

Bonus Section: Real-Life Stories of Miracles in Action

BRUCE WILKINSON

Author of the *New York Times* #1 Bestseller *The Prayer of Jabez*
with DAVID KOPP

YOU *Were* BORN *for* THIS



7 Keys to a Life of Predictable Miracles

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DEDICATION



*To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly
above all that we ask or think,
according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory.*

from Ephesians 3:20–21

Contents

PART 1: WELCOME TO EVERYDAY MIRACLE TERRITORY

1. A New Way to See the World 3
You were born to expect a miracle today
2. The Tiny, Enormous Difference 19
You were born to do God's work by God's power
3. Behind the Veil of Heaven 35
You were born to be a living link between Heaven and earth

PART 2: FOUR KEYS TO A LIFE OF MIRACLES

- Introduction to the Miracle Life Keys 49
4. The Master Key 53
You were born to be sent on miracle missions
5. The People Key 65
You were born to share God's heart for people
6. The Spirit Key 79
You were born to partner with God's Spirit
7. The Risk Key 93
You were born to take risks of faith in dependence on God

PART 3: HOW TO DELIVER A MIRACLE

8. The Five Signals That Guide a Miracle Delivery 107
You were born to understand and respond to miracle-related signals

9. The Five Steps That Lead to a Miracle Delivery 131
You were born to know and follow miracle-related delivery steps

PART 4: THREE KEYS TO SPECIAL DELIVERY MIRACLES

Introduction to the Special Delivery Keys 149

10. The Money Key 153
You were born to deliver miracles of financial provision

11. The Dream Key 171
You were born to deliver miracles of life purpose

12. The Forgiveness Key 193
You were born to deliver miracles of forgiveness

Epilogue: Welcome to the Beginning 213

Real People, Real Miracles 223

Discussion Questions 234

Acknowledgments 243

Notes 245

Part 1



WELCOME TO
EVERYDAY MIRACLE
TERRITORY



A New Way to See the World

You were born to expect a miracle today

*W*hat if I told you I'm certain you missed a miracle yesterday? And not just any miracle but one that Heaven wanted to do through you to significantly change someone's life for the better—maybe your own?

I would understand if you were doubtful.

But right alongside that doubt, most of us can identify a nearly universal experience. Almost everyone in the world—whatever their religious belief—can point to an event in their lives that seemed directly orchestrated by Heaven, that seemed impossible to explain without using words like “I can't believe what just happened! That was a miracle!” We call these experiences divine coincidences, miracle moments, supernatural provisions. Whatever we call them, we tend to value such events so highly that we recount

them over and over, often for years. “I’ll never forget the time...,” we say, or “Sooner or later my daughter is going to tell you about...”

Why do we remember such events so clearly? I think it’s because we feel that we have been touched by Heaven. It’s as if God Himself stepped through the curtain that separates the seen from the unseen to make something wonderful happen for us, something only He could do.

But here’s the best part. In the experience we hear a personal and unforgettable message from God. Something like, *I’m here. I care about you. I can do for you what you cannot do for yourself.*

Beginning with this near-universal experience, this book asks a few simple but intriguing questions:

- Why are these experiences of the miraculous so rare for most people?
- What if Heaven actually wanted you to experience them on a regular basis?
- What if ordinary people like you and me are invited to partner with God to deliver miracles to others?

If these questions put a picture in your mind of people everywhere walking around expecting to be a part of miracle moments on a regular basis, you’re not far wrong.

A mysterious encounter

Let me tell you about a mysterious encounter I had in a restaurant outside Denver with a waiter named Jack. I call it mysterious because on the surface everything looked so ordinary. Five friends at a table for six, waiters coming and going, voices, clatter—just what you’d expect in a busy restaurant. But by the time dinner was over, we all knew beyond a doubt that we’d been present for a divine appointment.

It was as if God Himself had walked up and said, “Thank you for saving Me a place. I’ve been wanting to do something for Jack.”

Here's what happened.

During the course of the meal, Jack had served us well. But apart from the usual exchanges about the menu and our orders, we hadn't spoken much. Around the table, meanwhile, the conversation revolved around some of Jesus' more extreme teachings—ones like “Ask, and you will receive” and “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” During the conversation I felt unexpectedly nudged by Heaven to try something I'd never done before. At the same time I sensed it was meant to involve Jack.

My experiment involved putting three hundred dollars “at risk.” Now, don't let the amount throw you. The money wasn't mine, and believe it or not, the person who was letting me carry it around was expecting me to give it away. (But more about that in a later chapter.)

When Jack came by to refill the water glasses, I posed a question. “Have you ever heard the saying ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive?’”

“Yes, I have,” he said.

“Do you believe that?”

“Sure, I guess I do,” he said, looking puzzled.

“Good!” I said. “I have an interesting opportunity for you.” I placed a hundred-dollar bill on the table. “You have an unusual choice, Jack. You can either receive this hundred dollars as a gift, not a tip...”

I paused. I definitely had Jack's attention, and the two couples with me didn't appear to be breathing.

I looked at Jack. “Or you can say no to the money and instead give each of us a dessert. But this would be *you* buying the desserts, not the restaurant. You can't do both things, and there's no right or wrong. So what would you like to do—give or receive?”

