



“If you can’t do it right...”

I want to toss out the lie that says I should only do things if I can do them right.

I was lost. I had to start over. *Dee, da, dee, da, dee...dum, dee, da, da* came the opening strains of Beethoven’s *Für Elise*, but as I came closer and closer to that treacherous run, I felt the panic start creeping into my throat. I got hot in my cheeks, my fingers began slipping in sweat. I tried to check out of all mental functioning and slide through on muscle memory, but I couldn’t.

My pre-frontal lobe has always been over active, and it kept the factual truth in front of me: *You don’t know the chord that starts the run.* So I froze again.

On my third attempt and failure, I was ready to open the music and sear the measure into my right temporal lobe when I heard a rumble from the kitchen and my dad’s booming voice, “If you’re not going to do it right, don’t do it!”

I flinched. I knew it was important to do things right. Our family did things right. We went to church each week. I practiced piano every day for an hour. My bedroom was spotless. I spent the summer of my 3rd grade year going through “30 Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary.” I was nine years old and reading Austen and Tolstoy. I was brainy and judgmental and somehow in vague dread of what might happen if I didn’t do things right. I tried not to imagine it.

I know my dad loved me. I was his Suzy. We watched birds together. Planted grass seed in our front yard. Picked blackberries in the woods behind our house and raised earthworms. I just don’t think he could tolerate hearing that chord misplayed one more time. And he was nervous—the recital was that evening. *Could I get it right?*

Yes! I played *Für Elise* beautifully that night in my crispy peach taffeta. My “right” family returned to a regulated state, and I fell asleep with the world contained and sensible. Yet as I slept, Dad’s words began to bury themselves down into the sands of time like a blind, colorless crab escaping the light. I didn’t choose to believe it. It came to

be its own unshakeable truth: *If you can’t do it right* (and I added “best”), *don’t do it.*

That belief has kept me from both large and small things that I would like to do. From jumping into a pick-up volleyball game to writing the book that is burning inside me. *I wouldn’t do it right. Someone else could do it better. Step back. Don’t do it.*

I’m not alone in holding this lie to be self-evident. Many people I meet hold similar core beliefs, beliefs that keep them from doing what God has for them. Even biblical heroes believed the lies. Someone must have told Moses that he was slow of tongue, and he believed it. Someone convinced Jeremiah he had no power with words and was “just a child.” Gideon believed his clan was the weakest, and he was the wimpiest of wimps. I wonder who told him that, and why he decided to believe it could keep him from doing what God asked him to do?

God looks at our potential—what he has made us to be, not always what we believe from our history or heritage. I’m not saying we are all destined for fame or that you should anticipate finding yourself in the annals of history, but I know without a shadow of doubt that you were made for a purpose. I was made for a purpose. Fear of not doing it right (or better than everyone else) are the enemy’s lies to hold us back and keep us down.

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago” (Ephesians 2:10, NLT). We may not always do them right, but neither did the Bible heroes. Thankfully, God redeems and restores and fills in the gap. He is the only one who is always right and always righteous.

I want to toss out the lie that says I should only do things if I can do them right. Instead, I want to believe that if my heart is right with God, he can take even the failures and use me for his glory.

I’m going to start writing that book. □

—Susan Reedy