



# What Would Harriet Tubman Do: A Black Woman's Guide to Success and Freedom

*Cassandra George Sturges*

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In Harriet Tubman's biography she talked about how every night she would pray to God to stop her master from beating her. But she said that it seemed like the more she prayed the more her master would beat her. She decided that God was inside of her, and that He would only do the things for her that she could not do for herself so she decided to plan an escape from slavery. Secondly, she told herself that she would no longer think of herself as a slave, because she believed that her thoughts would create her reality. She said that in order to be a free person she had to think of herself as a free person.

Harriet Tubman's first two attempts to escape slavery failed because she decided to bring her family along who changed their minds at the last minute or told others who blew their cover. On her third attempt to freedom, she told absolutely no one and put on a disguise as a crazy old man and successfully escaped the plantation.

Harriet Tubman became my first academic mentor even though she couldn't read or write. Here is an academically illiterate woman who couldn't read her own Wanted Dead or Alive signs who found her way to freedom—because she embraced the God of Action inside of her.

But this is not why I love her. I love Harriet Tubman because after finding her own way to freedom she came back and led over 300 slaves to freedom. I feel like if I had been Harriet Tubman, I would have been traumatized by the cold dirty rivers, the bugs, and the dogs chasing me. I think I would have become an alcoholic telling my story of horror-- of how I escaped to freedom to anyone who would listen.

Harriet Tubman reached out to me at Henry Ford Community College's library and taught me 4 important lessons that weren't in the textbook or in the classroom:

The first lesson that I learned is that I needed to truly put forth a real effort and try as hard as I could before God would step in. God would meet me at the library, He would meet me in the classroom—but he wouldn't drag me there. God would help me to understand any subject matter but only after I had fallen asleep at the dining room table after burning the midnight oil. I learned that I must do everything within my own power that is humanly possible before God will step in to help me.

The second lesson that I learned from Harriet Tubman is that it is essential to define myself for myself. My thoughts about myself would project to the world how I should be treated. She had to think of herself as a free person before she could attract opportunities and the right people into her life to see her as she saw herself. Whatever you truly believe about yourself will be manifested in your life- the world doesn't argue with you. The world will just give you opportunities to validate your truth...

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