Jack just stood there holding the water pitcher. He asked twice if I was serious. Then finally he said, “I'll take the hundred dollars.”

True to my word, I handed him the bill.

“Thank you!” he said. Then he walked back to the kitchen.

After he left and my friends started breathing again, we all tried to figure out what had just happened. Was my unusual test about giving and receiving even fair? What was Jack thinking now? And what in the world was he saying to the crew in the kitchen?

All the while I was feeling increasingly uncomfortable. You see, earlier I had slipped another two hundred dollars under my plate. If the waiter had chosen to buy us desserts and not take the hundred—believing that it is more blessed to give than to receive—I was going to give him the hidden two hundred dollars. I had really hoped he would make the self-sacrificial choice because I'd strongly sensed that God wanted to encourage him with the larger sum.

The next time he came around, I said, "I'm curious, Jack. Do you feel like you made the right choice?"

"Absolutely!" he said excitedly. "In fact, it was a miracle. You see, I'm a single dad." He pulled out his wallet and proudly showed us a photo of his three-year-old son. "Isn't he something!" he said with a big smile. Then he explained his reaction. "I have to work three jobs during four days of the week just so I can take care of my son the other three days when my ex-wife works. But I'm having a tough time making ends meet. Just this morning I had to mail my alimony check of a hundred dollars even though my account was down to zero. Driving to work this afternoon, I actually prayed, 'God, please! I need an extra hundred dollars, and I need it tonight!'"

Well, I was speechless, and so were my friends. How could we have known of our waiter's crisis or of his prayer for a hundred dollars?

Then it was my turn to explain. I told him that even if he had decided to give instead of receive, I'd planned to give him the hundred dollars. "But now that I know your story, I agree. You made the right choice."

Suddenly I knew what needed to happen next. "You have to know that none of this money was mine," I told him. "The owner wanted me to pass

it on as a kind of message to the right person. And I'm sure that person was you."

I reached under the plate for the other two hundred. "Obviously God wanted you to have the hundred dollars, and He wants you to have this too."

What God thinks is normal

What just happened here? Let's break it down:

- Jack drove to work that evening to wait tables, but he brought with him a secret, pressing need.
- I had come to Colorado from Atlanta on business and ended up having dinner with friends in Jack's restaurant.
- Unbeknown to Jack or my friends, I was prepared to meet someone's financial need with money that wasn't mine.
- By the end of the evening, God had used one person to deliver something that met a big need for another person—and in a way that was clearly miraculous to everyone involved.

You might react differently to what happened around that table. You might think, for example, *Well, I don't have a hundred-dollar bill lying around. And if I did, why would I give it to a stranger? For that matter, how would I figure out whom to give it to?*

We'll look closely at these reactions and more like them in the pages ahead. You'll see, I promise, that God is just as likely to have plans for five dollars or twenty dollars as He is for a hundred dollars and that He never asks you or me to serve Him in a way that doesn't fit us personally and perfectly.

For now, though, put yourself in the story of our dinner with Jack. Imagine how you would have felt leaving that table and knowing you had played

God had used one person to deliver something that met a big need for another person—and in a way that was clearly miraculous.

an active role in delivering God's provision for a young man's desperate need. Better yet, imagine a lifestyle of such encounters, where God works through you in unexplainable ways to do a miracle—and on a regular basis.

This kind of life is not only possible but is what God thinks of as normal when He thinks of you.

God did not place you on this earth to notice Him at work only once or twice in your whole life.

You see, He did not place you on this earth to notice Him at work only once or twice in your whole life. He did not create you to consistently miss out on the wonder of His presence and power.

The truth is, you were born to live a supernatural life doing God's work by God's power. You were born to walk out your door each morning

believing that God will use you to deliver a necessary miracle today.

This book will show you how.

The Everyday Miracle Territory

When it comes to miracles, most people I know see the world as divided in two.

On the far left is a region we could call the Land of Signs and Wonders. In this land amazing miracles seem to happen a lot, although only for a select few. Mostly this world reveals itself on television, in a few unusual churches, and in faraway places. Still, Signs and Wonders is a remarkable place. In this land the blind regain their sight and invalids throw away their canes to run around like school kids.

On the far right is the Land of Good Deeds. Nobody is putting on a show here. Fortunately, though, the place is full of good people watching out for each other, doing good works. And certainly God is pleased with that.

Interestingly, in Good Deeds land a lot of people believe in miracles and spend time studying them. They just don't expect to actually see any

miracles, much less be a part of them on a regular basis. When they praise God for miracles, they're grateful for things that occurred long ago. Good Deeds land doesn't dazzle like Signs and Wonders, but things are more manageable there. More predictable.

What's the one big disadvantage in Good Deeds land? God rarely shows up in a supernatural way. Why would He? No one is expecting the miraculous, and besides, everything is running just fine. Or so it seems.

Which land would you say you live in most of the time?

A large majority of people live in the Land of Good Deeds. Even though some would say they have experienced meaningful personal miracles in the past—at a point of spiritual awakening or in a time of crisis—they believe those experiences are rare. More important, they believe we don't have a role in whether one happens again or not, so there's no point in leaving the house today on the lookout for one.

