

JESUS
TALKED TO ME
TODAY

True Stories of Children's Encounters
with Angels, Miracles, and God

COMPILED BY
JAMES STUART BELL



BETHANYHOUSE

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Minneapolis, Minnesota

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Published by Bethany House Publishers
11400 Hampshire Avenue South
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2016930776

ISBN: 978-0-7642-1722-7

“An Unexpected Answer” by Ingrid Shelton adapted with permission from “Not a Teacher!” in Therese Marszalek and Sheri Stone, *Miracles Still Happen* (Tulsa: Harrison House, 2003).

“The Pink Vanity Miracle” by Tom Cornelius, as told to Joyce Williams adapted with permission from “A Little Girl’s Christmas Prayer” in Joyce Williams, *God Sightings* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2009).

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The following are true stories, but some details and names have been changed in order to protect privacy.

Editorial services provided by Jeanette Gardner Littleton Publication Services.

Cover design by LOOK Design Studio
Cover photo: Super Stock; Cultura Limited

16 17 18 19 20 21 22 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



James Stuart Bell, *Jesus Talked to Me Today*
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To my daughter Brigit Bell Ritchie
in remembrance of the Jesus stories
we read together so many years ago



All grown-ups were once children—although few of them remember it.

—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

Thanks go to David Horton, Andy McGuire,
Ellen Chalifoux, Carissa Maki, Hannah Carpenter,
and Stacey Theesfield—you are all so appreciated.

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Introduction

Jesus in the Gospels has important things to say about children. He implies that they are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, their angels continually see the face of God, and it would be better for an adult to drown in the sea than to harm a child.

Though children are born with a sin nature and can be self-centered, it seems that there is also an original innocence they have that displays its own beauty and charm and reminds us indirectly of what we have lost over the years as adults. In effect, Jesus is saying that we should emulate the simple faith, trust, and love that children naturally possess.

As parents and grandparents, we write down their cute sayings and revel in delight at recent videos showing the precious antics of these little ones as they grow bigger. As they become older children, and even teenagers, we marvel at their insights and precocious points of view. There is the temptation to shelter them to avoid the world's moral pollution, and yet we know

that they have to face the world as it is and hopefully transform it through their relationship with Jesus.

What may be lost to us, however, in the midst of the birthday parties, soccer matches, and dramatic skits, is the still, small voice of Jesus speaking to us in profound and miraculous ways. Just as He told His disciples not to hinder the children from coming to Him, so we should pay closer attention to our children when they do go to Jesus, seeking His reality in their lives.

Children have a natural affinity for the supernatural. They willingly accept the reality of Jesus because their loving, caring parents tell them He is real, and they can often see Him mirrored in their parents' lives. At times we do not realize the spiritual depth of "Jesus encounters" that our children experience after having accepted Him in literal childlike faith.

And that is what this book is about—experiences of God's supernatural realm from the innocent eyes and ears and hearts of children and teenagers. Enjoy these stories "from the mouths of babes" and be open to hear from the Lord in fresh, sweet, and pristine ways as He enables you, too, to experience Jesus with a more childlike faith than you ever have before.

James Stuart Bell

Like Lava-Hot Electricity

Susan M. Watkins

“You’ll need to contact a funeral home.”

The words reverberated down the hall, reaching my young ears, then melted around me like the peculiar objects in a Salvador Dali painting.

He’s talking about me, I realized.

I stared at the crushed paper beneath my body that failed to cover the surface of the examination table I was lying on.

I heard the words clearly, though they were surreal. They assaulted my ears and shattered my dreams as they hung in the air of the doctor’s office.

I was only fifteen years old.

A couple of years earlier, I’d been emotionally drained and disillusioned by my parents’ abrupt separation and divorce. The deep wound drove me to find a safety valve to relieve the pressure, and I left home at age fourteen.

A bustling metropolis became my new family. Being hungry was the hardest experience, followed by suffering the brutal cold.

