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by Berni Dymet



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Signs, Wonders and Miracles

Miracles don't happen every day. They just don't. But sometimes we're so used to not expecting them, that we miss them entirely

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signs, wonders
and miracles

by berni dymet

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CHAPTER 1

THE PARALYTIC

I'm going to throw something out there, something that might upset a few people, but hey ... I'm going to throw it out there anyhow.

The reason we sometimes miss out on miracles, is that we're too comfortable in being the victim of our circumstances. Does that make you squirm just a little bit?

Here's what I'm talking about. I know plenty of people who are so comfortable in their misery, that the thought of a miracle to lift them out of that misery is incredibly unsettling.

I know of people who are now third and fourth generation of long term unemployed,

relying – generation after generation – on government handouts, government housing, government welfare to get by. Now don't get me wrong. There are many people who are unemployed for good and valid reasons. For some it's a short term thing; for others it's a tragic life-long situation of ill health or disability. I totally get that.

But there are many who are so comfortable in their welfare dependency, that they just aren't interested in getting out there, getting skilled up, hunting down a job and going to work. That's a real life example of how people can become comfortable in their misfortune.

Have you ever met anyone who continually complains about their lot – this is no good, that is no good, this isn't fair, that isn't fair? But you reach out anyway and try to help them, befriend them, lend a practical hand to help them improve their lot – and they almost bite your hand off.

What?! Help?! Change?! What's the matter with you?! They're comfortable in their situation. Comfortable to whinge and complain, but not

to do anything much about it.

In this booklet called *Signs, Wonders and Miracles* we're taking a good hard look at some of the eight signs or miracles that Jesus performed as recorded in John's Gospel – the fourth book of the New Testament. And right now we're going to meet one such person; a man stuck in his misery who did the same thing over and over again. The only problem was, it didn't work! It wasn't making his lot any better. And then, one day, Jesus walks into his life and turns everything upside down.

Let's take a look:

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids – blind, lame, and paralysed. One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up,

and while I am going another steps down before me.” Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk?’” Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” (John 5:1-17)

So, what’s the deal here at the pool of Bethesda? Well, for starters, the word Bethesda means ‘House of Mercy’, or ‘House of Grace’.

Not a bad start is it? And both Jews and gentiles went down there, with the belief that there was healing to be had there. We learn elsewhere that they believed an angel would occasionally come and stir up the water and first one in, would be healed. The problem was that people had been going there for years and they'd never been healed.

I mean, imagine this man's problem. He's lame! Getting down into the pool is going to take some time and effort. So a guy with a cold or an ingrown toenail jumps in first and whammo – the lame man misses out, AGAIN!! Where's the grace in that? Where's the mercy in that? Hmm??

Both Jew and gentile, believer and pagan used to go down there, and sit there day after day, year after year. We don't know if anyone was ever healed, but it seems that this place was not such a raging success. It didn't seem to be living up to its reputation. People went down there with a bit of a religious, wishing-well mentality, and this man whom Jesus ultimately heals in this story, is a bit like that.

What's Einstein's definition of insanity?
Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Well, that's where this fella seems to have been caught. He's been an invalid for thirty-eight years; that's an incredibly long time. Goodness only knows how long he's been down here every day at this pool, facing the misery and hopelessness of his situation – remember there was no government disability pension on offer from the Romans, in 1st century Israel.

How many of us are living our lives like that? A difficult marriage, a wayward child, a deep nagging sense of inadequacy or low self-esteem, an addiction of some sort ... and we just sit there, day after day, with that wishing-well mentality. We imagine that somehow one day things will get better, but on the other hand, we're content to sit there in our muck and squalor, never really expecting anything to change, never even wanting it to change really!

And then, in walks Jesus.

There were lots of people around the Pool of Bethesda that day. There were probably some

even more deserving of healing than this man. But Jesus walks up to this guy. Why? Well, He tells us:

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” (John 5:19)

Why does Jesus go to this man? Because He’s the one that His Dad in heaven was going to heal today. There’s a lesson in that for you and me – *do what Dad’s doing, and nothing else.*

Why is this such a powerful miracle with such a powerful message for you and me today? The reason is that it speaks of Jesus walking into a mundane situation, and choosing a man who perhaps wasn’t quite as zealous as he could have been in improving his lot – and Jesus just does it.

