

Guest editorial: It's a God thing

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The other day, our kids wanted to take their mother and me out for dinner to celebrate our birthdays. They are two days apart, and we always celebrate them together. So, they took us to a big outdoor mall. We rode with sons Ben and Michael. Our daughter, Emily, and her husband, Ryan, were meeting us there.

An art fair was under way, so the parking lots were jam-packed. Ben found a place behind the bookstore and parked. As we made our way to the restaurant, my wife hesitated. She'd noticed an older gentleman, perhaps 75 or 80 years old, looking rather frustrated. She told me, "I think he's confused, Rich." So, I stood on the corner and watched him a moment. He was wandering between parked cars, scratching his head.

I sent Ingrid and the boys on to reserve a table. I approached the older man and asked, "Can I help you?"

Lost car

He was rather embarrassed. He said, "I lost my car."

He described it, an older Cadillac, bronze colored. Together, we walked the lot. Every row. Twice. No bronze-colored Cadillacs.

Just then, luckily, my daughter and her husband arrived, and I saw them parking. "Lend me your keys, Emily," I said. "This gentleman has lost his car, and I think it must be in a different lot."

The man only reluctantly got into the car with me. "I don't want to put you out," he said.

We drove across the mall to another parking lot. We couldn't find his car

there, either.

“What was the first thing you remember seeing?” I asked.

“The sidewalk,” he replied.

Not much help.

We drove to the opposite side of the mall to another lot with a parking structure. We found no older Cadillacs anywhere. I was beginning to wonder if his car hadn’t been stolen.

Oh, there it is

After 45 minutes, I was ready to give up. Then I had an inspiration. This particular mall is crisscrossed with streets along the storefronts. I drove each one, slowly. After only a few minutes, I stopped and pointed: “Is that your car?”

Sure enough, it was. He hadn’t parked in a lot at all!

I pulled my car alongside his, and he withdrew his wallet. “I want to pay you for your time,” he said.

I smiled and shook my head. “I won’t take your money.”

Only then, after all of that, did we finally introduce ourselves. His name was Gilford. He was from Mississippi, and he and his wife were visiting Texas to see his daughter and grandchildren. They had decided to do a little shopping.

Now, that’s a God thing

He was very appreciative. “You know,” he said, “my wife and I have a saying when something like this happens, when someone shows up out of the blue to help us, or unexpectedly does something kind.”

“What’s that?”

“We say, ‘It’s a God thing.’”

I laughed. I said, “Tell you what, Gilford, if you will pray for me, I promise to pray for you.” He agreed. We shook hands and parted.

Later, I got to thinking. I’ve often taken notice of “God things” when I see them happening. They are unexpected blessings that others often call “coincidences.” Seemingly unplanned, they always serve a specific purpose in my life. I see the hand of God in them and recognize I have been the blessed recipient of a “God thing.”

But this time Gilford helped me see God had used me to be someone else’s “God thing.” I was his unexpected blessing! Boy, that felt good.

Our God works in mysterious ways, they tell us. Every event in the life of a believer serves God’s ultimate plan. (See Isaiah 14:24 and Romans 8:28.) To our minds, the way God weaves remarkable events in and through our lives may seem illogical and beyond understanding. But since God is love, it makes perfect sense that the tapestry he weaves results in loving interactions with others.

It’s a God thing.

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