

people all the time when really I'm slightly misanthropic. I struggled with many things, but, despite my upbringing, what I didn't struggle with was my gender. My calling to be a pastor, while still shocking, had become less and less ambiguous and even started to feel precious to me. That's why I didn't want tell my parents.

I was experiencing a feeling of purpose, perhaps for the first time in my life, and the last thing I wanted was for them to squash it. And yet, they had to know at some point, so on a Saturday in November of 2005, I sat in my parents' living room on their brocade, overstuffed sofa, and while they stared at the brand-new tattoo of Mary Magdalene that now covered my forearm, I confessed, and not very elegantly.

"I...um...am really enjoying seminary, and I need to tell you that I've changed my degree track from an academic degree to a pastoral degree. Umm...see...I feel like maybe God is calling me to start a church, and I guess I think maybe I'm supposed to be a pastor to my people, but I'm scared, and well...I am...but..." I had no idea if any of it made sense, but it was being spoken. I was terrified that they would reject the idea and shame me for my disregard for the scriptures, which forbid a woman to teach. And I wasn't sure what felt worse: the possibility of them shaming me or the fact that they still could.

At that moment, my father silently stood up, walked to the bookshelf and took down his worn, leather-bound Bible. Here we go, I thought, he's going to beat me with the scripture stick.

He opened it up and read. I could tell from where he was

PASTRIX

turning that it wasn't one of Paul's letters at the end of the book, but something closer to the middle. My father did not read the 1st Timothy passage about women being silent in church. He read from Esther.

From my father I heard only these words: "But you were born for such a day as this." He closed the book and my mother joined him in embracing me. They prayed over me and they gave me a blessing. And some blessings, like the one my conservative Christian parents gave to their soon-to-be-Lutheran pastor daughter who had put them through hell, are the kind of blessings that stay with you for the rest of your life. The kind you can't speak of without crying all over again.