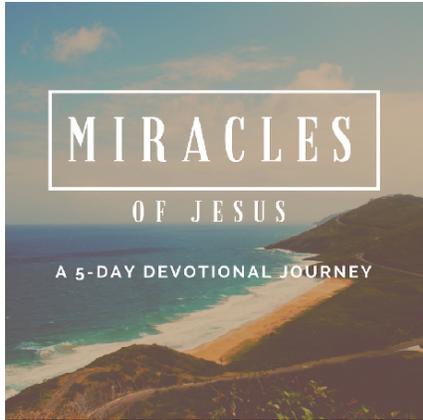


If we're honest we'll admit that some of the stuff that we read about in the Bible seems pretty outrageous. Especially some of what the Bible records as the miracles of Jesus. There's Jesus turning water into wine, Jesus walking on water, Jesus giving strength to the legs of those who hadn't been able to walk in years, Jesus bringing people back from the dead, there's some pretty outlandish things recorded in the Bible.

Here's my fear, I worry that sometimes we read the outrageous and the outlandish in the Bible and we dismiss it because it doesn't make sense to us. We pawn it off as figurative or maybe just as a parable. As we continue down that road we can pretty quickly become disengaged the miracles of the Bible because we've never witnessed anything like that first hand.

Regardless of whether you have ever witnessed a real life healing before I want to invite you to join me over the next 5 days as we look at just a few of the miracles that Jesus performed. It's my belief that the same power that Jesus used to perform the real life miracles in the Bible is the same power that's available to you and I today. Miracles come in all shapes and sizes and it's my prayer that over the next few days you'll come to realize some of the miracles that have perhaps already occurred in your life.



Day #1 - Looking for a Miracle

Have you ever found yourself moving at 100 miles per hour on a particular project or for a particular season only to feel like you're not really making any significant progress? It seems like no matter what you do, you end up in the same spot with the only difference being that now you're more tired. Some people refer to it as treading water. There's a lot of activity but no real movement. I've been there a time or two myself. Those times can be frustrating and at times you may even feel like throwing in the towel. After all, what's the point of all this if we're not making any real difference?

My kids are still misbehaving.

My relationship with my spouse is still struggling.

My boss still doesn't notice my improved job performance.

What's the point? Luke 5 records for us the account of Jesus aiding a few of His future disciples in a net busting catch of fish.

Check out [Luke 5:1-11](#).

"One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish." "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man." For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus."

I notice a couple of things about this miracle that are worth pointing out:

Jesus got into the empty boat. When Jesus approached the edge of the sea shore he chose to occupy the empty vessel. Peter had been out all day trying to manage on his own, trying everything he knew to do to achieve some level of success. He came up empty handed. He literally had nothing to show for a night's full of hard labor. Perhaps it was the end of a shift, perhaps it was out of exhaustion, maybe he was just fed up with his lack of results but for all intents and purposes, Peter had given up. He had vacated his vessel. He had emptied out his vessel and it was at that precise moment that Jesus steps into the picture to fill it up. There is a significant lesson there for you and I as well. Too often we cry out for a miracle from God without ever giving up on our original plans. We stay out at sea laboring, striving, scrounging for some results. Perhaps your miracle from God will only arrive once you stop trying to create one for yourself.

Peter still had to put in some work. Once Jesus steps into the boat, He looks at Peter and instructs him to push them out into the water a little ways. This must have been frustrating for Peter. After all he had just been out all night working and now Jesus is telling him to put in a little more work. I can imagine Peter's stomach churning as he pushed the boat away from the shore yet again. Why was Jesus insisting that Peter go through all of these same motions again? Why did he have to push out yet again? But this time it was different. This time his companion on the journey was someone who had some inside knowledge of where the fish were biting. This time His fishing partner possessed something that his previous partners hadn't possessed. Peter still had some work today but this time he was moving forward with greater knowledge and wisdom. Too often when we look to God for a miracle, we choose to sit on our hands and wait for Him to do all of the work. When things don't pan out like we think they should we become frustrated and weary. A miracle doesn't replace our responsibility to be faithful. It brings movement and action to our faithfulness.

