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Our Twenty-First Century Minds

Have you made up your mind whether you believe in miracles or not? Many of us find ourselves torn on this subject. On the one hand, we believe most (if not necessarily all) of the miracles in the Bible. But on the other hand, we do not expect God to perform too many miracles in our own lives.



But, wouldn't it be something if God were still in the business of doing miracles in this world? Most people would love to see one, if for no other reason than to know for sure that God exists.

Previously, I told you about my being in Costa Rica in the early 1980s when I was helping a mission organization start a new church in one of the barrios in the capital city, San Jose. During that time, I joined a young adult fellowship comprised mostly of Costa Ricans. On Sunday nights, this group held a prayer and healing service. At the time, I was experiencing a lot of pain in my hip caused by a summer of excessive jogging when I was training for a marathon. I had seen numerous doctors, including an acupuncturist. Unfortunately, no immediate relief was found. So, I decided to attend one of these prayer services to see if there was any chance someone would be willing to pray for me. I was at the end of my rope. I will never forget the wonderful worship, and then the leaders instructing people to break off into small groups for the healing prayer portion of the evening.



I was first in line for my particular small group. I stepped right up to three or four leaders and told them about my hip and asked for prayer. One of the leaders looked me right in the eye and inquired, "Do you really believe that these prayers can heal you?" I said, of course why else would I be there. Calmly, he again looked me in the eye and asked, "Do you believe that Jesus working through these prayers can heal you?" Feeling a bit frustrated and a touch confused, I said I would not have come unless I believed. Then there was a pause as the other three people began to gather around me and lay hands on me. One last time, the gentleman asked me, "Do you believe these prayers can heal you?" In one, final sigh of affirmation, I told him that yes indeed I believed. At that moment, I closed my eyes and felt the loving hands of the people all around me. They were praying with such joy, and so was I.

Suddenly, it was as if the whole room stood still and there was the warmest, most wonderful feeling in my heart and also surrounding my hip. I had never felt such deep warmth in my life. God's love had become tangible and pervasive throughout my body; tension left me, and I experienced a profound peace.

As the prayer ended, I hugged everyone, but said very few words other than I felt so much better; but, most importantly, my hip felt renewed. The next morning, I arose and went jogging for the first time in nearly two years. I could hardly believe it. The prayers were heard and God had healed me. I was never more convinced of God's enormous love and reality in my life.

Our journeys of faith are not easy. We often want God to do what we want him to do when we want him to do it. We do not understand why he is sometimes so close and manifest,

and at other times seems so distant. Or why he answers this prayer and not another. Sometimes we believe he is there, but at other times we are not so sure.

Today, as a Presbyterian pastor in the United States, I often find myself in Bible studies or even in informal conversations when the topic swings toward a discussion about miracles in the Bible versus our lives today. Frequently, people are not sure that God is up to the same kind of activities at the dawn of the twenty-first century - with all that we know and have - as compared to the first century and earlier.

We in the West have to be especially careful in these regards. God, over the years, has not moved an inch in what he can do to influence our time and space. After all, he created everything; why wouldn't he rearrange what he has created at any moment in time?

This is one of the many reasons I enjoy so much my current job with Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship. I have the privilege of meeting people throughout the world, but especially in the southern hemisphere, who wake each morning and expect to see God's miraculous hand at work. They read the Bible and take God at face value. If God performed miracles in Biblical times why couldn't he now? If Jesus said ask and you will receive, why don't we ask? It is for this reason among many that today the Church is growing by leaps and bounds in Africa, Latin America and Asia. It is our responsibility to make our petitions and desires known to him.



As the book of John states in the 11th chapter, verse four, God performs a miracle "...for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." In fact, God is shepherding us through our days in ways unimaginable. God knows exactly when to alter time and space for the sake of his kingdom advancing on earth.

As we know, God is at work every day with us in the West, too, often in the smallest, most beautiful and perceptible ways. Many of you reading this article know a time in your life when your back was up against the wall and God did a miraculous thing to save you from despair and destruction. You knew it was God and nobody else who saved you. Faith itself is a miracle. Think of the people you know whose lives have been transformed and renewed by the power of Christ in their lives. What greater miracle is there than a life being forgiven, given purpose and made eternal?

Deep down in our hearts, we know there is more to life, even as Christians, than what we have already experienced. We would love to take God at his word as expressed in the Bible, but our twenty-first century minds often get in the way. Our faith would be enhanced if we honestly answered the question that was put to me on that Sunday night more than 20 years ago, "Do you believe that Jesus working through these prayers can heal you?"