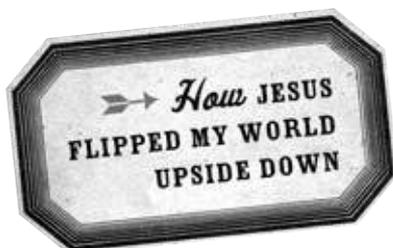


SIGNS, WONDERS

and a

BAPTIST PREACHER



CHAD NORRIS



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To Wendy

I remember when we were dating and we agreed that the path He had for us would not be normal. It will be fun to continue to see what He does with us. From that day in the counselor's office when Jesus flipped me upside down until now, you have never questioned whether or not this pursuit is real. The greatest blessing He has given me is you. Thank you for being a rock when I did not know which way was up. You bring joy to our family. Our three little people think you are the most incredible woman in the world. I do, too.

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Foreword

Chad's grades from the University of Georgia made it impossible for him to study theology in a seminary. He wasn't unhappy about this because he never wanted to attend seminary. All he wanted to do was lead young people to Christ. And he was already successfully preaching Christ to crowds of young people around the country. So it made no sense to Chad when he heard God tell him to apply for seminary. It made perfect sense to Chad when he received a letter of rejection from the seminary two weeks after he had applied.

Then God pulled one of those impossible strings, and Chad was in seminary with his new wife, Miss University of Georgia. Along with Wendy, Chad also took his bottles of Klonopin and Zoloft to seminary as well. The supernatural peace that transcends human understanding, which we Christians claim as our unique possession, had eluded Chad since he was five. He lived in a nightmare world of panic attacks and depression. The young man who preached peace to the young had so little of it himself.

Chad did not distinguish himself academically at the seminary, nor did the seminary heal Chad of the panic attacks and depression. But some special professors took a special interest in him, and that is probably why God sent him to seminary.

After Chad graduated, he went right back to telling young people about Christ. He never thought in a million years that he would write a book. Then God healed him of the panic and depression. Then God used him to heal others. Then Chad had a new story to tell.

Then God pulled another one of those impossible strings. And you are now holding Chad's first book in your hands. I say "first book" because I think the One writing Chad's story has a few more impossible twists and turns for the young man.

Chad is still learning how to tell his story, but he is a quick learner. He speaks in the vernacular that endears him to young audiences. He is a little too repetitive for my literary tastes, but he is not teaching creative writing. He is teaching about the creative power of God. Another defect of the book is that Chad can't completely conceal his anger over the bruising he has received at the hands of Christians who don't believe that God heals as much or as often as Chad claims. I know about that anger. I am not too worried about it because I know the power that heals it.

Lastly, this is not a theological book. It is a story. Chad knows that a theologian would slaughter him in a debate. But he's not debating. He is simply telling his story. It is a story of redemption and grace and healing and love. It is the story of a young man experiencing the Jesus of the New Testament. And a young man with an experience of Jesus will never be at the mercy of a theologian with an argument.

A man who could not read once won a debate with a group of erudite theologians when he told them, “One thing I do know. Once I was blind, but now I see.”

I love theologians. I used to be one. Still, I would rather have Chad pray for me than any doctor of theology that I know.

Jack Deere, teaching pastor, Wellspring Church,
Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; bestselling author,
Surprised by the Power of the Spirit

Acknowledgments

Writing this book has been interesting to say the least. As I have fleshed out the story of my life, I have even found myself thinking, *I'm still processing how odd life can be when God does something out of my normal way of looking at things.* I simply want to say that the thoughts that I share in this work are my own. Everything that I have written is from my own experience in following Jesus. These thoughts in no way reflect the ideas or theology of the organizations that I have worked with or people I have done life with. I gave my life to Jesus Christ when I was twelve years old, and this book is an honest reflection of what He has shown me in my pursuit of Him.

I want to thank Jesus for helping me at my worst moment. I love You. My life is Yours.

Thank you to Wendy. You are the strongest person I know.

