

Blow God's freakin' mind

By [Cindy Wang Brandt](#)

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One of my favorite lines in the musical *The Book of Mormon* is from the song "You and Me (But Mostly Me)." The main characters, Elder Cunningham and Elder Price, talk about their upcoming mission. Elder Price sings, "Something I've foreseen, Now that I'm 19, I'll do something incredible, That blows God's freaking mind!"

I crack up every time I hear it, its full intended effect sending me into a fit of giggles. For me, it's funny in a self-deprecating way, because I was Elder Price at 19, on fire for the Lord, signed on for the missionary life and ready to change the world.

****insert public announcement**** If you are 19 years old, in the unlikely case that you are reading this middle-aged woman's blog, go ahead and stop reading. Go and blow God's freakin' mind. Chase your passions, travel, take risks, make mistakes; we need your energy and vitality and idealism. Be smart and listen and learn. Bookmark this blog and come back to it when you're a bit tired from all your endeavors. It'll still be sitting here waiting in cyberspace for ya. Go, YOLO it up, or whatever you young people say these days.*******

The rest of you, pull up a chair and let's have a bit of a laugh about this, shall we? When did you stop thinking you could change the world? For me, I think it was around when I turned 30. It wasn't a grand realization. It seemed like it was just another ordinary day. I woke up weary from a night of interrupted sleep with my nursing baby, pulled open the shades and saw that the scenery outside my bedroom window hadn't budged since the previous morning. I made some coffee, sat down at the computer and cringed at the news stories. Yet another tragedy strikes. Children are still dying of hunger, wars are still raging. Without fanfare, I quietly took off my mental superhero cape, and almost imperceptibly whispered to myself, "Hey, let's stop saving the world, the baby needs his diaper changed."

I mean, in Christian lingo, it's always been, "you can do nothing without God," and "God is the Potter, we are the clay," which sounds humble but is sort of code for, "God is going to use me to DO ALL OF THE THINGS and SAVE ALL OF THE PEOPLE."

That's the "blessing" we always speak of, right?

It was bad enough in the '90s when evangelicals launched strategic campaigns to reach unreached people groups (remember the 10/40 window?), but now with the current generation rising to meet the call for more social justice, our messiah complex is becoming straight up pathological. Before, we were saving souls, now we have to eliminate global poverty and rescue all of the orphans while we're at it.

You could say I've become disillusioned. When you begin to actually participate in the process of saving the world, whether it be in missions or development, you learn that behind every good intention and inspiring vision is a trail of messy humanity: broken promises, severed relationships, moral failure, bitter betrayal. You always knew nobody is perfect, but you thought that amazing humanitarian, or that godly missionary, was pretty darn close, until a scandal breaks and they're the culprit.

The breadth and depth of the global challenges we face are overwhelming. In 2013, I attended the Justice Conference and heard from [Matt Friedman](#), an anti-human-trafficking expert, who told us that globally there is an estimate of 21 million slaves and the counter-trafficking sector has managed to prosecute and convict a whopping 4,000 perpetrators per year. If that's not a fast-losing battle with the worst odds ever, I don't know what is.

Change the world? These days I'm lucky to just survive in it.

Looking back, however, the day I hung up my superhero cape was a good day. Because when I stopped being Superman, I could finally live as Clark Kent. Clumsy, awkward, ordinary Clark. When I stopped (quite literally) flying around the world, I could finally settle in to my messy cubicle, and take an honest accounting of the simple tools I had in my disposal to live faithfully in my everyday life. Now I work at my modest day job, and I write. Each time I open up a blank document, I don't try to save the world, I try to be faithful with my humble words, thrilled if it connects with a few.

These days I'm not all that impressed with the flashy campaigns, dazzling graphics, and the celebrity with the largest Twitter following. I'm much more in awe of the men and women who have been working day in and day out for 10, 20 years, moving forward slowly, one steady step at a time.

I echo author [Courtney E. Martin](#)'s words:

“We don’t want to save the world, we want to live in it—flawed, fierce, loving, and humble.”

I’m not disillusioned into mediocrity, or driven to despair by cynicism. I still care about the world, perhaps even more deeply and focused than ever, but I’ve shed the arrogance of thinking I can change it. I only hope to live fully in it, true to myself, and to others. And I want to work hard at doing this, day in and day out.

I’m not a doomsday sayer, I’m a progressive. I believe the world is changing and evolving for the better. I think the arc of the moral universe bends towards justice but it is long, tugged gently by the collective forces of ordinary folks doing steadfast work.

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