What I want you to realize is that if you live in either land I've described, you've overlooked the most promising region of all. You see, between the dazzle of Signs and Wonders and the duty of Good Deeds lies a broad and promising middle ground.

In this book we call this in-between land the Everyday Miracle Territory. Here people believe that God wants to intervene—and does—in supernatural ways in human affairs on a regular basis. Here unmet needs are seen by ordinary people as golden opportunities for God to show up, and to do so through them, at almost any moment. They're not waiting for special powers for themselves or for God to part the skies on their behalf. They have experienced miracles and know beyond doubt that miracles are for them and others like them, right here and right now.

Those who live in the Everyday Miracle Territory have already made two startling observations.

One is full of hope. Everywhere they look, in every situation, they see potential for an unforgettable "God-incidence"—not a coincidence but a

moment when God steps in to meet a real need through them in a way that only He can. Some days it actually feels as though God has a pile of miracles ready to be delivered!

Their other observation is full of dismay.

They are nearly alone.

Would you agree that few people today are living in Everyday Miracle Territory? I wrote this book to help you see that the land of personal, everyday miracles is your rightful home turf. Instead of focusing on the nature-defying acts that God *is able to* do, this book invites you to encounter the miracles that God *does* do on a regular basis—and to embrace your exciting part in partnering with Him to make them happen.

You'll discover that what God chooses to depend on for these divine encounters is simply a willing servant. No previous experience required. No record of perfection. No special religious gift or qualification. In this book we call these refreshingly ordinary folks “delivery agents” for God. They are men and women who say to Him, “Please send me to do Your work by Your power today!”

That's exactly what Jimmy said.

Jimmy the “delivery guy”

Jimmy is one of the most down-to-earth men I've ever met. He can fix anything, find anything, make do with anything. You're stranded with a handful of folks on a desert island? You want Jimmy in the handful. You want to program your iPhone to walk your dog? Jimmy's your man. Just don't ask him to spend time over tea talking about relationships or contemplating the meaning of the universe.

The first time Jimmy heard that he could cooperate with God in supernatural events on a regular basis, he thought, *Not likely*.

He worked in construction, after all, not ministry. He struggled to come

up with even one time in the past ten years when he could say with certainty that the supernatural had clearly showed up. The idea of a lifestyle of miracles felt about as real to Jimmy as taking a road trip through an asteroid belt.

But over the course of a You Were Born for This conference, Jimmy realized that he really did want to learn how to partner with Heaven to do God's work on earth. Taking a big step into the unknown, he committed himself to being God's delivery agent when and where he was called upon.

The next morning, while Jimmy was dropping off windows at a job site, he struck up a conversation with a carpenter named Nick. Nick let it be known that his marriage was on the rocks and that he didn't hold out much hope. He just seemed to want to vent.

Normally Jimmy would have expressed sympathy for a man in that kind of misery, then quickly steered as far away as possible from such a sensitive topic. This time, though, Jimmy hung in there. He listened, identified with Nick's struggle, asked a few questions. Then, sensing that the man's heart was open, he asked a simple but miracle-inviting question he had learned at the conference: "Nick, I really want to help you. What can I do for you?"

Without hesitation the carpenter said, "You could tell me what to do next. I'm tied up in knots, but I really want this marriage to work."

Jimmy panicked. Tell another guy how to fix a relationship? *Not likely!* But he took a deep breath and then took an outrageous step of faith. "Why don't you get something to write with," he told the carpenter, "and when you come back, I'll tell you how to save your marriage."

The truth was, Jimmy was stalling. He didn't have a clue what he was going to tell Nick. But as he explained to me later, he was holding on to a couple of things I had said at the conference: "Relax, the miracle is God's to do, not yours" and "Give God a minute." Something or Someone seemed to be leading the way in this conversation with Nick, and Jimmy was determined to follow.

When the carpenter returned, Jimmy heard himself saying, “You need to go home and make your bed.”

Jimmy had no idea where that had come from or what good it was. “That’s all I have to say,” he told Nick apologetically. “I guess you don’t even need to write it down.”

But the carpenter was staring at Jimmy with his mouth open.

“How did you know?” he gasped. “That is a giant source of conflict for us! I’m the last one up, and I *never* make the bed. My wife says it’s a sign of everything that’s wrong with the marriage. I don’t get it. But you know what? I’m going to drive back at lunch and make the bed before my wife gets home.”

To me, this story demonstrates God’s willingness to do a personal miracle if we are willing to deliver one. Nick wasn’t expecting help from a stranger. And Jimmy didn’t think he had help to give. What he had, though, was a readiness to pass along what God prompted him to say.

But the best thing the story shows is God’s heart. He cares about the personal struggles of a carpenter named Nick—and He wanted Nick to see that. He cared enough to show Nick a practical step he could take that might say more to his wife than a love letter and just might turn things around for the couple.

All He needed was Jimmy, delivery agent.

Doing what God wants done

You might be like Jimmy, completely unprepared and unqualified but ready to try something different. You may have grown up in the church and have a long list of religious accomplishments to point to. You may be like Nick, uncertain that God exists or that He cares for you. But Heaven works in ways that seem to apply no matter what our spiritual mind-set happens to be.

