

How God used an ailing mother, a father's odd restaurant choice and seating selection, a bank deposit slip, and a daughter's love to orchestrate a meeting between a stranger and an Erskine Theological Seminary student...

Janet's Story:

When her ailing mother had to move to a nursing home, Janet's father was left living alone. So began Janet's daily visits and outings with her father.

Their outings frequently included a meal—always at one of the local meat and three places. But this day, "Papa Toole" said he felt like having a sandwich. *Unusual, but okay.* Janet headed to the counter to place their sandwich order. When Janet turned around to join her father, she was surprised to see that he had selected a booth far from the front door. *Very unusual.* Since Papa walks with a cane, he *always* selects the closest available seating to the door. This selection placed them back to back with the only other occupied booth; a booth where two young couples and two young children were seated.

Janet could not help eavesdropping. "I could hear the excitement in this man's voice as he told the others of his calling to go to seminary and that the seminary had a program that would allow him to graduate with no debt," Janet said. "He was telling the others that he needed to find twelve sponsors and how it might be possible between family, church friends, and others." Janet heard him mention the sponsor level of \$40 a month and thought, "I sometimes spend that much in a month on nonsense."

Janet and Papa finished their meal. Once in the car, Janet pulled a bank deposit slip from her purse, tore it in half, and wrote her phone number on it. "I'll be right back," she told Papa. She walked back into the restaurant, up to the table and said, "I'm sorry I was eavesdropping, but I'd like to be your first sponsor. I'm a nurse at the cancer center. Here's my number. Call me when you are ready." She then turned around, walked back out to the car, and drove off.

Eric did call her and she is one of Eric's twelve sponsors. They are strangers no longer and she is forever linked as part of Eric's ministry. "It is amazing how God orchestrates things," Janet says.

Janet says of her experience that her father always taught her to do what is right. "Papa is a giving person and I grew up witnessing many of his acts of kindness," she says. "Daily God puts opportunities in our path and it's our choice if we respond or just let them go by." When Janet left the restaurant the first time, she says she realized that if she did not respond, she would regret it forever. And respond she did.

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