Thank you to Sam, Ruthie and Jack. You three are not just my children—you are my friends.

Thank you to Rich Butler. You are an incredible leader. Thank you for letting me be “me.” Your authentic passion

for Jesus Christ is refreshing. I have never been around a leader hungrier for His presence than you. I cannot wait to see what the Father continues to do with City Church.

Thank you to Ben Daniel. I will never forget the early stages of conversations about the Kingdom. I hope we never lose our childlike wonder. You show us all what it means to invest in others. Your influence in my life is priceless.

Thank you to the entire City Church Staff for listening to me ramble on and on about the manuscript. City Church is my extended family. Coming to work is fun. Working with family is a gift. What we have is special.

To City Church. I am grateful to Abba that I get to be a part of this church family. I have always been drawn to real people. When I think about City Church, I think about the words *authentic* and *hungry*. I pray we stay hungry until He returns.

Thank you to Dave Rhodes. Beeson and Wayfarer stretched me beyond what I thought I was capable of. We took a chance at an idea and had fun doing it. 3DM is lucky to have you. Change the world.

To the entire Wayfarer team: I love you. I meet people on a monthly basis in Greenville who talk about the impact of Engage. We grew, we learned, and we laughed.

Thank you to Robert Neely for walking beside me and helping this book come to life. Without you, I would have never been able to write this. You are great at what you do, and you are a true brother. Your integrity and humility is something I rarely see. You make me want to love Jesus more.

Thank you to Mark and Amanda Combs. Without you this book would never have gotten off the ground. Who knew

that a healed shoulder would lead to this? You two are contagiously authentic. Wendy and I love your family.

To Chad Johnson. In every season I have gone through the last twenty years, you have been there to help shape my “story.” You have never judged me. You listen better than anyone I know. Your impact on my life comes through these pages. I have always felt safe with you as I flesh out all of these different Kingdom thoughts. You, Angie and the boys are family.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to read so many rough drafts of this work. I truly am grateful for your work and your friendship.

Thank you, Mom and Dad. I can still remember sitting around our table in Shoresbrook when I asked so many questions about what I wrote about in this book. I will never be able to repay you two for the investment you made in me. I love you both.

Gabe Norris, I love you more than I can express. Calvin told us at Beeson that the true definition of a leader is this: “Simply turn around. If no one is following you, you are not a leader. If people are standing in line to follow, then you know you are a leader.” I have never seen someone who has more people willing to follow him than you. Thank you for helping me think through this book. Thank you for listening. Thank you for believing in me. I cannot imagine two brothers on the earth closer than we are.

Bumpsie, you are the best sister I could ever have asked for. I wrote so much about Mama Jane in this book, and I can see her legacy coming through you. Thank you for your fierce loyalty to our family. I love you.

Thank you, Justin, for convincing me that I could write this book. Thank you for believing in me. I love you.

Acknowledgments

To our Men's Group. Who knew that a bunch of holy misfits engaging in real conversations on the Kingdom would lead me to this? I love all of you. I am a better person as a result of our times together.

Thank you to Rich Hodge. Dustin said it best: "You are Peter Pan and we are the lost boys." I have had some neat people pour into my life, but none of them can match what Jesus has done with me through your influence. No way I would have ever written this book without knowing you.

Thank you to Gary Hypolitte. Your hunger for God is intoxicating. I love you deeply. When all of this is over, I will sit back and relish the fact that I got to know you. Your walk with Jesus is inspiring. My time with you in Haiti has changed my life.

Thank you, Mama Jane and Papa. I miss you both. I will see you both soon.

Thank you to Jack Deere. When I was in seminary, you were a hero to me. You are a pioneer. Thank you for opening my eyes to a bigger view of God. It is humbling that you are writing the foreword to my book. Thank you for your honest critique.

Lastly, thank You, Father. When You opened my eyes to how kind You are, I could not believe it. I love You. My life is Yours.