Perhaps you’ve heard about my book *The Prayer of Jabez*. It shows how

a little-known prayer from three thousand years ago can still result in great blessing and influence for God in our time. Millions bought the book, prayed the prayer...and were astonished at what God began to do in their lives. One reason the message of that book resonated with so many, I believe, is that it made ministry (which simply means doing what God wants done in the world) accessible as a way of life.

Jabez lived in ancient Israel. The Bible says that he was “more honorable than his brothers,” but as far as I can tell, it wasn’t because of his superior spiritual status. Perhaps he was “more honorable” because he asked with all his heart for God to do for him and through him exactly what God already wanted to do.

And the Bible says, “God granted him what he requested.”¹

Through the prayer of Jabez, millions learned to ask God to expand their territory of influence for Him and then to put His hand of power on them. Not surprisingly, as soon as they took these brave steps, people started seeing miracle opportunities all over the place. And thousands wrote excitedly to me to report what was happening.

Here’s what I want you to see: *The Prayer of Jabez* showed ordinary people how to ask God to greatly expand their opportunities to serve Him. *You Were Born for This* shows ordinary people how to be intentional about and skilled at inviting the miraculous into the midst of that larger life.

Think of *You Were Born for This* as *Jabez* to the miracle power.

For all the Jimmys and Jabezses in the world, this book reveals in practical terms how God works supernaturally through His willing partners to make a difference in people’s lives. It’s the most rewarding and significant life imaginable!

Wouldn’t you know it, in answer to my own prayers during those years, God expanded my territory beyond anything I could have imagined.

He sent our family to Africa.

When good deeds aren't enough

In 2002 my wife, Darlene, and I experienced a clear call to move to Africa to tackle some of the most daunting challenges of our time. “Will you go?” God said to us. “Will you care?”

This was happening during the busiest months of my speaking and writing about Jabez. Why would God ask us to leave behind an exploding ministry based on a book He was so clearly blessing? We didn't understand it.

You might think that someone who has studied the character of God in graduate school and dedicated his life to serving Him wouldn't be surprised when God radically redirects his life. I will confess that until then I had enjoyed a lot of clarity about what God had called me to do. I saw myself as a Bible teacher, leader, and disciple maker. My publisher saw me as an author. And that was that.

But almost overnight we experienced a spiritual awakening to the needs of a continent. Poverty. Prejudice. Hunger. AIDS. Orphans. God seemed to be saying to our family, “My heart breaks over these things. I want your hearts to break over them too.”

Without knowing what it might mean, we said yes. Then, believing we had been called to a three- to five-year personal mission, we said good-bye

*Good deeds alone
will never be enough
to meet the desperate
needs of our time.*

to friends and family and moved to Johannesburg, South Africa.

What does this have to do with *You Were Born for This*? From the start we knew that trying to meet any one of those needs would be far too big a task for us. God would have to show up in extraordinary ways or nothing of significance would get done.

And He did. We started not by asking, “What can we do?” but by asking, “What does God want done?” We set some high-risk goals in the areas of greatest need. Our ministry plan expected—even depended on—God to

intervene. Finally we set about working with others, including charitable groups, African organizations, government agencies, churches, and thousands of First World volunteers, to meet faith-stretching goals. Of course not everything we tried succeeded. But we kept asking for miracles and taking risks of faith, and God *did* show up, as I'll share in the pages ahead.

By the time we returned to the States, our thinking had changed in two important ways.

First, we'd become convinced that good deeds alone will never be enough to meet the desperate needs of our time. This is true whether the needs are personal or global in scope. We simply need more of God. We desperately need miracles!

*You Were Born
for This is a bold
initiative to reclaim
the miraculous as a
normal way of life.*

Second, we had learned that it's often long-time Christians who resist miracles the most. Many have stopped expecting miracles, asking for them, or even knowing how to partner with God to invite them. In other words, they have abandoned the Everyday Miracle Territory and often measure success by how *little* they need God.

As you'd expect, the consequences of limiting what God does on earth to what we can do for Him are disastrous. Just look around. The most pressing personal and global needs go unmet while a generation asks, "Where is God? Doesn't He care? Does He even exist?"

But it doesn't have to be that way.

Miracles are for everyone

You Were Born for This is a bold initiative to reclaim the miraculous as a normal way of life. Through biblical insights, true stories, and practical how-tos, I'll show you what that new normal could look like for you.

In part 1 you'll see why everyone you encounter has an unmet need that

God strongly desires to meet, very possibly through you. You'll discover that the Everyday Miracle Territory is real—and you're standing in the middle of it.

We define a miracle as “an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.”² It's true that most of us will never be empowered by God to heal someone or walk on water. The Bible is clear that not everyone has been gifted to carry out such miracles. Yet the Bible is also clear that we are all invited to do God's work by God's power. That's why in this book we only focus on the personal miracles that are within the reach of all of us.

I'm audacious enough to call these miracles predictable. By that I mean that when we do God's work in God's way, He reveals Himself to be a miracle-working God. I mean that miracles will take place so regularly that their occurrence will seem predictable to you—not because of how or when they occur but because they *will* occur.

