

Doing the Work

—Ed Dunn

I'll never forget her words: *Good job, Ed, good week—you are really Doing the Work!* My counselor's words would ring in my ears from the time I left her office until I would return again the following Friday afternoon. My counselor's office had become a safe space, one I'd grown more comfortable within with each new visit. Week-in and week-out at a set time and within that comfortable space, her reinforcing message was clear: *Keep Doing the work!*

"A counselor?!" you may ask. "Why did you need a counselor, Ed?" That's a fair question. As a follow-up to my last column entitled, *Let the Past Be the Past*, please allow me an opportunity to share a time in my life when I was put in a position to have to follow my own advice.

It was early 2003 and at that time, I had been married for nearly fourteen years. My wife, new baby girl and I had recently made a move from the sunny and seventy-seven degrees of Los Angeles, California, to the cold and gray of a Boston, Massachusetts winter. In retrospect, I'm not quite sure what we were thinking, moving to Boston in the dead of winter, but the prospect of a bigger job and a slightly more approachable housing market led us all to charge headlong into a new chapter of our lives.

The truth was, my wife and I needed a new chapter in our lives. We were looking for a new start. After fourteen years together, our marriage had grown tired. Add to that fact the death of my wife's mother due to cancer and the realities of her own postpartum depression, and it was clear we needed a new space in which to breathe.

To shorten a long and painful story, our move to a new city, a bigger job with more



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pay and even a beautiful, white colonial gambrel on a charming, tree-lined street did not change what was not working between us. The fact that I was traveling almost every week with the demands of the new job made things even more difficult. By the end of 2003, my wife decided to leave Boston and return home to Los Angeles. She filed for divorce shortly thereafter.

I was exhausted and completely devastated by what had happened to us. And so, I sought the help of a counselor. It has been said that time heals all wounds. It has also been said that hindsight is often 20/20.

Although well-meaning friends and family offered both pieces of wisdom in an attempt to comfort me, at the time, I felt my life was falling apart, and must admit, I found little comfort in such wisdom. In time, however, with the support of my counselor, in our process of *doing the work*, I would come to see that both pieces of wisdom were true.

— *Be still, and know that I am God*
(Psalm 46:10).

From my childhood, I've always loved this verse. In the difficulty I was facing with the divorce, I came back to this verse time and again. It might seem paradoxical to quote a verse from the Psalms about *being still* in the midst of a painful story about *doing the work*. It's not.

of meditation, prayer and conversation, but eventually, I was able to listen more fully, to forgive the hurts I'd caused and those caused by others, and to let the past be the past. In *being still*, reflecting and talking it out each week, I was *doing the work*.

Jesus is with us in the midst of our pain. No matter what we may face; a divorce, a loss of a loved one, or any number of health, financial or family traumas, Jesus gives us his peace and promises to walk it out with us. **Being still, trusting God and living in and by his grace involves doing the work.**

I know in my own life, Jesus helped me

to be still and to do the work I needed to do. He may have even helped guide me to the counselor I worked with each week. Although I can't be certain of that, I am happy to give him the credit. With her help, I was able to heal and to make the changes I needed to make. I was able to grow. *Doing the work* has become a way of life, and I thank God for his help and comfort along the way. □

Ed Dunn is the author of Let the Past Be the Past.



My counselor's office had become a safe space...

The words of this verse served me not only as a spiritual inspiration, but also as a physical way in which to **do the work** I needed to do.

My counselor helped me to slow down. She helped me to get quiet. In the process of our weekly visits and the **work we were doing** together, we began to explore some of my past, some of my life experiences and how I was repeating certain patterns in my life that needed to change. It took time and lots

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and endured the world of religion and its academic and publishing institutions in a way few women have.

In the preface to her gutsy, honest, authentic and uncompromising, let-the-chips-fall-where-they-may *Fired at 57: My Fight for Justice in Christian Academia* she says:

"This volume is devoid of god-talk on my part, though loaded with it from those who fired me at Calvin Seminary. Such god-talk may seem odd to those outside the Christian workplace. Here firings are sugar-coated with the 'I've prayed-about-it' defense. Indeed, if words are taken at face value, my firing was an incredibly holy process, hours upon hours of fervent prayer, God leading every step of the way. At one point I was even accused of not sufficiently appreciating their prayers on my behalf. This whole dynamic in Christian culture is nothing short of spiritual abuse."

Religion has attempted to hide its abuse and oppression by its use of "holy" in-house language and by liberally smearing God's name all over its toxic and evil behaviors like one would put lipstick on a pig.

When the thin veneer of the profane use of God's name and hateful religious makeup is removed, the pig remains. I am thankful that Dr. Tucker, along with many others in all areas of our culture, has chosen to take a stand against the Taliban-like abuse of women, whether one calls it misogyny, bigotry, sexism or gender discrimination.

Read Ruth Tucker's book — you will be glad you did.

—Greg Albrecht