Introduction

Another Haiti trip was in the books. Our plane lifted off the ground at Port Au Prince for the return flight home, and I could already taste the cheeseburger I would order as soon as we landed in Miami. I had two things on my mind: Taking a hot shower, and savoring that cheeseburger. I looked around the plane and saw that many of our team members were journaling about their time in Haiti. I decided I was too tired so I leaned my head back in order to sleep, and that is when I knew things were about to change.

I want you to write a book, Chad, is all I heard. I heard it in that place where you cannot talk yourself out of it. I said softly to God, “I don’t want to write a book because I know what You want me to write about. I don’t want to end up on one of those web pages that will call me a crazy person and a heretic.” I quickly put on headphones and started listening to music.

Two weeks later, I was sitting on a couch in our church office and I said, “Fine, I’ll do it, Lord.”

Before we even get started with this book, there are a few things I want to get out of the way: I do not think I have

God all figured out; I would get slaughtered in a biblical debate with scholars; I do not seek sensational things about the Kingdom; I am a laid-back guy who tends to drive very slowly in my minivan with 289,000 miles on it; I am more comfortable around real people with real problems than I am in religious circles; and the biggest desire of my life is to build great friendship with God.

I never thought in a million years I would write a book like this. After all, let's be honest—signs and wonders are strange and even weird. And I never wanted to be known as weird. But in my journey of getting to know God better, some weird things started happening—for example, praying for someone and watching him or her be dramatically healed right in front of my eyes. That is bizarre. It may not be bizarre for you, but for me it has been.

Not long ago, I was sitting beside a swimming pool in Daniel Island, South Carolina, in a casual conversation with one of my best friends. The last thing on my mind was praying for someone's hurting shoulder. To be honest, it was nice to unplug and just soak up some rays while we contemplated the upcoming football season. Another man walked past us and my friend said, "That guy right there is named Mark. He played college football at Wofford, and he knows a good friend of yours."

I walked up to Mark, introduced myself and told him that I grew up minutes away from Wofford College. We swapped stories, and I asked him casually, "Is your shoulder bothering you?"

He looked at me for a few seconds and smiled. "Chad, I'm in physical therapy for my shoulder right now. How did you know my shoulder is hurting?"

I said, “I’ve been asking myself that question a lot. The quick answer is ‘God showed me.’ The long answer is ‘I don’t know how all of this really works.’ I just know that I have to pray for you.” Then in the midst of a lot of people swimming and relaxing in the sun, I prayed for my new friend and God healed him. Nobody knew we were praying. I did not call attention to the situation. I prayed a quick prayer and Mark said, “It feels better.” He never went back to physical therapy, and we have been engaged in conversations about the Kingdom ever since.

As a result of this random encounter, Mark ended up leading a Men’s Hike at the church I serve. From that hike, many men’s lives have been changed for the better. That night I lay in bed and told God, “Thank You for reminding me of how real You are.”

In this book, I hope to help you experience this bizarre God just as I have. It all started for me when I really read the Bible. Have you ever been transported? I have not. Acts talks about this. I have never seen anyone raised from the dead either (not yet, that is).

Once I started reading the Bible and following what I found there, I began to go deeper and deeper into the Kingdom of God. So for me, the days of proclamation without demonstration are over. I have seen too much. I have heard too much.

When you are wrecked by Jesus’ wild passion and love for you and the way in which He wants His Kingdom presented, you tend to care more about what He thinks than what other people think. At least that has been the case for me. Now, please refrain from picturing me as a vigilante. This book is not my attempt to stir the pots of religious thought

or to put myself on an island. (That may happen, but it is not my goal.)

Instead, I am just agreeing with Peter and John. They said in Acts 4:20 that they could not stop talking about what they had seen and heard. The same is true for me.

Recently in our church, at a service called Hosting His Presence, I prayed for a young man whom I did not know. I said, “Hey, my name is Chad.”

The young man said, “My name is Ben. Do you mind listening to the Lord and praying over me?”