In part 2 you'll be introduced to four keys to a life of miracles. They will enable you as a delivery agent for God to

- make a very specific, urgent request;
- understand and accept His miracle agenda for you;
- know how to partner with an unseen power;
- take a promising but life-changing risk.

In part 3 you'll discover practical advice on how to deliver a miracle to someone in need. First you'll learn five universally identifiable signals that will guide you in your partnership with Heaven. Then you'll learn five steps for delivering a miracle. When you learn and apply these truths regularly, you can invite God to do a miracle through you for anyone at any time.

That's a startling statement, isn't it? But as you'll see, God is so intent on meeting people's deepest needs that He is always looking for volunteers who will become living links between Heaven and earth.

In part 4 you'll be introduced to three more keys that unlock what I call special delivery miracles. These miracles meet needs that matter to everyone:

finances, life dreams, and forgiveness. Each chapter is based on surprising insights from the Bible and is illustrated with stories you'll find both instructive and highly motivating.

You Were Born for This will change how you see the world and what you expect God can and will do through you to meet real needs. You will master a few simple but powerful tools and will come to say with confidence, "I want to partner with Heaven to deliver a miracle to someone in need today—and now I know how!"

If that's what you want, I invite you to turn the page.



The Tiny, Enormous Difference

*You were born to do God's work
by God's power*

*I*n the first chapter I described an exciting new life of miracles. And I promised that experiencing the supernatural on a regular basis is the “this” you were born for.

But if waking up to our miracle potential is so wonderful, and if this is what God wants for us, what keeps so many from actually living this way? Why do we continually fall into a rut of trying to help others on our own, of trying to avoid any situation where we would be forced to depend upon God for success?

The truth is, we can be in relationship with God and active in helping others for years without really understanding His ways or allowing Him to work through us in supernatural ways. At the heart of the problem, I believe,

is a small distinction with big implications. I'm talking about the difference between knowing about God's power and actually partnering with Him in delivering miracles.

An event in my life illustrates that tiny but enormous difference.

Some years ago I was invited to speak to eighty men at a retreat center. The evening of the event, I asked the person in charge, "What would you like me to do if God shows up tonight?"

He seemed startled. "What do you mean?"

I repeated my question. "If the Lord moves and does something unusual, what do you want me to do?"

He gave it some thought. "Well, it would be important for you to bring things to a close in thirty minutes," he said. "Like we agreed."

"All right," I said. "But if something else occurs that might be unexpected, I'm going to look at you. If you want me to end things, just grab your right ear, and I will close in prayer."

He didn't seem pleased with my backup plan. "I don't need to grab my ear, Dr. Wilkinson. You just close in thirty minutes."

I confess, at this point I imagined God shaking His head in disappointment. You see, I wasn't there only because I'd been invited. Before I'd agreed to come, I'd had a strong sense that I'd already been "sent." (More about that in chapter 4.) Then, as I had prayed about what to say, I'd sensed that Heaven might have something unusual in store.

When the time came, the roomful of men welcomed me warmly, and I launched into my message. No more than five minutes in, I received a divine nudge (more about that later too). In a way that was both unusual and impossible to ignore, my attention was directed toward a man sitting four rows back on the left side of the center aisle.

I decided to trust the nudge—in fact, to risk looking like a fool because of it. I stopped talking, walked down the aisle, and introduced myself. The

man's name was Owen. "I sense there is something unusual going on in your life," I told him. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

Alarm was written all over Owen's face. "No!" he exclaimed. "No, not at all. Really, I'm fine."

Now what to do? Nothing but apologize to Owen and get back up front. On the way to the podium, I thought, *Well, Lord, that was unusual.*

You should know, audiences I speak to aren't accustomed to speakers who stop in midsentence and march into the crowd with a point-blank, personal question. (I'm not accustomed to it either, for that matter.) Some men in the room were eying me now as if I might be dangerous.

Once I'd collected my thoughts, I began again. But almost immediately I felt another nudge from God. Same nudge, same man. This time I debated with Heaven, and my case was airtight. *I just did that, Lord, and nothing happened!*

But the nudge was clear. *Go again.*

Have you ever come to a point in your life where you've had to make a choice between everything visible, everything expected and sensible...and something invisible, something inaudible, something known only to you that you can't possibly defend *but that you know in your heart is true*? When God nudged me again, I had one of those moments. My sentences stumbled, then stopped. And I decided to take another risk of faith.

So I picked up a chair from the front, carried it down the aisle, and sat right next to Owen. "Sir, please don't be offended," I said calmly, "but you're not telling the truth."

You could have heard a pin drop.

Owen wore the same look of alarm, but when he finally found his voice, he said, "How on earth did you know?"

"I don't know, really," I said. "But God does, and He has something in mind for you tonight. I sense that something is deeply troubling you."

“The truth is, I’m quitting the ministry tonight,” Owen said soberly. “I called my wife this afternoon and told her my decision. Right after your session tonight, I’m done.”

We certainly had everyone’s attention.

A roomful of witnesses

“Would you mind sharing why you’re quitting?” I asked Owen.

