

Katie Langston

You're listening to an extra shot episode on the Project Zion podcast, a shorter episode that lets you get your Project Zion fix. In between are falling episodes. It might be shorter time wise, but hopefully not in content. So regardless of the temperature at which you prefer your caffeine, sit back and enjoy this extra shot.

Linda Booth

Welcome, my friend to Coffee Connect. My name is Linda Booth, and I'm going to tell you some stories. So grab your cup of your favorite brew and sit close because I'm going to tell you three stories of times God has shown up in very unusual places. The 1st one was told to me at a winner re union several years ago and Phoenix, Arizona. Over lunch, I heard the following story from a retired woman who lived her life on a precise schedule. On Monday, she said she did her laundry. On Tuesday, she went to the grocery store, etc. Now I could appreciate that because my mother was a similar kind of woman. She did the same things each day every week. And so this woman, telling this story said she discovered that when she went to the grocery store people were on her Tuesday schedule because they were there when she was. She always stopped to talk with several of the people, but one woman would never reply to her greetings. She took it as a personal challenge to get the woman to acknowledge her presence and to speak to her. But she never would. One Tuesday, when she was at the store, she didn't see the woman she thought well, must be because she just missed her. The next Tuesday, she purposely looked for the woman and couldn't find her while standing in the check out line. She felt concerned for the woman and she said a short prayer on her behalf. During the week, she said, she found herself thinking about the woman and offering many more prayers on her behalf. The next Tuesday, before she left her home, she had prayed for the woman, and she took what used to be popular. You remember those little guardian angel pins? She took it from her jewelry box, and she put it in her pocket and with her grocery list in hand, she went up and down the aisles, getting items she needed and looking for the woman. She found her facing a shelf of canned goods and she went up to the woman who didn't turn around. And she said, I've missed you the last two weeks and I've been praying for you. Are you alright? The woman slowly turned and tears were forming in her eyes, and she said, You'll never know how much your concern and prayers mean to me. My husband has Alzheimer's and I'm afraid to leave him for very long because he might wander off. So I come to the grocery store and I get what I need as fast as I can so I can get home to him. The woman, who had been praying, took the guardian angel pin from her pocket and she attached it to the other woman's jacket lapel. And she said, I want to help you and your husband because as I have been praying for you, I feel a deep connection to you and I've grown to love you. She gave her her contact information to the woman and she received the woman's contact information, and she told me that she frequently called the woman and went to her home and watch the woman's husband so she could have some respite. And she invited the woman, her husband, to church, and she picked them up.

And members of the congregation loved and supported that couple. The woman said to me, I believe you can encounter God in many places, even the grocery store.

Linda Booth

The next story I'm going to tell you is when God showed up. Well, God showed up in many places in this story, but especially over a backyard fence. Many years ago, Bob Kyser and I taught a class that leaders workshop at Graceland University in Lamone Iowa, the classes working title, Waas Journey with Christ and a record number of people enrolled. I think they thought the focus was on spiritual formation, which typically draws a lot of people. To their surprise on the first day we announced we would focus on witness and invitation. We told the participants that if they came each day, they would receive a new missionary video resource called Sisters and Brothers in Christ. When the first session ended, a woman came up to me and said the class definitely wasn't for her. She was too shy to offer witness an invitation, someone else to Christ and I encouraged her to come back the next day and give the class one more try. After the second class, the woman came up to me again and said, I can't to this. I don't know anyone who doesn't already have a church will. Each day the woman came to class, and each day she had one or multiple new excuses about why she could witness or invite anyone to Christ, but she always came back. On the last day of class, Bob and I had a commissioning service. Each student came upto one of us. We offered words of encouragement and gave each person the missionary video series the woman was in my line, and I encouraged her to trust God to pray and ask God who she should witness to and invite. She didn't appear very enthusiastic when I handed her the free missionary resource, she said she just would try as she shrugged her shoulders and went back to receipt. Several weeks later, I received this a bulging envelope with several hand written yellow legal pad pages. It was from the woman with all the excuses of why she couldn't witness or invite, she shared that on the ride home she had prayed asking God whom she was to witness to an invite. And that night, and the next morning she did the same thing. In the afternoon, she was in her backyard, checking her garden. She saw her neighbor on the other side of the fence and as she crossed the yard to thank the woman for having her husband over for dinner. When she was gone, she said, God seemed to be saying, This is whom you were called to witness to and invite, she said. On her walk across the yard, she argued with God. But I think our she already has a church. He's thought, But what if she says no? But what does? She thinks I'm crazy. She wrote that she thanked the woman for hospitality and then blurted out an invitation to come to church with her and her husband the next day. And she said, the woman looked surprised and said, Quote, I'll check with my husband, which in my family is kind of code for maybe, and but maybe not so, the woman wrote that she later told her husband that she had blown it, and she was embarrassed. The next morning when she arrived at church, she saw her neighbor and her neighbor's husband through the plate glass doors of the church, and she was surprised. She introduced her neighbors to people standing in the foyer, and then they went into the sanctuary for the service and all. During the service, the woman criticized each element prayers. A little weak pianist, a little clumsy, the preachers a little dull. When the service was over, her neighbor was smiling. There's something special about this congregation, she said. I really feel at home here. We'll be back next Sunday. God had shown up during that woman's walk across the lawn, and certainly as her neighbor experience sacred community that Sunday morning God's presence is

promised. Even when we make excuses or feel unworthy, unprepared and inexperienced, God shows up.

Linda Booth

And my last story is very personal to me. It's when God showed up in a memory care unit. My father, Ernie, Ledsworth served as a 70 in Community of Christ for nearly 70 years, and the last year of his life was difficult for him in our family. Dad lived in a memory care unit and my mother in the skilled nursing unit on the same senior citizen campus. My sister, brother and I would roll mother in her wheelchair to the memory care unit so she could receive her kisses from daddy. Often. When we visited, he wasn't really aware of our presence. He was agitated. He'd repeat over and over again. Different series of questions like, What did they do with my shoes? Or where did they park the car? Or is it time to go to church? One hot, sultry afternoon when I pushed Mother's wheelchair beside Daddy's wheelchair, he looked up at me with clarity and said, Linda, did you know that God so loved the world? Yes, Daddy, I replied in surprise. That's one of my favorite scriptures. I try to weave it into every sermon I give. No, Linda, Did you know that God so loved the world? No matter how many times I replied in the affirmative or come commented, he insistently, we would return to Linda. Did you know that God so loved the world? Finally, he smiled, a smile we hadn't seen for a very long time and said Linda, God so loved the world that he gave his son! Isn't it marvelous? Yes, Daddy. I said it is truly marvelous. It is, isn't it? He replied, you better make sure you tell everyone in that lucid god moment. My father reminded me that God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life. Indeed. God did not send the son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Daddy died several weeks later on January 10th 2014. I still miss him. However, that last coherent conversation lives within me. And I treasure that God moment. So I hope you continue to check out Coffee Connect and pay attention. You'll discover God in the most surprising and unlikely places.

Katie Langston

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