Just as we train our people to do, I internally asked the Holy Spirit to calm my mind, and I listened for God to speak to me. I then began to tell Ben what I was hearing. I said, “Ben, you don’t need to be skeptical of things like this. The Lord really loves you. I actually see your life taking a dramatic turn very soon. God has something up His sleeve for you. You are incredibly gifted and are called by Him. Brace yourself for change.”

Ben replied, “Actually, I am going for a while to Redding, California, to Bethel Church for a visit.”

I shook my head. “You won’t be moving back here. This trip is a setup for you. God has something planned for you there.”

I learned later that Ben did move to Redding and was asked to join the team at Jesus Culture. He now serves on their creative team.

A young man standing beside Ben that night was named Seth. I turned to Seth and said, “I see you sitting on a deck in London reading C. S. Lewis.”

Seth smiled and said, “Bro, I just returned from London, and I am getting ready to head back there. I love reading C. S. Lewis.” What did God show all three of us that night?

Well, that He is closer than we think, that He is more real than we think, and that what was available for superstars like Peter, James and John is also a reality for normal people like me and you.

Now, when I say this, many people have a quick response: “Be careful, buddy. Don’t go down some irresponsible rabbit trail here.” Some people cannot even let me finish telling a story about a healing before they jump in and protest it passionately. I get that. I really do. That is why I am going to tell you my whole story—not just the signs and wonders part.

My own story is one of depression and panic attacks. I have been to the darkest corner of the dark night of the soul. I do not have all of the answers, and I have had enough disappointment with God to last me a long time. You will read about that in this book. But through it all, what I have seen and heard has made me wonder why in the world we do not at least see some of the same powerful, miraculous, unexplainable things that our Master saw.

Now some of these same folks who protest the evidence of miracles taking place today get quite passionate about the importance of feeding the poor. They welcome the idea of being completely sold out to Jesus if it involves finances or caring for widows and orphans. Of course, those things find their roots in the biblical text.

But I feel as though we need to notice some other things in the Gospel message as well. I suspect that the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are waiting to see if anyone on earth wants to do what Peter, Stephen, Paul and Philip did. I remember years ago when it dawned on me, “Wait a minute, these people were just normal people. I’m a person just like

them.” That perhaps is the most elementary thought I have ever had, yet it really got me yearning to dig a little deeper.

And let’s move past labels. I doubt, for instance, that Paul went around saying he was *charismatic*. Maybe what I have been calling “extreme” the New Testament calls “ordinary.” Take the story of Eutychus. Eutychus fell asleep during Paul’s sermon, fell headlong out of a window and died. Paul must have been an incredibly boring preacher, or else so ridiculously long-winded that he preached until it was very late. Nevertheless, Paul did not launch into a sermon about the glory God was getting from this tragedy. He walked downstairs, raised Eutychus from the dead and went back to preaching. That is truly strange. I would have a hard time believing it myself if it were not in that beautiful book called Acts.

I have been a Baptist all of my life, and I am noticing something interesting happening in America. The supernatural has moved away from charismatic-only conversations. In my city, a few traditional Methodist and Presbyterian churches have healing services once a week. Stories of the impossible are starting to rise from unlikely places. By the time my children are raising their own children, I have a sneaking suspicion that the Church will look a lot more like it did when the King was here doing the works of His Father.

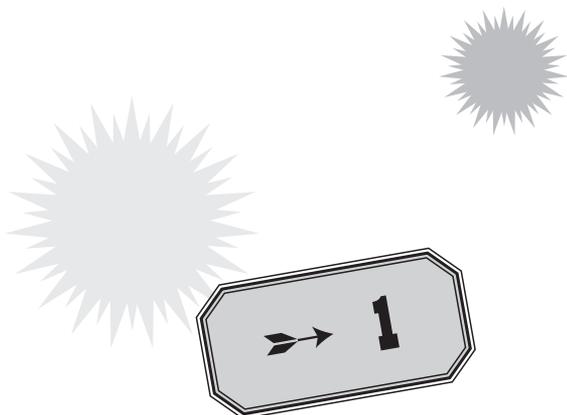
So my point in this book is this: I simply want to explore whether or not it is possible to operate on this planet in the way that Jesus commanded His disciples to operate. It is time to put our old paradigms down for a while. Actions we consider abnormal are really quite normal to the One who spoke the world out of nothing. I want my normal to match Jesus’ normal.

