



June 2023

Divine Interruption

Dear Friends,

I wanted to make a quick pit stop on my way to an important appointment. Pulling my car into one of those 10-minute parking spaces—I hoped to ‘get in, get out, and get on with my plans.’ However, as I waited for the service tech to retrieve the parts I had ordered, I felt the spirit nudging me to strike up a conversation with the woman seated behind the counter. So I smiled and joked lightheartedly that “\$50 was more than I expected to pay for three paper vacuum filters.”

She replied, “Yes, the price is far too high.”

Something in her face communicated an unspoken burden. So, I took a risk. “I hope I’m not being too forward, but you seem to be troubled by something this morning. Are you doing okay?” With some reservation, she slowly opened up about a tragedy in her life that had happened a few days earlier. A close friend was playing with his five-year-old son. Without thinking, the boy had run into traffic to retrieve a ball and was hit and killed by an oncoming car.

I expressed my profound sadness over this tragic loss and told her that I would pray for her and the family. It was then that she inquired of me—asking how long I had lived in Bahrain and if I “liked living here.” I answered eagerly—“Yes, we enjoy Bahrain very much! We feel blessed to live and work here.”

I followed with a question or two. “Do you have any idea what I do?”

She lowered her eyes and softly answered, “no.”

I said, “Well, I’m a Christian pastor.” The look on her face made clear, she had no idea what I was saying. So I tried a second time. “I’m the pastor of the National Evangelical Church in Manama—the church right next to the American Mission Hospital.”

Immediately, her face lit up! “I am so interested in Christianity! I would like to go to church! My father says it’s okay for me to read the Bible, but I don’t have a Bible.”

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Again her eyes lowered and she spoke very softly. “You know I am Muslim, correct?” Her style of dress and head covering left no doubt—I was very much aware she was Muslim.

“Yes, I smiled—that makes no difference. All are welcome at the NEC. We have Muslim guests almost every week.”

It was about this time that the repair tech came back with my parts. Taking the items from the tech, she scanned the barcode with a knowing smile. With her smile growing wider, she put the parts in a bag and handed them to me saying, “The price was far too high. I gave you a special discount.”

“Well then,” I said as I took the bag from her outstretched arm, “please allow me to do something special for you. I would be delighted to give you a Bible and save a special place for you and your family at our church.”

The look on her face was priceless. “You would do that for me—even though I’m not Christian? Yes, I will come!”

As I prepared to take my leave, I noticed that her manner had changed dramatically in the few moments we had shared. Grief and sadness had given way to wonder, curiosity, and eager expectation! My spirit, too, had been reoriented from a laser focus on a task I needed to complete to a sense of amazement and wonder at the work God can do when we are led by the Spirit and open to the prospect of divine interruption.

Please don’t think that stories such as this are uncommon. I am often amazed at how God breaks into the plans of ordinary people—inviting us to take a risk of faith. We celebrate the many ways we see God at work in the Middle East even as we thank God and bless you for the privilege of being an extension of your ministry in this land.

With a profound appreciation for your partnership in the work of the gospel,

Blaine and Kathleen Newhouse
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Kingdom of Bahrain