Haltingly, Owen told his story. He’d been a successful businessman. But when he felt called by God to work with men, he’d given up his business and put heart and soul into his new ministry. Financially, nothing had gone as expected. “My wife and I have gone broke trying to keep this thing afloat,” he said. “We love what we do, but we have lost our savings and our retirement. I’ve remortgaged our house. My credit cards are maxed out. On top of all that, I’m sixteen thousand dollars in debt...”

Owen was struggling to talk now. “I’ve had enough,” he said quietly. “After tonight, I quit.”

Every man in the room could identify with Owen’s painful dilemma. If God wanted him to stay in the ministry, why were the circumstances so impossible for him and his family? I said as much to Owen, and I told him that my wife and I had experienced similar testing numerous times.

Then I said, “I have only one question. When you changed course and launched your ministry, was that a career move on your part, or would you say it was in response to a divine call?”

“God called us,” he said. “I have no doubt.”

“Okay. Would you say that God is now calling you out of the ministry? Is He asking you to leave?”

“No.”

“Are you sure you want to leave?”

Owen became agitated. “Well, I’m up to my ears in debt. I *have* to quit! How am I supposed to do this?”

“I understand. But has God asked you to leave?”

A long pause.

“No.”

As this little drama played out, the other men listened raptly. And I’d forgotten about the guy in charge who didn’t want to have to pull on his ear to get my attention.

“What are you going to do?” I asked Owen.

And then God’s Spirit moved into the room—a noticeable awareness that His presence was among us in peace and power. Many in the audience were struggling with their own emotions.

Owen’s eyes filled with tears. Then with great effort he said, “I shouldn’t quit unless He asks me to leave. I won’t quit.”

I wanted to test his resolve. “But what about the sixteen-thousand-dollar debt?”

“No, I won’t quit.” He had decided.

We shook hands on his decision, and when I asked some in the audience to gather around and pray for him, scores of men surrounded him. They poured out their hearts in prayer for Owen. Then we all listened while he prayed an emotional, humble prayer, recommitting himself to his calling.

Men were beginning to filter back to their seats when someone spoke up. “It’s not right!” It was the man in charge. “This man is sixteen thousand dollars in debt. My wife and I are going to give him a thousand dollars. What are you going to do?” He looked around the room. He looked at me. “What are *you* going to do? You’re the speaker.”

I didn’t say anything while we all contemplated his challenge. And then, without a word, men started to open their wallets. One by one they walked over to Owen with their gifts. I did too. In no time at all, Owen had sixteen thousand dollars.

Owen was speechless, awestruck by what God had done, and the rest

of us were grateful just to have been a part of it. What an unforgettable experience!

Standing beside him in the aisle, I said, “Do you recognize the order of things that just happened? What did you have to decide before God gave you the money?”

“Unless God calls me to, I’m not leaving.”

“When you made a decision of loyalty to God,” I said, “the powerful arm of God was outstretched from Heaven. Do you recognize who was behind this test?”

“God was. He was testing my loyalty,” said Owen.

“How did you do on the test?”

“I almost failed it.”

“Yes, but you didn’t,” I said. “Isn’t it interesting that God sent me here on the very night you were going to quit and gave me a supernatural nudge—twice—because He didn’t want you to fail the test? And He prompted all these men to meet your need!”

I never got back to my message that night. God clearly had something better in mind. The miracle for Owen was followed by one-on-one miracle breakthroughs for two other men who’d been brought to that room for a reason. But so had all of us. Our paths had been guided there, not for a program, not to hear someone speak, but to be witnesses together of God at work in powerful, personal, and supernatural ways.

I’ll admit the whole experience took longer than thirty minutes. But the man in charge never reached for his ear.

A small shift in how we think

How many times do you suppose you have been in a situation where God urgently wanted to do something supernatural—something unexplainable and bigger than you could imagine—but it didn’t happen because someone started tugging on his ear?

Maybe that someone was you.

I told the story of the men's retreat at some length because it illustrates the kinds of personal miracles God loves to do and *will* do when He has a willing and responsive delivery agent. The story also shows how a small shift in how we think about the Spirit's power can have enormous, lasting consequences. Consider how close I came to missing out on the miracle God did through me for Owen. How easy it would have been for me to explain away God's nudges and proceed with my talk according to plan. The result would have been a perfectly fine ministry event, but would God's glory and power have been so unforgettably on display? Would Owen's critical need have been met? Not likely.

The story shows how a small shift in how we think about the Spirit's power can have enormous consequences.

So, what made the difference?

Nothing special about me, I assure you. The difference had everything to do with what I know about God's miraculous power, who has access to it, and how it helps us accomplish His work.

As I've traveled the world, I've noticed that many of Christ's followers appear to know a lot about God's Spirit but few understand how practically to partner with Him to bring a personal miracle to another person. I've seen many who long for more of the Spirit and yet resist actively partnering with His power in their lives.

In this chapter I want to help you see some things you might have missed about God's power. I hope you'll see and experience what the men in the room with Owen did that night. The evening awakened them to the hope that ordinary men and women really can actively partner with God to accomplish the miraculous. And they went home determined to be more than witnesses of God at work. They wanted to be agents who know how to deliver His miracles to others.

