**Your Story Matters**

Overcome life’s hurts and reclaim your voice

Jo Ann Fore

Average Rating:

Not rated[2 Comments](http://www.todayschristianwoman.com/articles/2014/january/your-story-matters.html?paging=off#comments)

[View as Multiple Pages](http://www.todayschristianwoman.com/articles/2014/january/your-story-matters.html)

I blame Disney.

Those storybook tales we held to as we grew up—the wonder and magic of happy endings—oh how those dreams and expectations can set a girl up for disappointment when life gets hard.

And at some point, life always gets hard.

I remember the day I surrendered my happily-ever-after, that day I sat cross-legged on the bare hardwood of my living room, a thirty-something worn-out mama and abandoned wife. My fears, doubts, and insecurities sparkling much brighter than my trampled tiara.

Broken dreams and unmet expectations leave invisible wounds, ones that linger, confuse, and overwhelm. Our souls stained, our hearts wrecked, we tend to lose hope. Our mouths broken, we fall silent.

While silence can be serene and comforting when we need a break from daily living, silencing who we are, our internal voices, weakens our ability to connect heart-to-heart with others.

Over time, our voices can fade to insignificance. The nothingness permeates our lives with low self-esteem and threatens to steal our very identities.

Have you (or someone you know) ever fallen silent? Felt unable to express yourself because you were misunderstood, attacked, or criticized in some way? Have you ever hurt so badly you doubted the pain could go away? More importantly, have you felt a sharp pull to hide these hurts?

That's not God's plan.

Your voice matters. In fact, it's a personal gift from the One who made you.

Pull that truth in tight—to the very core of your being. Relish the freedom.

You aren't alone. Unworthy. Powerless. You are important in God's eyes. You aren't defined by what has happened to you, or even your own wrong choices; these things will not destroy you. You are loved. Needed. And what you have to say is valuable.

You aren't defined by what has happened to you, or even your own wrong choices; these things will not destroy you.

Intoxicating, isn't it?

*Those thin places*

*where truth seeps through—*

*those are the places where Jesus walks,*

*the places we find healing.*

Dare you believe it? The Pollyanna euphemisms can fade quickly as you default to what you know best. After a brief interlude of hope, your mind pulls back, pulverized by self-doubt. *Is what I have to say really meaningful or valued—does anyone even care?*

It's hard to forget those times you were forced to keep secrets. Or those times others made you feel worthless and inferior, pumping up their ego at the price of your self-worth.

This battle for our voices is intense. We want our freedoms. To feel joy. We want to matter. But our worlds are loud, filled with friends, family, and co-workers as well as social demands and outside negative influences.

And in the midst of all that noise, we tend to lose the voices that matter most—both our own and that of the God who whispers to our hearts.

And in the midst of all that noise, we tend to lose the voices that matter most—both our own and that of the God who whispers to our hearts.

I well know the roar of silence, the taste of fear. I've lived the numbing quiet of suppressed emotional pain caused by unfathomable hurts.

But I've also reached out and grasped the hand of freedom extended by a personal and loving God. I've come to savor the liberty to speak—to participate in my own life and the lives of those around me. No longer does life pass me by.

A tumultuous journey of childhood sexual abuse, a twenty-year struggle with bulimia, and emotional and physical abuse in a former "Christian" marriage threatened to derail God's purpose for my life. With a shattered sense of safety, I couldn't believe God, much less trust him. With a brain hardwired by destructive negativity, I made countless poor choices. And the fallout of those painful life experiences left me vulnerable. Voiceless for years.

But I didn't have to be that way.

Over time, in the healing shadow of Jesus, I addressed the toxic beliefs that had soiled my life and twisted my thinking. As I learned to identify these lies and replace them with truth, I couldn't help but think differently. Unaware, in the midst of it, I was retraining my brain.

*The first step toward freedom is to choose truth.*

Today, I use my formerly silenced voice to tell others about God's goodness and the plan he has for us to live a life of joy and purpose. A full life. A free life.

I don't share my story, or the stories of others, to sensationalize or compare. I'm gut-transparent about the cuts on my soul because I have benefited from the healing power that lies in this sort of exchange. Those times others have shared the messiness of their lives, those were the times I finally realized I wasn't alone. The times I found the courage to confront my own mess.

*When we hear others say what we cannot,*

*we somehow start to make sense out of the pain*

*that can't otherwise be expressed.*

I am one of many, only one out of countless women who have suffered hurts and wounds that slice soul-deep. Do I share this connection with you? While I don't know your story or situation, I do know that together we can gain strength to restore the lost years.

We can overcome these things that have hurt us and reclaim our voices, using them to make a difference.

*Subscribe to TCW* [*at this link*](https://w1.buysub.com/pubs/L2/ETW/ho_weekly_oct13.jsp?cds_page_id=146938&cds_mag_code=ETW&id=1384874732042&lsid=33230925309036459&vid=2&cds_response_key=I3JKAZF01)*, and sign up for our free* [*e-newsletter*](http://www.christianitytoday.com/lyris/todayschristianwoman/subscribe.html) *to become part of a community of women striving to love God and live fearlessly in the grit of everyday life.*

*Excerpted from* [*When a Woman Finds Her Voice*](http://www.amazon.com/When-Woman-Finds-Her-Voice/dp/0891123873)*. Copyright © 2013 by Jo Ann Fore. Used by permission of Leafwood Publishers, an imprint of Abilene Christian University Press. Jo Ann is a popular blogger, certified Life Coach, and Founder of the vibrant virtual community,* [*Write Where It Hurts*](http://www.writewhereithurts.org/)*. Connect with her online at* [*www.JoAnnFore.com*](http://www.JoAnnFore.com)*.*