Peter had to go through a period of learning before the miracle. Something that I had never noticed about this passage before was that before the actual miracle of a net busting catch of fish occurred, Jesus chose to spend some time teaching those that had gathered. The Scripture says that when He had finished teaching, He instructed Peter to let down the nets once again. If Peter wasn't frustrated to begin with, he was probably through the roof when Jesus starts teaching. Peter's probably thinking, is this why we're here? What do I even get out of this deal other than a bigger sunburn and more aching muscles? But just imagine Peter sitting there, perhaps listening

by default to the words of Jesus. Yes, he had no choice but to listen, but I can imagine that some of what Jesus said in those moments slipped into Peter's heart and mind. Perhaps you and I are also sometimes required to go through a period of learning before our miracle arrives. How often do we just cry out for a miracle and never stop to wonder what God is wanting to teach us in the process, before the miracle?

Questions for Reflection:

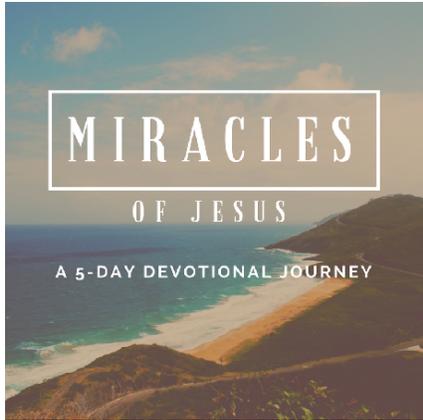
How empty is your vessel?

Are you still tirelessly working, frantically trying to create your own miracle?

Are you willing to put in the work for your miracle? Not frantic work, but faithful work?

Are you willing to continue going through the motions of faithfulness believing that God will show up?

What might God be teaching you in your period of waiting for a miracle?



Day #2 - It's Never too Late

If you have a pulse then you have likely experienced some level of hopelessness in your life. Perhaps it's your marriage that seems to be headed for a dead end. Perhaps your kids are completely out of control and seem lost to the saving work of Jesus Christ. Perhaps your relationship with your extended family is tenuous and seems like it will never bear any fruit. Perhaps you personally feel like you can't be restored in God's eyes. You've done too much. You've strayed too far.

Broken relationships seem to define our lives.

Internal hopelessness wells within you.

The continual lump in your throat reminds you that the end is near or worse, has already arrived. Hopelessness abounds.

One of the most appealing aspects of Scripture is that it offers hope. The sick are healed, the dead are raised, life is renewed, forgiveness is granted, relationships are restored. Situations that appear to be hopeless are suddenly flooded with a renewed hope. What was thought to be lost, is suddenly and inexplicably found. What was previously determined to be a dead end suddenly opens up to reveal a new beginning. The story of God sending Jesus to restore humanity is one of hope. Jesus' miracles while He walked the earth are full of life giving, hope restoring acts.

I am reminded of the account recorded for us in Luke 7.

Luke 7:11-17 says, "Soon afterward Jesus went with his disciples to the village of Nain, and a large crowd followed him. A funeral procession was coming out as he approached the village gate. The young man who had died was a widow's only son, and a large crowd from the village was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart overflowed with compassion. "Don't cry!" he said. Then he walked over to the coffin and touched it, and the bearers stopped. "Young man," he said, "I tell you, get up." Then the dead boy sat up and began to talk! And Jesus gave him back to his mother. Great fear swept the crowd, and they praised God, saying, "A mighty prophet has risen among us," and "God has visited his people today." And the news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding countryside."

Setting aside the obvious, there is something amazing that jumped out to me in this account.

***"There is no such thing as a window of opportunity
when it comes to Jesus and His miracles."***

This wasn't Jesus swooping in at the last minute to save the day. This wasn't Jesus coming to the rescue when hope had almost run out. This wasn't a mother's desperate plea for Jesus to save her long lost son at the last moment. This was already over. The deed was done. The funeral was underway. The procession had already assembled and they were headed to the burial grounds. Hope of another outcome had come and gone and the boy's mother had already resigned to the fact that she would spend the rest of her days alone and perhaps unprotected.