Jesus has stretched me more than anyone I have ever known. You would think that the closer you get to someone the simpler things would become. That has not been my experience. As a matter of fact, He leaves me scratching my head a lot. His invitation to follow Him brings with it a very high level of challenge.

I am not sure where this story ends. At this point in my life, I do not really care. God told Abram to pick up his family and head out. Abram did not know where he was going, but he knew that he could not stay where he was. All people of faith can relate to that. I know I can. I used to be obsessed with where this journey will take me, but not anymore. I used to be paranoid about what others think of the things that the Father is doing through me. Not anymore. Life is too short to worry about things like that.

So with that said, here is my story. This is the best way I can tell you what I have seen and heard. I sincerely pray that you will find hope for your own situation as you take a look at my own. For me, I count it as a win if you simply choose to wrestle with John 14:12 as a result of reading this book:

[Jesus said,] “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”



An Unexpected Journey

I like sweet tea, and I like a lot of it. Someone asked me the other day, “What are some of the things you like?” I said that I like good weather, good friends, college football and having a fan on while I sleep. It does not take a lot to make me happy. I am a front-porch-on-the-swing type of guy.

I also like simple things. I like to say that *simple* is the new *deep*. Complicated people make me ornery. I cannot pay attention to a conversation going on around me that is full of words I have not used since the SAT. So as this simple man began to pray for a woman named Gail at a healing service, I began to consider how God might view her blindness. Could her need quite possibly be a simple matter for Him?

We had decided as a church family to hold a service in which we would pray for people with physical problems. Many of us

had been spending a lot of time in the gospels, and we had begun to wonder what would happen if we prayed for people the way Jesus did. We set out to find the answer. I have to admit, though, that I felt trepidation during the weeks leading up to the first healing service. I remember having conversations with my friends that went like this:

Friend: “What are you going to preach about at the healing service?”

Me: “I have no idea, and I’ve never been more nervous about anything in my life.”

I laugh now when I look back at my trepidation. The only healing service I knew of was when a flashy fellow pressed someone’s forehead with the palm of his hand and shouted, “Be healed in the name of *Je-sus!*”

But our service was not at all like that. It was inviting, warm and fun. Gail’s friends helped her make her way to the front of the church, and I prayed gently for her. She said that she felt tingling in her face. Then God healed her right there on the spot. I did not jump around. (Other people did.) I did not throw snakes on the floor or twirl like a madman. I did not call attention to the situation at all.

Except that I was smiling. Until that moment, I had never thought I could pray and see someone get better. Maybe a headache here and there—but blindness? No way. When Gail’s doctor examined her later, he could not believe what she said had happened in order for her to see. It made no sense to him.

Granted, I was as surprised as anyone. But then I began to consider, *Why don’t we see more things like this?* That

night energized my relentless pursuit of Jesus Christ and what He actually taught about the Kingdom.

A lot of things have happened since that service years ago when I prayed for Gail. It has been fun, scary, confusing and always adventurous. And it has been nothing like what I expected when I first started following Christ.

Strange Happenings

I gave my life to Jesus Christ when I was twelve years old. I was sitting in my bedroom at 35 Prestwick Court in Spartanburg, South Carolina. There was no worship band or youth revival speaker. There were no goose bumps or visions. I did not even fully understand what I was doing, but I knew I simply needed Jesus.

Earlier that day, I had been listening to some men in our church describe their own journeys with God, and they had me thinking. I am not going to lie; I did not want to go to hell. A guest evangelist had previously scared me out of my mind. Thus, I was processing the idea of “knowing Jesus,” but also the reality of going to hell for all of eternity if I did not give my life to Him.

