Columns
Spirituality



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They appeared out of nowhere: an older gentleman clutching a worn, leather-covered book and a quiet woman a step behind him. I was not expecting guests at 9:57 a.m. My door was open only for the purposes of allowing the sun to bathe the two cats that claim me as their human.

My hair was a tumbleweed of disaster and my hands were covered in marinara sauce and ricotta cheese. I was in the middle of making my friend Debbie's famous vegetarian lasagna. "Hello!" I greeted them, a cheery face hiding massive social anxiety. The gentleman nodded and shuffled awkwardly for a moment. He looked at me and said, "What do you think about the future? Do you think it is good? Or bad?"

Well that's an interesting way to strike up a conversation, I thought. I smiled and said, "And who might you be?" He fumbled a bit with his words and the tassel hanging from his Bible. The woman whispered behind him, "Jehovah's Witnesses."

Flashback to my days studying in Toronto. A young man with a fistful of flyers at the corner of the busy intersection of Bloor and Yonge. "Do you know Jesus?" I don't have time for this. I just need some coffee. I tried to pass, but he shouted all the more. "Do YOU know Jesus?" "Of course," I said. "I'm Catholic, and I'm a grad student in theology."

He was unimpressed and said, "You don't know Jesus." He wringed a pamphlet from out of his clenched fist and spat out a litany of axioms about my Lord and Savior that resembled literally nothing from the Gospels. I had it. Fueled by a desperate need for caffeine, I unleashed the fury of 10,000 Catholic archangels as I launched into a proper exegesis of the Scriptures. I trembled with self-satisfaction. He was aghast. He shook his head and solemnly pointed to the ground. "You," he said, "are going down to hell." Annoyed, I grabbed his sweaty pamphlet and said, "I, sir, am going for coffee."

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These two Jehovah's Witnesses were different. I felt an affection for Jim and Sharon, as Jim, still clutching his Bible, prepared to break open the word of God to me. He had my attention when, instead of opening the Bible, a smartphone appeared with a Bible app already open. He began to read a passage from Psalm 1, a psalm about persons who choose good over wickedness.

> He will be like a tree planted by streams of water,
>
> A tree that produces fruit in its season,
>
> The foliage of which does not wither.
>
> And everything he does will succeed.

My left eye flinched ever so slightly at the sleight of gendered language, but I quickly made space within me for Jim and the language of prayer he'd probably been using since before I was born. I understood that he meant to include me.

"See," he said. "The future. The future is good. For God creates that which will grow, grow and flourish and bear fruit." I smiled and said, "I sure hope so." And that's when Sharon stepped up. One foot planted on the ground, the other on my porch. "You don't have to hope. God said that the future is good. We can trust that." I was taken aback. She spoke as one who has seen some stuff in their life, racking up a ton of frequent-flier miles to hell and back. "We can trust that," she said.

Something stirred in me. I was about to have an "aha" moment.

DING!

The kitchen timer went off. The lasagna was done.

What do I do? On the one hand, I wanted to talk more with Jim and Sharon to see if I could coax the "aha" moment out of hiding. On the other hand, I wanted to liberate the lasagna from the oven at its most optimal time. I made the obvious choice: lasagna. Lasagna is my friend. It has no expectations of me.

> "What do you think about the future? Do you think it is good? Or bad?"
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I thanked Jim and Sharon for their visit and wished them well in their ministry. But I couldn't yet say goodbye. I needed to tell them something. I needed to tell them that they had affected me, that their words seized hold of me and opened up the beginning of a conversation with God that I didn't know I needed to have. I reached out to clasp their hands.

Catching their eyes, I said, "Thank you, Jim. Thank you, Sharon. You don't know what your visit meant to me today. Your words opened up something inside of me. I don't know where it's going, but I am eager to talk with God about it. Thank you."

Jim and Sharon nodded solemnly, a shy joy beginning to shine.

What they didn't know is that the night before, I talked with a friend about it being high time for us to manifest what we really want in life. She spoke with clarity and direction. As for me, although I was geeked about manifesting, the "what" was nowhere to be seen. What am I being called to? What would it be like to fling myself into the wild, wild wind of the Spirit?

Next thing I know, Jehovah's Witnesses show up at my door.

God knew I was not going to move beyond some spirited yet non-specific manifesting. So God moved to me — like these two Jehovah's Witnesses. They met me where I am. They brought the good news literally to my doorstep. Not once did they seem aghast, even when I clasped their hands with mine still covered in marinara sauce and ricotta cheese.

I am still pondering these things in my heart, but one thing I know for sure is that Jim and Sharon are okay with me walking into the future a little bit disheveled. God's okay with the delightfully weird chaos that I am, and, I think, welcomes that chaos into the future.

After all, who'd want a future without lasagna?

"God said that the future is good. We can trust that."