From the outside looking in, the window of opportunity was closed. All hope for a miracle to occur had passed when her son breathed his last. Then comes Jesus. He steps on to the scene and filled with compassion He looks to the grieving mother and says, "Don't cry". Can you imagine her confusion. How could she be expected to not cry at a time like this? Was this man Jesus unaware of what was happening? Did He not realize that she was grieving?

Perhaps she assumed that His words were designed to encourage her. As in, "*Don't cry it's going to be okay.*" or "*Don't cry, you'll get through this.*" What followed next not only baffled the grieving mother but it terrified the crowd that had gathered as well.

"Young man, I tell you, get up."

In an instant, Jesus snatched back what death had claimed. There is no window of opportunity when it comes to the power of Jesus and His miracles.

Think for a moment of that person or situation that you feel is lost. See that face, imagine that situation in your mind's eye. Review the details of that broken relationship that you are convinced is over. Rehash that poor choice or series of poor choices in your own life that you are sure Jesus can't forgive.

Say these words out loud: "Young man, I tell you, get up."

When we see hopelessness, Jesus sees hope.

When we see a closed door, Jesus sees an open door.

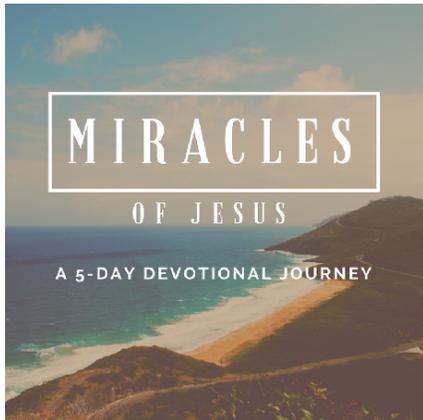
When we see a dead end, Jesus sees a new beginning.

The window is wide open and Jesus is more than capable of performing a miracle in your life today.

Questions for Reflection:

Name a person or situation that you have resigned to being lost?

Consider writing out the words, “Young man, I tell you, get up.” and posting them in a prominent place to remind you of the power of Jesus.



Day #3 - Everyday Miracles

As you read through the accounts of Jesus' miracles in the Bible it's hard to imagine some of those things occurring in today's time. Walking on water, healing the lame, multiplying the fish and the loaves. This is dramatic stuff. The definition of the word miracle is, *"a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency."*

I would imagine that if you were pressed you could come up with something resembling a miracle in your own life but do big, bold, dramatic, inexplicable things still happen in today's world? If you peruse the internet you can of course find articles and news stories that detail out what some believe to be modern day miracles. A quick search yielded these catchy headlines:

"The "mysterious voice" which led cops to discover child who survived for 14 hours in submerged car."

"The boy who drowned and was revived unharmed after 101 minutes of CPR."

"The woman who came back to life after having no pulse for 45 minutes."

"The dog who walked 20 blocks to the hospital where her owner was recovering from surgery."

(Miracle or not, the last one's pretty cool.) We could of course spend all day arguing about the legitimacy of each of these so-called miracles but my question is this, "What classifies as a miracle?" Are miracles only the big, bold, dramatic, life-altering, completely inexplicable events in life?

There's a great example in the Bible in the book of John where we're given a look at the very first miracle that Jesus performed as He walked the earth. Take a minute to read John 2:1-11. *"The next day there was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus' mother told him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, that's not our problem," Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." But his mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Standing nearby were six stone water jars,*

used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." When the jars had been filled, he said, "Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies." So the servants followed his instructions. When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. "A host always serves the best wine first," he said. "Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!" This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him."

This is an interesting account because while the turning of water into wine is inexplicable, it isn't anything necessarily dramatic or life altering. Similar to today, weddings in this culture were a big deal but unlike today, weddings in Jesus' time were a multi-day event that brought together most of the community for a time of celebration where wine played a central role. The family of the bridegroom was responsible for hosting this reception of sorts and the use and quality of wine played a pivotal role in how their guests were to be treated.

I can think of a thousand things that are more worse than running out of food or beverages at a wedding. Certainly Jesus was aware that there were starving people in the village as well. He must have been aware that many were sick and needing to be healed right? Was making sure that this family had enough wine to go around really tops on the list of things that He needed to handle?