Was my decision to accept Jesus driven by fear? Absolutely. It was years later, during counseling, before I realized this. Yet even though I could not describe what I was sensing, I knew that I needed to give Jesus my life. I knew that I was incomplete without being surrendered to Him. So I said out loud, “I want to give my life to You. Be my Savior.”

The change in me was real. I read my Bible. I began preaching to my friends. I went to seminary and pastored college

students. I traveled and spoke at churches and conferences. These were good years, but something was missing.

One night in a hotel room in San Angelo, Texas, I finally despaired of not seeing anything in my life that smelled and felt like the book of Acts. I was preaching to two thousand teenagers attending Youth Summer Camp, and after one session I went back to my hotel room and had it out with God.

I took my Bible and shook it at the heavens. I kept shouting, “There has to be more, God! All I do is preach to people that You want them with You in heaven forever!” I felt as though I was about to explode.

In my opinion, desperation does not make God move, but it does light a fire in your own belly so that you chase Him and His truth harder than you ever have. As the Bible tells us, when you seek Him with your whole heart, you find Him.

That night, I heard a voice tell me to turn on the television. I turned it on and flipped up two channels to a documentary in progress about a man named Reinhard Bonnke. I had never heard of him. The documentary talked about someone who had been raised from the dead in Africa. I remember feeling shocked as I watched it.

Remember, I had just finished screaming at God, “Why don’t I ever see miracles like those in the book of Acts?” As I watched, transfixed, my heart leaped inside my chest. Finally, I had evidence that the things I longed for were possible. I had known for years that Stephen, Peter, John, Philip and Paul saw heaven change their natural-realm circumstances, but until that moment I had never heard of anyone doing anything like that in the here and now.

Sitting down under the weight of this revelation, I considered that perhaps it was possible for me to experience what

this evangelist was experiencing. I sensed that I was about to know a lot more of God.

But there was a problem: How could I go about this discovery? Where did I even start? I really did not want to be viewed as some sort of a crazy man seeking attention. I was torn because even though I had a calling on my life, I have never been the type who stands out in the crowd in matters of faith. There is no fish on my car or Christian T-shirt in my closet. I love normal things like books and eating too much spaghetti.

This was before I knew that one can be natural and walk in the ways of the Kingdom at the same time. In the days that followed, I realized that I was scared to death that my friends and those to whom I was speaking would think that I had embraced whacked-out theology. And, honestly, I was scared to death that I might. The last thing I wanted to do was fall off the deep end into water where I had no business swimming.

Reality Check

During this time I met well-known teacher and author Jack Deere. As I read his book *Surprised by the Voice of God*, I began to understand that I could actually walk with God in the way that my heart wanted. Jack was a respected scholar and seminary professor—someone I really trusted. I had just finished my seminary education, and I never want to check my brain at the door.

Thus, since I was curious about the life of Jesus, I came up with a plan. I stuck my head into the gospel of John for what

seemed like a million hours and said, “Jesus, I’m all Yours. Show me what You want me to see—even if it ruins my life.” I tell people all of the time that they should be careful about what they pray for. If I had known what it would cost me to pray that way, I might have been less inclined to mean it.

The book of John and the other gospels took hold of me. One day I hope to sit down with Peter, Andrew, John and some of the others and ask, “What was it like? I won’t say anything to anybody—just be honest with me.” I cannot imagine what it was like for them. A normal guy from nowhere came onto the scene and said, “Before Abraham was, I AM,” and then started doing bizarre things.

Can you imagine being one of Jesus’ birth brothers or sisters? There is no way in the world you and I would have believed Him. No one expected the Savior of the world to live in a backwoods town and pretty much be inconspicuous for thirty years.

Take a moment and imagine the following scenario. Joseph is sitting with his family over a meal and says to his young son James, “What do you want to do when you grow up, son?”

James replies, “You know, Dad, I’ve been thinking. I would like to be a part of the family business one day. I love working with wood, and I could see myself doing that for a long time.”

