

Never Would Have Made It

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As I reflect on my life journey, I see how God was there for me. The bible states, “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11, The New International Version). I am not a professional social worker however I believe I can guide people towards having a closer spiritual connection with God.

About twenty years ago while working at Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) in a clerical position, I decided to go back to school for a master degree in social work (MSW) at Yeshiva University. I remember my first day as an intern at a group home for girls. I sat in the house with the residents for about an hour listening and observing. The young girls spoke in an abusive manner. I was not accustomed to hearing the abusive words that came out of their mouths. The young girls were between the ages 14-18 years old.

One day one of the young girls asked to go to church with me. When I asked her how she knew I went to church her response was, “Miss Belk, really?” She and I went to the Christmas Eve service where I introduced her as my friend. We had a nice time. I didn't preach the bible but the Christ in me allowed her to inquire about church.

As I mature in my faith I believe God has a purpose for each of us. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28, New International Version). Although I do not work with clients as an occupation, I have a passion for encouraging people. I talk to the public on a daily basis; both property owners and tenants come to the office frustrated. Though I am not supposed to discuss religion, God quite often becomes part of the conversations with these visitors. Many property owners have come to the office very angry, frustrated, and tearful, but leave the office laughing and praising God after talking with me. One landlord was seeking answers pertaining to property

they owned. As I answered the questions the landlord began to talk about God; it was as though the chair next to the desk became an altar. I believe I was an empty vessel that God used to guide the property owner in the right direction. The lesson to be learned is, sometimes we just need to have someone to listen.

The church that I attend has allowed me to grow spiritually. I lead the new members' class and co-lead a bible study group. The new members' class meets for six weeks. It is amazing to witness how relationships are developed through the presence of God. When people meet at first they are on guard about sharing. I remember one new class in particular consisted of all women, and our male assistant pastor was co-leading the class with me. One evening he arrived late as we were having a women-only discussion. I looked at the women and asked if they preferred for him not to join us for that night and they answered "yes." I spoke to the Pastor and he left the class to me. Wow, me asking a Pastor to excuse himself and he agreeing to— that is God.

God is always with me; "...with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26, New International Version). I am a witness that when God instructs you to carry out an assignment, a conversation takes place between you and God as told in the bible. He will be with you, he will give you the person you need and the tools to work with. The bible tells about a man named Moses. God instructed Moses to lead the Isrealite people out of Egypt. Moses did not understand how he could lead God's people, but God told Moses that he would be with him. God used what Moses had in his hand during the conversation as a tool and partnered him with his brother Aaron.

I can relate to Moses; I did not think I could lead a bible study. Yes, I lead the new members class but the lessons are prepared for me by someone else. My church has a six week

bible session called Christian Academy. When leading a bible study I have to prepare the lesson. I asked a lady named Nona at my church to co-lead the bible study with me. We each lead every other week. I led the first class. I used ordinary items such as candles, a plastic grocery bag, cracked plastic cups, candy, battery operated lights, music, crayons, and coloring pictures.

The question was, how do these items relate to a bible study? Let me explain. When a candle is blown out, it can be used again. The cracked plastic cups could hold the candy. The plastic grocery bag may have various uses. As in life sometimes the spirit is blown out for a moment but can be lit again. Although we may experience a moment of being cracked, we are capable of obtaining sweetness. God has various uses for us, we are recyclable. The battery operated lights and music were used to relax and listen to the words of the song being played; the crayons and coloring picture to remind us we are God's children.

As many gospel songs go, I never would have made it without God. I was not raised in a family that went to church or gave positive support. However I have learned that when you choose to break a cycle, live a life that is positive and choose the people you want to formalize yourself with, God will make it possible.

I can not speak about something I have not experienced. As previously mentioned I am not a social worker nor do I work in the area of social work. But I can speak and share about the experience of allowing God to work in my life. I am working towards a goal. That goal is to help individuals who want to have a spiritual connection with God reach that goal. I will allow God to lead and work through me.