I wrote this book to awaken that same hope and expectation in you.

We're never more fully alive and complete than when we experience God working through us and in spite of us in a way that changes someone's life right before our eyes. Nothing compares to the wonder of seeing God's goodness and glory break through—and knowing we played a part in it.

Let's begin with what Jesus said about the supernatural power of God.

God in motion

One of the last things Jesus did with His friends before He returned to Heaven was to hand out their new job descriptions. It made for a very short read:

Go into all the world for Me...and do the impossible.

You'll find the complete assignment in Matthew 28:18–20 and Acts 1:4–8, but have you ever wondered how the disciples reacted? I think they might have felt two opposite reactions at the same time. On the one hand, I think they wanted to say, “Please, Lord, no! We can't possibly. Look at our limitations. Look at our failures.”

And on the other hand, I think they couldn't wait to get started. They'd already learned a lot from the Master, and His mission for them was glorious beyond words. Why not get right to work?

How would you have reacted?

I want you to see that both of these responses are rooted in the same misunderstanding about how this partnership with Heaven actually works.

Which explains a further instruction Jesus gave His friends:

*Wait.*¹

But wait for what? Look at Jesus' explanation of how the impossible would become the norm in the near future:

*You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me...to the end of the earth.*²

The Greek word here for “power” is one that might seem familiar to you—*dynamis*. As you might guess from its English derivations (*dynamite* and *dynamic*, for example), *dynamis* means a certain kind of power. Not potential power, like still air or water, but power in motion. Power like a gale-force wind or Niagara Falls. *Dynamis* means power at work.

When Jesus told His followers to wait for Heaven’s *dynamis*, the message was clear: What I’m sending you to do you cannot do in your own power. You can only do it as My power moves through you.

So wait for it.

The disciples got the message. They waited. And when the Spirit came in power, the world changed. If you’ve read the stories of the early church in Acts, you know what I mean. Now all believers had the Spirit all the time, not just dwelling in them for renewal and comfort, but working through them to accomplish Heaven’s desires for people in need.

What happened next was miraculous.

Imagine the stories told around dinner tables at night.

“Philip, when you followed God’s nudge into the desert and that VIP got saved—I’ll never forget that!”

“Paul, when you stood up in the town square to talk about Christ and people were throwing rocks, but some people listened and many believed—I’ll never forget that!”

“Rhoda, when you shouted, ‘Peter is at the door!’ even though we were sure he was in prison—I’ll never forget that!”

God’s power—the *dynamis* of the Spirit—was at work through them to accomplish what they could never have done on their own.

It’s easy to read the accounts of the early church and assume that those

were special people living in special days. Some of them had walked with Jesus, after all. Some were apostles. Perhaps that's why many today think they can't expect to partner with the supernatural in similar ways.

But is that assumption true? Listen to one apostle's frank remarks about how much difference being "special" made:

I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.... I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.³

Weakness, fear, and much trembling? Clearly Paul realized he couldn't achieve ministry success merely by his own effort or ability. But Paul had another stunning insight. He saw that his weakness actually made room—*created a miracle opportunity*—for God to demonstrate His supernatural power.

Let me pull the threads together.

Jesus commissioned every one of His followers—from the original disciples down to you and me—to do for others what we cannot do alone. It is too much for us. But Heaven has released God's dynamis to work in us and through us. Whatever our human limitations, when we know how to partner with Heaven, we will see that *we were born to accomplish by supernatural means what God wants done.*

“Unlock that door, please!”

My first clue that my friend John was a great candidate for miracle missions came when I heard that he was taking the message of *The Prayer of Jabez* to

men in jail. In particular, he wanted to teach inmates to be intentional about asking God to supernaturally expand their territory for Him. Only a man who understands the astonishing power of God would attempt such a venture behind bars.

John, a business owner with a big heart, has been visiting men at a local jail for years. “I consider it the most important thing I do all week,” he wrote to me. John felt that with God’s help he’d been able to do a lot of good for these men. But he wanted to do more. He wanted to do ministry with miracle impact.

What would happen, John wondered, if he taught inmates to be purposeful about inviting God to intervene through them in supernatural ways?

In *The Prayer of Jabez*, I suggest a ministry question: “How may I help you?” Many times in my life this question has led to a miracle opportunity.

“I had no idea how God would use this idea,” John wrote. “But the men began to practice asking, ‘How may I help you?’ You can imagine the jokes flying around. ‘Thank you. Would you just unlock that door, please?’”

For reasons John couldn’t explain, his class grew from twelve to twenty-seven men. Even behind bars—maybe *because* they were behind bars—the men seemed motivated by the notion that God’s power was available to them too. They began taking risks to invite God to work in supernatural ways. Hardened convicts accepted Christ as Savior. A man who’d had continual run-ins with inmates of another ethnicity started to slip encouraging notes under their doors at night.

One day John asked Terrence, a newcomer to the class, “How may I help you?”

Terrence barely hesitated. “I have not seen my child since she was three,” he said. “And the child’s mother will not communicate with me. She destroys my letters, and I’m afraid my daughter will never know me. The

greatest thing for me would be to see my daughter. Can you help with that?”

