

A Funny Thing Happened On the Way

Thirty years ago, God sent someone my way who would redirect my life. One morning in 1977, my friend Stephanie went to work as usual and promptly met her next assignment: me. She did not know how God was working in my life and how strategic our meeting would be.

At the time, admittedly, I was pursuing my own way and not the way of the Lord, but I was desperate to know Him. I had been at a crossroads in my life and career. Living and working in Los Angeles had been good for me professionally, but in nearly every other way I was faltering.

It was time to leave California. I knew it. I just didn't know how I could pull it off. After praying and asking God to help me change my life, I was hired by a theater production company for a national tour. Knowing I'd be on the road for, possibly, more than a year, I gave up my apartment and put everything in storage that I couldn't fit into my luggage.

Getting the job and getting out of town were both answers to prayers. And it was certainly a reason for me to start paying attention to the Lord.

My career had taken off at the expense of my commitment to God, and I was miserable. At my lowest point, when I had no reason to expect anything from Him, He showed me His mercy. I was as serious as I knew how to be. I really wanted to change.

My new job required a temporary move to New York City before the beginning of the tour. At the start of one of our rehearsals, we were all brought onstage and introduced to our company manager, Stephanie, who would travel with us.

When she first approached me, I said, "Hello," and she said, "Praise the Lord!" Although my knowledge of spiritual things was limited to what I had learned as a youth, I knew immediately that God had set this meeting in motion long before it happened.

That first day, Stephanie began sharing the gospel with all the members of our company. Many came to Christ because of her witness and her example. For more than a year, as we logged thousands of miles, she taught us the Word and disciplined us.

Wherever we were, we gathered weekly to study the Bible. Most Sundays, were workdays for us, but before the afternoon matinee, we'd find a place to worship. We read spiritual books, learned to pray and grew in God together.

When our tour ended, Stephanie continued her professional role—managing theater companies on Broadway and on the road. She also kept right on making disciples.

Stephanie taught me that each person—no matter how saved or lost they appear to be—matters and needs to be treated gently, with respect and the love of God. She saw everyone who wasn't already a believer as someone who was just a whisper away from the kingdom.

Her love and respect made it easy for me to believe God loved me. She seemed to see me the way I could be, not the way I was.

I'd not been around my precious friend for years, but the Lord allowed us to meet recently during one of her business trips to Orlando, Florida. God has promoted her to tremendous places of responsibility as a CEO and a consultant to the entertainment industry.

We had only a short time together, but I couldn't wait to see her. I wanted to tell her one more time how grateful I was that when the Lord sent her to find me, she showed up for

work.