

St. John the Divine's Life Changing Challenge was an outstanding call to action. When I think of all the Bible verses that tell us we can see God's majesty in His creation, it always makes me think of God's plan of restoration for us humans. Aren't we supposed to be soaring like eagles in this life? Christ came to earth to save us and to restore us. I know in my heart of hearts that we are to be living a life that is radically different from the norm.

I get glimpses of that life, and I want more. Thanks to SJD for giving these glimpses a name – Life Changing Moments.

I had one this past year and I'm still processing it and what it tells me about God and His ways. God has been teaching me about the profound truths of Isaiah 58: 6 – 12. About how we are to give of the money we need to sustain ourselves to those in greater need, and "forget not the needs of your own flesh and blood. "

Well, I have a relative who is nearly always in need, and when the request for money is made, it's usually a desperate need. Not quite 'the car is getting reposed' or 'I'm being evicted,' but close. God is teaching me to look to Him, my Provider, and not to the person in need. So what if they don't deserve the help, so what if they need to get a job, stop wasting money, budget better, and more; just give. One of the requests came at a particularly tight time for me, the funds I had were spoken for, but I sent my relative a check anyway, and figured I'd scramble and work things out on my end.

God surprised me. I believe God, I believe what He says about Himself in His Word, and I believe when I act in faith, God delivers all the time. Just a few weeks after the check was mailed to my relative, I was requested to give a speech in a top resort destination, for a fee that was quite nice (if this weren't such a public document I'd be tempted to use more adjectives). Plus the event was just a few months away, something rare in the speaking world where I make my living. The specifics about this event make me hilarious. It could only be God. I smile and laugh hilariously every time I think on it. Wow, God, you can show off!!! I finally get it. Giving sacrificially, and obediently, looking to God, not the worthiness of the recipient, does open the floodgates of heaven and pours out blessings too amazing to consider.

Stewardship season is here and that means we'll hear those old familiar passages, from both the Old Testament: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, " (Mal 3:10), to the New Testament favorite found in 2 Corinthians 9:7, about how "God loves a cheerful giver."

These passages have been taught so often in my 51 years of church life, and in such detail, that I even recall that the Greek word for 'cheerful' is actually hilaros, or hilarious; that God loves an hilarious giver.

Never in all those stewardship lessons did I begin to fathom how I could be a hilarious giver. Cheerful, okay, put a smile on my face as the plate goes by; but hilarious? This year, I got it and it's been a Life Changing Moment for me.

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