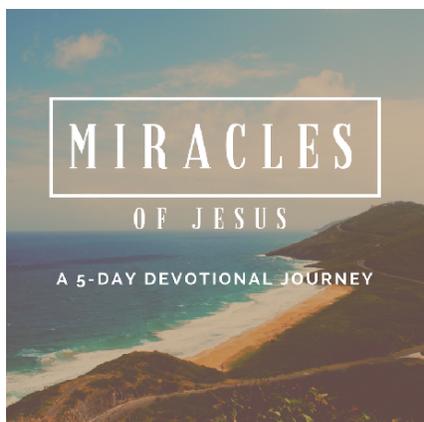
Allow me to suggest that too often we relegate the miracle working power of Jesus to the big, bold, life-altering needs of our lives. Does Jesus care about all of those big important things? Of course He does. Is He capable of healing the lame, bringing the dead back to life and guiding a dog back to its owner? I believe He is more than capable of doing those things. But doesn't He also care about the everyday?

- Does He care more about bringing the dead back to life than He cares about sustaining our lives throughout the course of an average day?
- Does He care more about healing the lame than He does you, allowing you to find a moment of peace in the midst of your hectic day?
- Does He care more about feeding 5000 than He does about giving you the strength to maintain your job which allows you to feed the 5 in your house?

I encourage you to remember that God is a God of everyday miracles. You may argue that God has never really done anything in your life but remember that you're able to read this devotional. You're breathing right now too. You have some sort of device in your hand that allows you to see these words. You have clothes on your back. You likely ate something today. Never forget that God's miracles aren't confined to the big and the bold. His miracles envelope you in the everyday common occurrences of life. Be encouraged and keep moving forward.

Questions for Reflection:

Have you ever considered that God's miracles are all around you in the everyday aspects of life? Make a list of those everyday miracles to remind you of His power at work in you everyday.



Day #4 - Miracles are Real

In both 2005 and in 2007 I had the privilege of going to South America, specifically the country of Brazil. I was a part of two teams that were tasked with helping to build and upkeep several churches and a school that our church here in the states, began nearly 30+ years ago. I could tell you several stories of God's faithfulness over my time away but one particular story comes to mind in a significant way as we continue our look at the miracles of Jesus.

Our group had been hard at work for several days when we had the opportunity to take a several hour boat ride down the river to a small village and market where we would have the chance to purchase some tickets and treasures for those back home. We docked our double decker boat just off of the main land at a small island where we disembarked for our grilled lunch over the open fire of a large drum. I managed to rig up my hammock just out of the way and was able to enjoy the breeze and the beauty of this amazing country. Nestled just off the main land where the village and shops were located we spent several hours eating, playing and resting.

We eventually boarded our boat again and made the short jump over to the mainland where we spent another hour or so perusing shops and taking in the sights. As several of us boarded the boat to return to our island oasis we realized that others in our group were more, shall we say, eager for the shopping experience. We were done, they were not. And so we waited, time passed, more time passed and we waited and we waited some more. As the number of us waiting to return grew and the number of those we were waiting on began to grow smaller, those of us waiting discovered that our patience level also began to grow small. We had waited for what seemed like forever when someone made the suggestion, "Hey why don't we just swim back." Before I could think, the shirts of several of the guys in our group were coming off and bodies were diving from the second level of the boat into the murky river. I hesitated, but only for a moment before I too found myself headlong in the river.

While I've never been a strong swimmer I didn't fear this decision, I dove in and began swimming towards the island. Out of the 8 to 10 of us that made this choice, I found myself in roughly the middle of the pack swimming next to a friend. Somewhere around the half way point, perhaps from the long week of work or the dehydration I later discovered that my body

was experiencing, I felt my arms and legs give out. If you've ever experienced this you know that in addition to the physical struggle you're having you can also begin to experience high anxiety and fear. In other words I started freaking out. I didn't know how deep the river was but I knew I couldn't reach the bottom.

