

**THE WIZARD OF OZ
MEETS THE WISDOM OF GOD**
What We Can Learn from Dorothy

Don't Ever Remove These Slippers – Following the Instructions

Glenda the Good Witch gives Dorothy the slippers off of the feet of the dead Wicked Witch of the East, and some instructions. The instructions are to never take off the slippers and follow the yellow brick road until Dorothy meets the Wizard of Oz, who will tell her how she could get home. Dorothy followed Glenda's orders. She stayed focused on seeing the Wizard, and even in the face of the Wicked Witch of the West's threats, she refused to remove the slippers. As a result, she was able to defeat the Wicked Witch, meet the Wizard and get back home.

Why can't I do that? Why is it that the simplest instructions are the hardest to follow? God says, "Seek me first, follow my instructions, and you will have everything you need." Ever wonder what would happen if you actually did that. I did. In a tearful, hormonal rage, I pondered out loud the life decisions I made that landed me where I am right now. Don't get me wrong. I am blessed with a wonderful, loving, God-fearing family, a roof over my head for which I only have to pay the cable bill, a couple of jobs and a great relationship with God that I don't deserve, but for His mercy. So as I cried and yelled at myself—thank the Lord my room is on the opposite side of the house or my family may have committed me—I realized, I should have been Mrs. Darren Sharper, living in Minnesota, with 2.3 kids, and whatever career I want because my husband is a superstar safety in the NFL. But I'm not, and why? Because I took off my slippers and focused so hard on the Emerald City that I forgot about getting home.

Okay, before you start thinking, that I've totally lost it, which even I thought was the case at 10:51 last night, let's look at the facts. As a high school senior, I was accepted into "The Harvard of the South," The College of William and Mary. I was going to major in Government (Pre Law) and minor in Theatre. But before I left, I took off my slippers. I had been given a prized possession that I'd managed to hold on to through four years of high school. Although, let's face it, no one was exactly begging for it then because I wasn't nearly as hot as I am now. But one month before I started college, I gave it away—my precious gift, my slippers, if you will. Well, being the good Christian girl that I was (and still am), I knew that the person who received my gift had to be the person that I spent the rest of my life with, otherwise, I could no longer justify the premarital sex. Meanwhile, I went to college, and my "fiancé" (that's what you call the dude you're having sex with when you're trying to justify it to God) went to a school three hours away. While taking a Sociology course my first semester, I met Darren Sharper...college football star. He was, and still is, so fine. And what was even more fascinating is that at a couple of parties, he actually paid attention to me. He actually danced with me. Me, seventeen-year-old, dorky glasses-wearing, one-year removed from my braces, me. I had a huge crush on him, but wouldn't dare think about being in a relationship with another man. I had to marry the person who had my "slippers."

Well, my boyfriend transferred back to Florida, and I followed him to a state school with no academic reputation. I changed my major to Legal Studies because I had to be practical about getting into law school and securing my future as a high powered corporate attorney. Eventually, my boyfriend and I did break up, and I went on a downward spiral socially (yes, yes, that sounds so much better than became a drunk floozy.) I did, however, stay on the path to the Emerald City—law school and my career in law. In fact, I focused on the Emerald City. I started thinking that the money, power, and prestige of a career in law was the answer to all of my life's problems. Becoming a lawyer was my life. It was all I had going for me. (Okay, so maybe I had some serious issues with self-esteem at the time.) Nevertheless, being a lawyer was it for me, never mind any possible plans God may have had for me. No, I just put all of my eggs in one basket, and went full speed ahead.

Well, if you know me now, you know that I ended up married, and divorced, and I am a lawyer, but the idea of making a career in law makes me physically ill. Lately, it seems like every relationship and career choice I made in the past has holed me in to some impossible situation and it can all be traced back to taking off my slippers. If I had not given "it" up, I would have had no qualms about leaving my boyfriend for Darren Sharper. Then, he and I could have dated his last two years at William and Mary, and I could have finished college at a prestigious school with a degree, written in Latin, and major in Theatre and a minor in Sociology. (See, I would have changed my major once Darren was drafted because I no longer had to worry about being practical and Sociology would be my minor because it would allow me to take more classes with Darren—keep up people!) Then, we would have married in 1999 when I graduated because wouldn't have graduated a year early due to the switching of my major. Maybe law school, maybe not. It would have been an option, but not my only option. Sure, I'd have to live in Green Bay for a while, but only until our Miami home was finished, and as Mrs. Toni Sharper, I don't really think I'd mind.

But alas, I am where I am, which is not bad, but I know it's not where I could have been. And I know it's my fault. Imagine what would have happened if Dorothy had taken off her slippers, or if she relied only on the riches found in the Emerald City to fulfill her dreams. She'd probably still be in Oz wondering what the heck happened. That's kind of where I am right now, except I know what happened. So what now? I pray. I forgive myself. I ask God for wisdom and guidance, and then actually listen to Him when He gives it. Because though it seems impossible at times for me to leave my self-imposed Oz experience, I know God is able to get me home if I stay focused on Him, and follow His instructions.

Home is in the Heart

After Dorothy receives the devastating news that the Wizard cannot help her or her friends, Glenda reappears with good news. The good news is that everything Dorothy and her friends were searching for—a brain, a heart, courage, home—were within them all along.

Many times, I find myself wishing that I could be someone else, somewhere else, or something else. I just don't feel like I'm getting the most out of life. I feel like I should have a better job, make more money, have longer lasting relationships. But in thinking that way I am denying that I am already blessed. When I try to keep up with the Joneses, or when I set unrealistic goals and standards for myself, I am denying that I am already blessed. The day I accepted Christ, God gave me every blessing that I will ever need on earth or in heaven. I just have to trust in that fact, and know that no matter what stage of life I am in, God has fully equipped me with all I need. Sometimes, He even gives me the things I want as well, so I should always be content.

That was the lesson that Dorothy learned in Oz. She came to understand that everything she and her friends had need of was already within them. It was only when she came to that realization that she could move on and reach her goal of getting home. We will be stuck in our own personal Oz, until we acknowledge the gifts that we already possess. But what an eye-opening experience to truly appreciate how blessed we are. God can help us realize that we are smarter than we thought we were. He can help us to love again. He can help us find courage in the midst of adversity. Or He can lead us back home. You are already blessed and highly favored, and God is smiling on you waiting for you to realize what He has already done in your life, so He can elevate you to a whole new place.