What’s the first thing Jesus asks him? He asks, *“So, do you want to be healed?”*

If Jesus asked you that question – come on, honestly – what would your answer be? Well, how does the man respond? Does He say ‘yes’

straight off the bat? No! He gives Jesus the excuse why he hasn't been healed; an excuse that comes right out of his victim's wishing-well mentality:

“Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.”

He's seeing things through the lens of his circumstances; he's looking from the bottom up, not from the top down. Jesus has just walked into his life – so what does Jesus do? He commands healing:

Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

To the man's credit he got up and he walked. Many of people weren't happy about it, but hey, Jesus had just come into his life and he was walking and that was a huuuuuge miracle for this man.

Do you know what I believe? I believe that today, through the power of His Word, Jesus has just walked into your life; into your same old, same old situation; into your

particular, personal need for healing. And here's the question He's asking you: "So, do you want to be healed?"

LIFE APPLICATION

Selective miracles

Okay, this particular sign – healing the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda – is a tough one to wrap our minds around. It's particularly tough when we feel as though we're between a rock and a hard place, and the only thing that's going to save us, is a serious, bona fide miracle.

So, it's time to really lay hold of the central truth of this particular miracle. And the place to start is for you to read this passage for yourself (John 5:1-18), asking the following questions:

1. If you were that man, would you have hung around that pool all that time?
2. Had you been sitting at that pool on that day, what would you have been thinking and feeling?

3. What do you learn from this man, about how you could think and behave when the situation seems hopeless?
4. Now imagine you're another one of the people near that pool needing a healing. What would you have done, had you seen Jesus heal this man?
5. What do you need to do now, to put yourself in a place where Jesus may walk into your life and perform a serious miracle?

These are tough questions to ask, particularly in light of John 5:19, but they're worth asking...

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CHAPTER 2 FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

Some years ago I was listening to a man who had founded a large Christian radio network in the USA. He's not directly involved in it anymore, but it's one of the big ones with hundreds of stations. These days, it looks hugely successful, and it is. But as he was talking, he took me back to the early days, when he started his first radio station.

They were humble beginnings. The man, his wife and their family put everything on the line. They didn't yet have many supporters, things were incredibly tight, and one day it came to the point where they didn't have any money and they didn't have any food in the house. The kids were coming home from

school and he and his wife didn't know how they were going to feed them.

Imagine! You put it all on the line for Jesus, and He leaves you in this situation. As a husband and father myself, I so empathised because we men are programmed to be the providers and the protectors for our families. Not being able to feed them would be devastating! His eyes became misty as he told us his story. And mine became misty too as I listened.

So, what did he and his wife do?

They sat down in despair on the kitchen floor and prayed ... and prayed ... and prayed. Presently, there was a knock on the front door. He went to answer it, and there was someone from their church who had felt to bring them some food for their dinner!

God answered their prayer. He knew what He was doing.

Now, I want to take a look at the third sign or miracle that Jesus performed which is recorded by the Apostle John in his Gospel – the feeding of the five thousand:

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little."

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated.

So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

(John 6:1-15)

What an awesome miracle – or sign as John calls it! And why wouldn't he call it a sign? Signs point at something and this one points directly at the power, the truth and the authenticity of Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah. The One who came to usher in not a worldly kingdom, but the Kingdom of Heaven.

Here was a very real ministry need: the Gospel was being proclaimed; thousands were following Jesus, and now, all of a sudden they had no food. The disciples – as you and I so

often do – looked at what they had in their hands, which was precious little. Jesus however, had different plans. Because His perspective on this situation was totally different to that of His Disciples.

Watchman Nee was a Chinese Evangelist who was martyred for his faith and Gospel work in the 1970's. This is what he wrote in a booklet that he published, entitled *Twelve Baskets Full*:

What do we mean when we talk of God's blessing? We mean divine activity that is not based on human activity. We mean a working of God that is not based on our work. The blessing of God is not something that we can earn by our efforts. It is not something that we can buy with our money.