I attempted to push through but quickly discovered that whatever energy I thought I had to accomplish this feat was no where near the amount of energy I actually possessed. In as calm of a vice as I could muster at that moment I said to my swimming partner, "Hey man, I'm struggling." He laughed it off as my progress slowed. Perhaps it was the look in my eye or the quiver in my voice that tipped him off because back came his response, "Are you serious?"

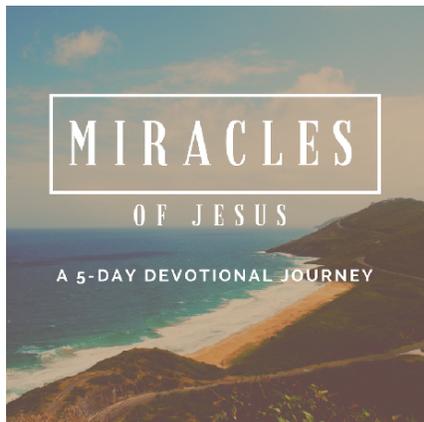
I vaguely remember giving a nod from my head before I went under for the first time. As I felt the water rush over my head, visions of my wife and kids flashed through my mind. I saw her face, I saw the faces of my sons being told that their dad wasn't coming home. My thoughts were interrupted by a hand grasping the back of my shorts and pulling me up above the water. I gasped for whatever air I could take in as I saw my friend go under himself from the force of pulling me upwards. I went back down, he came up, he pulled me up, he went down again. We repeated this process several times. As those around us realized the gravity of our situation they began shouting to the shore line for help. We were so close to the shore but just far enough away to make it difficult for anyone to really understand what was happening.

As I went under the water for what I was convinced was likely the last time, I remember feeling sadness. Not sadness for me but worry and sadness for my young wife and sons. As I held my breath hoping against hope that something or someone would change what felt like the end for me, I felt for the hand of my friend on the back of my shorts one last time as he pulled up with what little strength he had. As my head broke the surface of the water I took a breath larger than I had ever taken in my life before or since. As my lungs filled with air and my eyes shed their blurriness from the water I found myself face to face with the bow of a small fishing boat. Not from a conscious choice but rather from a deeper gut reaction for survival I raised one hand to grasp the edge of the boat. As the other members of our group that had also slowed their progress to help us, grabbed the edge of the boat I remember repeating the phrase, "Thank you Jesus" over and over. As I felt the sandy bottom of the river rise to the tips of my toes, the flat bottoms of my feet and then to my knees I collapsed on the beach in exhaustion.

What I discovered later in the afternoon, is that the cries of those around me, while almost indistinguishable to those on our boat were heard by an unnamed Brazilian man who was sitting

in his house watching television. He heard our cries over the noise of his television, he cared enough to rise his feet to investigate through his open door. He cared even more to do something about our situation. Sensing our peril, he rushed to the edge of the river where he happened to dock his fishing boat which happened to start on the first try. With that he sped out to bring us salvation.

I said earlier in the week that a miracle was something inexplicable. I can't explain what happened to me on that day other than as cliché as it sounds, "God wasn't finished with me." I'm supposed to continue providing for my wife. I'm supposed to continue raising my sons to carry on the legacy of those who came before us. I'm supposed to tell you this story. What are you supposed to do? Be encouraged and keep moving forward.



Day #5 - What's Your Story

It's my belief that God is always moving. He is always working. He is always active on the scene. It may not be in ways that we can visualize. It may not be in the manner we were hoping He would move. It may not be within our desired timeframe. Nevertheless, God is still in the business of performing miracles. What's your story? How has God moved in your life? When and where has God showed up in your relationships? When and where has He moved in your career? How have you seen Him actively on the scene in the lives of your family members. Too often we think that God's miracles are few and far between. We can perhaps think of a time or two when we've clearly seen His presence in our lives but beyond that we assume He's been inactive. What if God is always on the move? What if He's been actively working in the lives of those all around us and we just never knew?

Here's my challenge to you. Share your story. Share how you've seen God on the scene in miraculous ways in your life. Take the miracle that's been done in your life and allow it to live on as an encouragement to others. Share your story of how God has moved in your life, post it on social media for others to see and experience. God is all around us, always moving, always acting. What's your story?