Despite my aimless wanderings, God's steady gaze was fastened securely on me. I was divinely protected. Like Moses backed up against the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army straight ahead, I was positioned for a miracle.

Eventually my circumstances pressed me to evaluate my chosen path, which had turned into a trail of devastation. I longed for simpler times.

I reached the end of myself one year later. Like the prodigal of the Bible, I came to my senses. I returned home, where I was welcomed with feasts of love and sacrifice.

My family members had, one by one, given their lives to our heavenly Father, and shortly after I returned home, I turned to Him, too.

About that same time, I began to feel weary. Considering the lifestyle I'd just left, I assumed I needed to replenish my strength. Yet despite excessive sleep, I remained tired.

Mom took me to our family doctor for a checkup. Sitting in the waiting room, I watched the exotic fish in the elaborate aquarium.

When my doctor examined me, his brow furrowed and his kind expression vanished. Every touch caused excruciating pain and eventual bruising. My mother fidgeted as he drew vials of blood from my emaciated arms.

Everything was double- and triple-checked while he muttered, rapidly taking notes. The nurses became stoic and teary-eyed. I reasoned I must have a bad infection of some kind. I had always been prone to illness and had spent my life battling anemia.

The tension in the room was so thick that Mom nearly broke the handle on her purse. I tried to remain calm. Mom tried to

reassure me that nothing was seriously wrong, but this time even she couldn't believe her own words.

After a flurry of activity, Mom rose and went into the doctor's private office, where the walls were lined with Norman Rockwell depictions of physicians holding stethoscopes against young patients. I was left alone in the exam room and strained to hear the distant conversation.

Their voices were grim. I heard my mother weep softly over the muffled words. Then, despite the hushed tones, I heard my death sentence.

He said he'd seen it before, but never this advanced. I was beyond treatment. Nothing could be done for stage 4 cancer, and no therapeutic intervention was possible. His singular advice was to contact an undertaker.

The disease was so aggressive I wasn't even given a life expectancy. I could succumb at any moment.

He called the hospital to arrange tests that would document his diagnosis. A bone marrow specimen wasn't necessary—it would be too painful and not warranted at this final stage.

My mother asked a question too quietly for me to hear. But since the doctor's voice was louder, I could still hear him.

"She won't need a bed. She won't be here that long. We'll give it to someone we can help."

On the short walk home, Mom fought tears and I fought God. I was thin and close to death, but fully prepared to take on the Almighty.

I hadn't yet learned the vital truth about God's love: He is *willing* to be misunderstood by His children during the unknown situations of life.

As brand-new believers, we had no reference point for God's view on terminal disease. My vocabulary was reduced to two words of importance: *God* and *leukemia*.

Within days, I was at the hospital for tests. Barium milkshakes showed internal deterioration. With all my blood nearly drained for testing and my body practically glowing from X-rays, I was virtually sent home to die.

At home, I immediately burst into the Lord's court—but not with thanksgiving in my mouth. I was only fifteen and had dreams and goals.

I swam in my bed of tears, exhausted, and angrily asked, “Is *this* what Christianity is all about? You meet Christ and then you *die*?”

He was quiet in response to my questions. Deafeningly quiet.

My body deteriorated quickly, but I stubbornly lingered. I was on strike. Against death. There had to be an alternative ending.

I could no longer eat, and another month miraculously passed.

Despite my not having any treatment, my long blond hair began falling out. I collected it and threw it away in my bedside trash can, placed there for that purpose. I still frequented the bathroom, because although I could no longer eat, I began to pass internal tissues.

My pain was beyond description, and I grew weaker by the hour. Now with yellow skin, I had no color in my mouth or beneath my eyelids. It appeared that I wasn't going to receive a midnight reprieve.

Confined to bed and feeling terribly alone, I began to smell death on my hands. I've smelled it since then on those near death. It always smells the same. When I tried to scrub the smell away, my yellow hands bled.

My cat also smelled the death spell and refused to come near me. She began her lament and caterwauled nightly at my door.