One penny should always procure one penny's worth; but if without our one penny God gives us ten thousand penny's worth, that is His blessing. His blessing makes our calculations futile because it leaves us without any basis on which to calculate. When five small loaves provide nourishment for five thousand people

*and leave a surplus that fills twelve baskets,
that is God's blessing.*

*So many of us, instead of looking to the Lord to
bless the loaves, are looking at the loaves in our
hands. Our one hope in face of today's immense
need is that He will perform a miracle and
that He will do it by taking the bread into His
hands and blessing it.*

*When the Lord in His goodness brings us to
a totally new position where we recognise the
paramount importance of His blessing, then
the way will be open for Him to work.*

Here's the point that he's making (as I understand it) and it's absolutely the right point to be making: We labour away and labour away and labour away doing God's work – we think, in His name – without the appropriate expectation of His blessing on our work. In other words, we do it in our own strength, wondering all the time – *Why is this such hard work? Why isn't it just a little bit easier?*

Not imagining at any point that God's supernatural power is a complete game-changer. Jesus didn't have to go through some

longwinded prayer. He was so close to His Father in Heaven, so immersed in His power, that He just stepped out and did it – in the power of God. And it was ... *a complete game-changer.*

The power of this story – in fact it's whole point – doesn't lie in how much food Jesus' miracle produced. It lies in the twelve baskets that were left over. The message is *more than enough. Much, much more than enough.* And that message flies fully in the face of the little that they had at their disposal in the beginning. What the disciples hadn't reckoned on was the powerful blessing of God.

But let me ask you this question then: What was it that unlocked the power of this miracle? Jesus was ready, He had the power, He had the will – but what was the key?

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" (John 6:8-9)

It was the little boy who offered up all He had, to be blessed by the Lord. That was the

key. He could have kept it to himself, hoarded it. But He gave it all to the Lord ungrudgingly, willingly, sacrificially and the Lord blessed it, and multiplied it.

And brought glory to Jesus.

Remember the man I was telling you about earlier, Dick Jenkins, the founder of the KLOVE radio network in the USA, one of the three really big Christian radio networks in America (Moody Broadcasting Network, Salem and KLOVE). He was just like that little boy with the loaves and fishes, sitting there with his wife that day on the kitchen floor on that day of small beginnings. He'd put everything on the line! He'd offered up all he had, and the Lord blessed and multiplied it. Today, KLOVE is one of the big three, impacting millions of people each day with the love of Christ.

You and I ... we, too, are like that little boy. When we find ourselves between a rock and a hard place, when everything has run out – our money, our food, our resources, our friends, our energy – that place right there is the place

not to hang on to the little we have left, but to offer it up to God with a willing heart ... just like that little boy ... and He will take it and multiply it. That's what we mean by the blessing of God.

For unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.
(Psalm 127:1-2)

The powerful, miracle working blessing of God.

LIFE APPLICATION

One of the disciples

Read John 6:1-15 again. Okay, so you're one of the disciples with Jesus.

1. You see the problem: 5,000 men to feed, and only two fish and five loaves. What's going through your mind over Jesus' crazy idea of feeding these people?
2. And the little boy who offers up his all. What do you think of him? What would you have done had you been in his shoes?
3. How do his actions cause you to reflect on your commitment to Jesus and His mission?
4. After you've seen it all happen – the problem, Jesus' crazy idea, the little boy,

the miracle, the collection of the twelve baskets full of left overs, how have you been changed?

May the power of God's Word change you mightily as you allow the Holy Spirit to work in your heart!

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CHAPTER 3 THE ANSWER IS JESUS

Two amazing miracles: one healing a single man, the other feeding five thousand men (not to mention the women and children who were also there). So, what do the two have in common? What does Jesus have to say to you and me through them today, more than two thousand years later?

The answer to that question is really quite simple, and it is this: no matter what the situation, no matter what the problem, no matter how big or how small the need happens to be, no matter how impossible the situation appears – the answer is JESUS.

How often have you, in effect, sat hope-



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signs, wonders and miracles

lessly by your 'pool of Bethesda', expecting a miracle ... but not really; hoping against hope that Jesus would sovereignly step in and intervene in your life, but never really expecting Him to? You remain content, in a sense, to be the victim of your circumstances, wallowing in the role of the victim? Hmm?