Joseph smiles, and then turns to his eldest daughter. “What do you see yourself doing one day, honey?”

Looking at Mary, she answers, “I would absolutely love to be just like Mom. I want to take care of my family and help raise Jehovah-fearing children.”

Mary then turns to Jesus and asks, “Sweetheart, what do You see Yourself doing when You get older?”

Jesus looks at her and says, “I plan on representing a government and establishing true concepts of My Father as I perform signs, wonders, healings and miracles in a twenty-four-mile radius of where we are now. I also see Myself recruiting an intimate group of followers who will learn from Me and then take My message all over the world by passing down the things I share with them. I sense that My Father will release His Spirit after I go to rejoin Him. I’m about to do things that will make you stare into space, but what is really fun is that millions of others will be trained to do the same works I will do. I can’t wait. Would you please pass the matzos?”

I have never seen one second of one day that can match the intensity of watching God in the flesh walk on water or tell dead people to get up. It is fairly easy for us today to think of Jesus doing those unusual things, but what about the others with Him? We, from our perspective, know the whole story; we can read the book of Revelation before we read the four gospels. But not them. A man showed up from Nazareth and taught the most controversial message the world has ever heard. I wonder what a fisherman thought when a Jewish Rabbi said, “Go tell people about My Daddy’s Kingdom and raise the dead.” And they actually did this.

I have been watching *The Gospel of John* (a movie produced by Philip Saville) with my kids. I double dog dare you to put down your presuppositions and watch that movie. Watch it over and over and notice how much it stretches your religious mind. The more I watch and listen to it (the script is a word-for-word version of John’s gospel), the more I question what in the world I believe.

For most of my life, my Christianity has been defined by what I am *not doing*. I thought I was good with God because

I did not have any gross sins in my life. But when I read how Jesus operated and how He taught His followers to do the same things, I find myself gravitating toward what I *can do*.

The more I meditate on the gospel of John, the more I have come to believe that we have really tamed down our King, and made His message way too safe. Maybe that is because we want to be balanced. Try telling that to Jesus. If you had been His disciple and had told Him that you wanted to live a balanced life with a balanced theology, He would have said, “That’s nice. If you want to follow Me, you must eat My flesh and drink My blood.” Imagine how that went over in an Orthodox synagogue.

Why are we so obsessed with calming Jesus down? When it comes to the supernatural, most Christians who call themselves *disciples* say, “Let’s make sure we focus on the main thing.” This sounds wonderfully spiritual but is actually laced with the fear of man. Can you imagine what Jesus would have said to us if we had told Him: “Jesus, stop doing Your Father’s works and focus on the main thing”?

Jesus did three things while He was here. He preached the Kingdom, healed the sick and cast demons out of people. Yet, how easy it is to find thriving churches—particularly in America—that do none of those three? I cannot go on living as though that is okay. I do not want to be a part of a church that can make it without the Holy Spirit. I do not want a master’s degree in leadership and strategy and get to the point where I can lead others, if I do not have the fresh fire of the Father. The reason I love praying for the impossible is that I cannot take credit for it. I want to be a part of a movement that continues to say, “It had to be the Father. It just had to be.”

I got to the point in my relationship where I just could not take it anymore. It was not enough for me to read about Him and preach truths that He taught. I wanted to see at least some of the things that Jesus saw. I wanted my life to have at least some resemblance to His.

Our Spiritual Forebears

I know that “spiritualizing” our faith is only one reason that we fail to see the supernatural in our lives. Another reason—the main reason—is that most of us at least once have prayed sincerely, even earnestly, for a particular need—and nothing happened. Some of us have stored great libraries of doubt and disappointment.

Another reason we hesitate to go after the Kingdom wholeheartedly is that we see many abuses—yes, sadly, in the Church. This leads Christians to feel that attempts to see the Kingdom manifest on earth can open the door for extreme or dangerous beliefs.

