed, He was fascinated with the role of work in life, frequently using it as a metaphor for God at work (planting a vineyard, herding sheep, sowing and harvesting a crop, trimming a lamp, etc.).

Yet, though vocation and stewardship are vital components in the sacredness of work, without obedience to God and his legitimate superiors placed over us in life, vocation is not followed and stewardship is never undertaken. Jesus was never above being the servant of all, and was always obedient to His Father's will. Obedience, though, has always been hard for me to swallow. I've always been a big one on personal freedom and independence. And that's a particular perk of being a writer—the decided lack of bosses telling you what to do. In the end, though, even someone as independent as a writer has a boss. Or, leastwise, a writer who sees her work as vocation, stewardship, and an act of obedience.

A writing career is based on such faith—faith that your story will eventually evolve into something even remotely resembling your vision of it. Writers live in an information vacuum unable to gauge the impact the book is having—if any—on readers, save for the occasional reader letter. And, at best, those few letters have to stand for a lot of people who may have read your book and don't write you.

I've struggled, and at times struggle still—with that quite natural need for praise and affirmation that what I'm doing really matters. Yet, to God, the quality of my effort in serving Him is vastly more important than any fame or fortune I might ever gain. There is comfort in that, yet my faith in God is sometimes so weak and I doubt. Oh, how I doubt! Just another instance, I must confess, of my ongoing struggle with surrender in yet another form. ☺

There's a story in one of my books, *ALL GOOD GIFTS*, that I have a character relate to another character. I think it perhaps sums up the essence of why God has placed us on this earth at the particular time He did. I cannot give you the source of this story, for I took it from another book and the author told me it was so frequently used that the original source has been lost. So, some of you might even have heard this little tale.

During WWII, a German widow hid Jewish refugees in her own home. As her friends discovered the situation, they became extremely alarmed. "You're risking your own well-being," they told her. "I know that," she said. "Then why," they demanded, "do you persist in this foolishness?" Her answer was stark and to the point. "I am doing it," she said, "because the time is now and I am here."

The time is now, and I am also here, to fulfill the vocation to which God is calling me. There are two temptations, however, that I strive never to fall prey to: first that I can do nothing and so don't even try, and second, that I must do everything and consequently become overwhelmed and give up. To paraphrase Mother Teresa of Calcutta, what matters isn't that I do great things, but that I do small things with great love. And to remember that whatever I do, I should do it for the Lord, and never for my own self-aggrandizement or the esteem of others.

My writing indeed is a gift and a blessing. I try to remember each day that I write to give glory to God, to provide for myself and my family, and to supply useful services for the rest of creation. With God always at its center, it is healthy, ennobling, and soul-gratifying work. It is surely "the friend of my soul."

Blessings,  
Kathleen Morgan  
Colorado Springs, CO

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**KATHLEEN MORGAN**, an award winning, best-selling author, wrote fifteen romances for the general market before turning to the inspirational fiction market. She now writes for Fleming H. Revell, a division of Baker Publishing Group, and Tyndale House. Currently, Kathleen has had four historical romances in the "Brides of Culdee Creek" series, two hardcover, stand alone romantic novellas, three Scottish historical romances in the "These Highland Hills" series, two historical women's fiction novels, and book one of the "Guardians of Gadiel" fantasy series published in the Christian market. Her book, *As High As the Heavens*, was released in January 2008. Check her out at [www.kathleenmorgan.com](http://www.kathleenmorgan.com)

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