How often have you come to the end of your tether, your wits, your resources, your money, your food, your friends, your relationships – and faced a need that you were totally, totally under-resourced to deal with? And in that place, you stared at the little that you had in your hands, rather than the great power of the mighty God who loves you beyond anything that words can express?

Because we're spiritual beings living in a physical world, it seems that over and over again in our hearts and minds we allow our circumstances to trump our God. We imagine that the problems we're facing are so much bigger than He is. Of course we know that's not really true, but we think and believe and live and act as though it is.



Sometimes, we're closer
to our problems than we
are to our God.

.....

signs, wonders and miracles

And there's a reason for that. The closer something is, the bigger it seems. A tiny child right next to you looks much bigger than a 20 stone man who you can just see 500 metres down the road. That's what's going on here. That's why we get to believing, like that paralytic, that nothing's ever going to change. That's why we make excuses the way he did.

It's why we look at the little that we have in our hand, rather than offering it all up to God and expecting His mighty blessing. So ... what's the answer? The answer is one of proximity. The closer something is, the bigger it seems. Sometimes, we're closer to our problems than we are to our God. That's not to say that God is a million miles away. The Bible says quite the opposite; it says that we are brought near to Him by the blood of Jesus:

But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:13)

Do you see? Past tense. It's a done deal. If you believe in Jesus, right now you are close to God. That's something that Jesus did for you

on that Cross. And yet when we spend all our time focussing on the problem, and little or no time focussing on Him – praying, reading His Word, resting in Him, waiting on Him – the problems seems bigger than God.

And that's an optical illusion that Satan is entirely delighted with. My friend, look again at those two signs – miracles that point to the power of Jesus, the authenticity of Jesus, the willingness of Jesus to step into any and every situation and make a powerful difference.

That very same Jesus is the Jesus who died for you on that Cross; who allowed His blood to be spilt so that you, who once were far off, could now be close to God every minute of every day. You and I don't have to shout across a galaxy or a universe to communicate with God. The impenetrable wall of our sin that used to separate us from Him, is completely destroyed and removed the instant we believe in Jesus.

That's the power of God's Word for you today. God's miracle-working, life-transforming power is available to you, and it is much, much

... much bigger than any lifelong disability you need to overcome, or any crowd you need to feed.

No matter what the problem, what the situation, what the circumstance, what the obstacle, what the limitation happens to be, Jesus is in this place with you, and Jesus – this Jesus – is the answer. He always has been. He always will be.

TIME TO PRAY

A time to pray

Oh hallelujah. Praise God.

Lord, I pray that Your word would penetrate our hardened hearts in such a powerful way today. Lord, for each person whose confidence in You has been shaken, restore that confidence, that faith in You, in a powerful way so that the latter is much greater than the former.

Lord, for anyone who is travelling through the most difficult circumstances today, let Your peace and Your love fill their hearts so that they are ready and willing to cast themselves completely upon You.

May we be transformed – more and more back into Your image – day by day as we trust in

*Your miracle working power to be with us. In
Jesus' name we pray.*

And all the saints said ... amen!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Berni Dymet is a contemporary Christian communicator with a passion for sharing the Good News of Jesus right into the middle of life. He comes from the perspective that this Christianity thing - it isn't just a faith that lives in our heads or even our hearts, but that it actually works right here in the middle of our lives.

Christianity actually works when we dare to accept Jesus Christ into our lives!! Not just as Saviour, but also as Lord.

Millions of people around the globe tune into Berni's radio programs each week. The Lord has given him a special gift for sharing the Gospel in a truly practical way. In a way that really connects into the hearts and lives of real people in real places, transforming their lives. That's what the ministry of Christianityworks is all about. Leading people into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ.

But Berni's passion, his enthusiasm and his insights into the day to day realities of life are simply tools in God's hands. The real change agent is God Himself.

And to Him - and Him alone - be all the glory.

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Signs, Wonders and Miracles

Do you believe in signs, wonders and miracles for today? The supernatural power of God disrupting the natural order of things by breaking into your natural, mundane little old world today. Do you believe it or not?

It seems that people inevitably live at one of the two extremes in answering those questions. Absolutely NOT or ABSOLUTELY! 24/7 wall-to-wall miracles. What's the truth? Find out in this booklet as Berni Dymet takes a look at signs, wonders and miracles from a different perspective.

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