Another reason is that we often acknowledge that God *can* heal, but we are not sure He always *wants* to. The fear of presumption overrides our confidence in His character.

These realities are far too prevalent. We all have painful questions that we plan to ask God when we enter heaven. Even so, I believe that a day is coming very, very soon when we will see more and more churches embrace the supernatural. I have a picture in my mind of two college students talking. One says to another, “What do you mean you go to a church that never sees our Father’s works manifest? I haven’t heard of a church like that in ten years.”

Some of you reading this probably think that I am out in left field to suggest something like this. I would have thought the same thing a few years ago, but now I have seen and heard too much to think it is impossible. I am not talking here about the testimony of someone who lives in a country that I cannot pronounce. I am talking about a friend who is a dentist and sees the Kingdom manifest in his office on a regular basis as he prays for the broken. I am talking about countless others like him. These are normal, everyday people who are not famous, nor do they care to be.

I love stories of the saints of old who saw the impossible. Yes, I know that Hebrews 11 tells us of saints who never saw their Goliaths struck down. Trust me, I hear that. Keep reading and you will find that I am not a pie-in-the-sky person who thinks everything on planet earth is nice and tidy. The people who never saw victories are heroes in my book, but just as I do not ignore them, I also cannot throw away the stories of those who actually did see the impossible happen.

How in the world did Shamgar kill six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad? I have no idea, but if the impossible is possible, I want to do it, too. The Bible tells the stories of tons of Shamgars: Esther, Moses, Abraham, Deborah, Ehud, Peter, Noah, Aaron, Mary, John, Barnabas, Stephen and Timothy are but a small sampling of the people who saw God make the impossible happen through them.

I want to be like them. I want to see impossible things become possible in my life. I get excited when I read about Elijah calling down fire or Peter telling a dead child to wake up.

Now, granted, not one of us is Abraham or Moses or Elijah. But before we jump to the conclusion that we are not

qualified to do amazing things like opening blind eyes, we need to take a closer look at how truly messed up many of our biblical heroes were.

I was encouraged my whole young adult life to consider the faith of Noah, and how he built an ark in the midst of scrutiny and criticism. But no one ever told me that Noah got off the boat and got drunk, and then got naked. (Imagine that felt-board lesson in Vacation Bible School.)

Or take Abraham. He is the father of millions and has been commended by generations for his faith. Yet if you examine his life closely, you find that he was no goodie-two-shoes. Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife to save his own hide not once but twice.

And what about Peter? Peter is the one with whom Jesus entrusted the Church after He went to be with His Father. Yet when you look at Peter's life and see his impetuosity and his intermittent lack of faith, you have permission to attempt what Peter attempted.

Let's be honest. If Peter's shadow could make someone whole, then perhaps through the power of the Holy Spirit we are capable of more than we think. If people's inadequacies could keep them from moving in power, then no one but Jesus would do great things. Perhaps it is possible to be as tangled as a tackle box and still see the impossible happen.

Our Turn

Those heroes are gone now; it is our turn. That is why I get excited when I hear stories of people just like you and me who are seeing the same things our heroes saw. These are

everyday people walking through their own normal problems with tiny faith and producing huge outcomes.

Think about this: Many of us who think that the impossible is not within our grasp are the same people who believe that one day we will leave our bodies and shoot off into heaven. How can we be sure? We believe this by faith. Then why not use that same type of childlike faith to say, “God, we have no idea how this all works, but we want to see You do fun, weird, miraculous stuff through us.” Jesus continues to show me that I will miss 100 percent of the shots that I never take.

Again, I am not saying this as someone without pain. My journals are full of questions and hurt. Henri Nouwen was my literary mentor for a long season. I have agreed with Philip Yancey and preached that we all have our disappointments with God. But I cannot help asking why so many of us live our lives without the victories that our biblical ancestors experienced. If we say that we are children of a Father who props up His feet on the moon, then might our lives resemble something close to supernatural?

The night we prayed for Gail, I knew the answer was yes. I also knew that I had no idea what was in store for me.