**Benched**

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” —Philippians 2:3–4 (NIV)

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God …” —Exodus 20:2–5 (NIV)

**Insight**

Has God ever put you on the bench? Told you to take a time-out from something?

For a long time, music was my thing. In junior high and high school, like many, I struggled with self-confidence. I was quiet and shy—except when I got onstage. And for a week or so after, I got attention. I was popular, talked about. I got some buzz. While up on the stage, I sang with sincerity and to express the message of a song, I also became quite addicted to the high it brought me and the attention it brought as well. Singing had become an idol.

So one day in college, God benched me. He told me to sit this season out. Serve behind the scenes. So that Christmas season I wove pine into wreaths backstage while the choir practiced their gorgeous hymns, the soloists’ voices, rich and strong, echoing through the auditorium. It was painful.

God had to realign my heart and its motives.

*Was I singing for his glory or for my own?*

*Where was my identity coming from?*

*If I had to live a life without singing, would I be okay with that, or would it wreck me?*

We all have things we’re good at and things that bring us pleasure. But sometimes we can get addicted to the attention, to the likes, to the applause. These days, on a smaller scale, it’s social media. Are we posting something for attention, for a like, for a jolt of “you are worthy”?

For me, I recognize the feeling, the “high” I get when I’m starting to do things for the applause, for the likes, to feel worthy.

At these times, I stop, breathe, and remember the verse, “do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit …”

On the other hand, we shouldn’t bury our talents either. This is the other extreme: false humility. Sometimes it’s time for us to step out of the wings, off the bench, and use our talents to glorify God and serve others. And having gifts for performance—being able to step out on a stage or platform with confidence to speak, sing, write, whatever—*can* be used to glorify God.

In my case, there have been seasons that God has benched me from something so he can realign my heart and my motives back to center. But then he pushes me off the bench and says, “now, play ball!” (It’s almost baseball season. Thought that was appropriate!)

**Reflection**

* Has God ever benched you for a season? Why do you think this happened? What did you learn from it?
* Do you know the warning signs that you’re getting too much of your identity or security from something, whether an activity, a relationship, or a talent?

**Prayer**

Lord, help us to keep our motives and ambitions pure. Give us some warning signs, a check-engine light, when we’re getting too much of our identity or self-worth from something or someone other than you. Help us to realign our hearts with yours, and help us to humble ourselves to your training when we do, even if we’re benched for a while.