As he finished, Terrence’s eyes filled with tears. And John’s heart sank—he didn’t have a clue how to help. After talking through several ideas, they both decided that they didn’t really have any options.

“We decided the only one who could help was God,” recalls John. “So we prayed together. I asked God to intervene for Terrence and to bring his child for a visit.”

Terrence agreed to write a letter once more asking the child’s mother for a visit. Then they waited to see what God would do.

The following Sunday, when John went back, Terrence hadn’t heard a thing—just like all the times before. But what they didn’t know then was that his letter had been delivered and the mother and child were already making plans for a visit.

In fact, the very next Sunday, Terrence saw his daughter for the first time in years. He was able to reestablish a relationship with his family, and since that day he has been able to see his daughter regularly.

John’s bold experiment in partnering with God for miracles has continued to bring transformation. “Two men received money they weren’t expecting. Two other men are organizing full-time ministries for when they are released,” says John. “And another guy has made plans to work at a youth camp as part of his rehabilitation.”

John has changed too. “I’ve learned that helping other people to experience personal miracles is the most wonderful encouragement in the world.”

What is a personal miracle?

Can you see what separates John’s ministry experience from many other kinds of good works for God? It is the same thing, I believe, that set my ministry at the men’s retreat apart from a typical, predictably run service.

- We intentionally partnered with God’s Spirit—depending on Him for success—in ways that would showcase His character and glory when He met the needs supernaturally.
- We stepped out in faith to do God’s work in a context where failure was certain unless He acted.
- We took risks based on our belief that God *wanted* to show up and *would* show up in miraculous ways. And He did.

I use the term *personal miracle* to describe what happens when you help another person by intentionally relying on God’s power to meet that individual’s need. Why do I call these personal miracles?

First, because the kinds of miracles I’m talking about usually are completed in a person’s heart. Even if the miracle itself is evidenced by something tangible—Owen receives sixteen thousand dollars from strangers, Terrence receives a visit from his long-lost daughter—God clearly does a work inside the person’s heart as well.

Second, I call these personal miracles because God’s purpose for doing any miracle is always the same: to meet a person’s need.

And finally, the word *personal* aptly describes the aspect of God’s character that is revealed by these kinds of miracles. When God takes the time to intervene in our day to meet a need in a special way that’s meaningful to us in particular, we recognize how intimately God knows us and loves us.

A personal miracle is also what the Bible refers to as a good work. But not all good works are miracles. Let me explain.

Most Christians know the importance of expressing their faith through deliberate acts of service to others. Everyone’s good works matter a great deal to God. As Paul reminds us, we have been “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”⁴

But what I want you to see is that good works by your own effort are

good and necessary but many times are not enough. And I'm not speaking about our inability to work our way into a saving relationship with God. I mean that among the good works you and I were born to do lies a wide range of accomplishments that are extremely important to God, that we have been commissioned to do for Christ—and *that we absolutely cannot do without His supernatural power working through us.*

Think of the relationship between good works and personal miracles in your life in terms of two equations:

Your good works for God = ministry

Your ministry + God's supernatural power = miracles

For a personal miracle, you must choose to proactively partner with God's supernatural power to do what no good work of your own could. All Christ's followers have been invited into this amazing partnership with Heaven. It's a joint but unequal venture between weak humans and an extraordinary God to pursue His agenda in His way in His time by His power and for His glory.

This amazing partnership changes what we do, how we think, and what we know is possible. We end up deciding it's perfectly natural to expect miracles behind prison bars. We stop in midsentence because God shows us there's a man four rows back on the aisle who feels forgotten by Him.

We're completely prepared to go to the ends of the earth.

Open your eyes

I've noticed that when people start to live every day in active cooperation with the Spirit, something astonishing happens: they immediately recognize the life God intended for them. They see Jesus' promise of dynamis being ful-

filled right in front of them, and the difference is so enormous that they wonder how they could have missed it for so long.

But that's the problem. You can be a Christian for years and miss it completely!

I think that explains Paul's unusual concern about this very issue. He described it as an enlightenment problem. You need enlightenment

when a fundamental and life-changing truth is just inches away but you can't see it. And if you don't see it, you can't live it. Paul understood that a person can be a true believer in Christ and yet not understand at all how we are to actually accomplish the business of Heaven.

For the believers at Ephesus, he prayed,

that...the eyes of your understanding being enlightened ["enlightened"—there's the key word]; *that you may know* [have a clear mental perception of] *what is...the exceeding greatness of His power* ["power"—that's *dynamis*] *toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power* [*dynamis* again] *which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.*⁵

This is my prayer for you too: that the eyes of your understanding will be enlightened to your miracle potential. If you don't see the truth about God's power, you will come to a sensible but costly conclusion: "I was not born to do God's work by God's power."

Will you see and embrace the truth instead?

It's the difference between life as most people know it and your life as God wants it to be.

It's the difference between a commendable, even God-blessed human endeavor and supernaturally infused life.

*That's the problem.
You can be a Christian
for years and
miss it completely!*

It's the difference between your feeling good about what you've done to help others and others feeling astonished by what God has done for them through you.

This book is all about that tiny, enormous difference.