Mom had had enough, and grabbed the hem of God's garment. She wouldn't take no for an answer and decided I would not die before she did. She asked everyone she could how to pray for a healing. Since I was barely alive, *she* became my voice. On earth *and* in heaven.

I was moved to the sofa to be near family since I was no longer able to get up. I remained there wasting away. It was tortuous.

I still had enough focus to pray and fight for my dwindling life. I couldn't understand God's indifference, but made peace with His decision even if it was contrary to mine.

Still longing for health, I placed my failing life into His unseen hands. One last time I prayed out loud, "*Please, Lord, heal me and spare my life. Oh, please God . . . somehow . . . catch me!*"

The pain defied definition but reminded me that I was still alive. Death would end my pain, but it would likewise steal my dreams. I couldn't speak anymore because days earlier I'd lost the ability to take fluids.

I found myself suspended between hope and death, straddling two worlds and incapable of changing the outcome. It is true that dying is hard. Death is the easy part.

With my system rapidly shutting down, I could barely communicate with loved ones. Their questions seemed to take years to reach me, enveloped in multiple echoes. I answered by blinking my eyes. My weight had dropped to eighty pounds, and I was a colorless skeleton. A corpse with a heartbeat.

I, too, grasped Christ's hem and resolved He would either heal me or be forced to drag me around, as I was *not* letting go!

I drifted in and out of consciousness before my heart finally beat its last. I succumbed.

As my spirit separated from my body, I heard my mother's voice sobbing through layers of distant echoes. She'd returned from a Bible study where worshipers explained how to pray for me.

Though I was elated to be free from pain and disease, I paused, realizing I was being given a choice.

I decided to turn back, unable to bear my precious mother's brokenness.

Slowly my spirit returned into a pain-filled body.

I opened my eyes and saw my elated mother, whose words and lips were not synchronized. I strained to comprehend what she was saying.

She explained what she'd learned and announced that we would pray for my healing. We did, but nothing happened.

Perplexed, we tried again. Nothing.

Mom regrouped and prayed again. I just stared at her—it was all I could manage. Again, nothing.

Suddenly she asked, “Do *you* believe the Lord can heal you?”

I heard myself saying it but couldn't release the words. Finally, with a weak, parched voice, I managed to verbalize, “I belie—.”

It was as far as I got, when suddenly the heavens bowed low, the Lord came down, and I felt His enormous right hand gently cradle the top of my head.

No words can describe the power that was released into my being. A type of almost lava-hot electricity that neither burned nor injured entered my body from His hand.

My head was touched first to record these events. The thick, hot power traveled slowly. Slower than molasses in winter, but steady and consistent. Nothing could deter its mission.

Every part this power touched was instantaneously healed. When it reached my shoulders, it branched out in synchronized

precision and traveled down both arms at the exact same rate of speed. Upon exiting my fingertips, the power at my collarbone resumed its downward journey.

I became immediately aware of my physical body. Knowing exactly how things looked internally, I could have drawn detailed illustrations. For as God's gentle power permeated my body, I became acutely aware of my own intricate design.

His healing balm continued. I longed for it to reach my stomach—my area of greatest pain—for everywhere God's power touched, I was dramatically healed. Conversely, where it had yet to reach, I was still dying.

Finally reaching my abdomen, it divided and moved in unison down both legs. I lay there unable to move under God's power and felt as if I were actually luminous.

I finally spoke, declaring, "I'm healed!"

We were frozen in that divine moment, hushed and awestruck by God's holy presence.

Exiting that agonizing journey taught me deep lessons about God's unwavering faithfulness and unfathomable love.

At the tender age of fifteen, I was lavishly chosen to experience firsthand a demonstration of the Lord's overwhelming involvement in His children's lives and His inextinguishable desire to release His healing power. I was privileged to share in the sufferings of Christ and to declare the pristine nature of our Good Shepherd—who still leaves the ninety-nine to rescue the one caught beneath life's fence.

With His single touch, my terminal disease recoiled. He alone stilled my storm with one command. It will take all of eternity to thank Him.