



The Nature Of Miracles

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

Table of Contents

Forward		3
Chapter 1	God makes his strength known.	4
Chapter 2	Jesus rebukes an unclean spirit.	8
Chapter 3	An angel appears in a blazing fire.	12
Chapter 4	Water flows from a rock in Horeb.	16
Chapter 5	The bitter waters become sweet.	20
Chapter 6	An ax head floats.	23
Chapter 7	The bread is multiplied.	27
Chapter 8	Those who looked on the brazen serpent were healed.	29
Chapter 9	The lame man leaped and walked.	32
Chapter 10	An evil spirit is cast out of a woman.	35
Chapter 11	The paralyzed and lame are healed.	37
Chapter 12	A dead man lives.	41
Chapter 13	False prophets may show signs and wonders.	45

Forward

Some people think, "If only I could see a miracle, I could believe in God." God gave Pharaoh just such an opportunity. When gnats infested Egypt, even the magicians agreed that this was God's work ("the finger of God")—but still Pharaoh refused to believe. He was stubborn, and stubbornness can blind a person to the truth.

When believers rid themselves of stubbornness, they may be surprised by abundant evidence of God's work in their lives

God supplied manna to the hungry Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness (Exodus 16:14-31).

In the bountiful Promised Land they no longer needed this daily food supply because the land was ready for planting and harvesting. God had miraculously provided food for the Israelites while they were in the wilderness; here he provided food from the land itself.

Prayer is not an alternative to preparation, and faith is not a substitute for hard work. God can and does provide miraculously for his people as needed, but he also expects them to use their God-given talents and resources to provide for themselves.

If your prayers have gone unanswered, perhaps what you need is within your reach. Pray instead for the wisdom to see it and the energy and motivation to do it.

If you are needing a miracle today, remember that Jesus never changes. As your needs are, so will your strength and God's provision be.

Chapter 1

Through Miracles, God has made known his Strength

Psalm 77:14

You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your strength among the peoples.

Memories of God's miracles and faithfulness sustained Israel through their difficulties. They knew that God was capable and trustworthy. When you meet new trials, review how good God has been to you, and this will strengthen your faith.

The Lord saves Israel from the Egyptians.

Exodus 14:30-31

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.

No evidence of this great Exodus has been discovered in Egyptian historical records. This was because it was a common practice for Egyptian pharaohs not to record their defeats.

They even went so far as to take existing records and delete the names of traitors and political adversaries. Pharaoh would have been especially anxious not to record that his great army was destroyed chasing a band of runaway slaves. Since either the Egyptians failed to record the Exodus or the record has not yet been found, it is impossible to place a precise date on the event.

Miracles are the working of the Lord.

Exodus 34:10

Then God said, "Behold, I am going to make a covenant Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you.

God told the Israelites not to join in religious rites with the sinful people around them, but to give their absolute loyalty and exclusive devotion to him. Pagan worship simply cannot be mixed with the worship of the holy God. As Jesus pointed out, "No one can serve two masters.... You cannot serve both God and money" (Luke 16:13). Love of money is the god of this age, and many Christians attempt to make a treaty with this enslaving god. Are you trying to worship two gods at once? Where is your first allegiance?

.

The Lord will do great works.

Deuteronomy 3:24

‘O Lord GOD, You have begun to show your servant your greatness and your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours?

What encouraging news for Joshua, who was to lead his men against the persistent forces of evil in the Promised Land! Since God promised to help him win every battle, he had nothing to fear. Our battles may not be against godless armies, but they are just as real as Joshua's. Whether we are resisting temptation or battling fear, God has promised to fight with and for us as we place our hope and confidence in him.

The fire of the Lord consumed the burnt offering.

1 Kings 18:37-39

“Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again.” Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God.”

God flashed fire from heaven for Elijah. He will also help us accomplish what he commands us to do. The proof may not be as dramatic in our lives as in Elijah's, but God will make resources available to us in creative ways to accomplish his purposes.

He will give us the wisdom to raise a family, the courage to take a stand for truth, or the means to provide help for someone in need. Like Elijah, we can have faith that whatever God commands us to do, he will provide what we need to carry it through.

God does wonders without number.

Job 5:9

Who does great and unsearchable things, Wonders without number.

It is human nature to blame people for their own troubles, but Job's story makes it clear that blame cannot always be attached to those whom trouble strikes.

**Tell the generations to come of God's strength and wondrous
Power.**

Psalm 78:4

We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.

God recorded these painful and shameful truths in his Word so that we can avoid the same errors.

Chapter 2

Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit.

Luke 9:42-43

While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples,

As our spiritual vision improves and allows us to see and understand God better, we will also be able to see and understand evil better. We would be overcome by its horror if we did not have Jesus with us to take us through it safely. Don't be afraid to confront evil and suffering, no matter how ugly or horrible. Jesus goes with you.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mk+9%3A18> Why couldn't the disciples cast out the evil spirit? We read that they cast out demons while on their mission to the villages. Perhaps they had special authority only for that trip, or perhaps their faith was faltering. Mark tells this story to show that the battle with Satan is a difficult, ongoing struggle. Victory over sin and temptation comes through faith in Jesus Christ, not through our own efforts.

Signs will follow those who believe.

Mark 16:17-18

“These signs will accompany those who have believed: in my name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mk+16%3A18> There are times when God intervenes miraculously to protect his followers. Occasionally he gives them special powers. Paul handled a snake safely (Acts 28:5), and the disciples healed the sick (Matthew 10:1; Acts 3:7, 8).

This does not mean, however, that we should test God by putting ourselves in dangerous situations or try to tempt the laws of nature. No one should build a religion on a portion of Scripture. God calls us to live as new citizens in the eternal Kingdom and to witness by word and service to God's love and power.

Our witness should center on Jesus, not on superhero-type stunts.

God performed miracles through Jesus.

Acts 2:22-24

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. “But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

These people listened intently to Paul, but the word *Gentiles* brought out all their anger and exposed their pride. They were supposed to be a light to the Gentiles, telling them about the one true God. But they had renounced that mission by becoming separatist and exclusive. God's plan, however, would not be thwarted; the Gentiles were hearing the Good News through Jewish Christians, such as Paul and Peter.

The sons of Aaron offer strange fire before the Lord.

Leviticus 10:1-2

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD,

which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

What was the "wrong kind of fire" that Nadab and Abihu offered before the Lord? The fire on the altar of burnt offering was never to go out (6:12, 13), implying that it was holy. It is possible that Nadab and Abihu brought coals of fire to the altar from another source, making the sacrifice unholy. It has also been suggested that the two priests gave an offering at an unprescribed time. Whatever explanation is correct, the point is that Nadab and Abihu abused their office as priests in a flagrant act of disrespect to God, who had just reviewed with them precisely how they were to conduct worship.

As leaders, they had special responsibility to obey God. In their position, they could easily lead many people astray. If God has commissioned you to lead or teach others, never take that role for granted or abuse it. Stay faithful to God and follow his instructions.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lev+10%3A2> Aaron's sons were careless about following the laws for sacrifices. In response, God destroyed them with a blast of fire. Performing the sacrifices was an act of obedience. Doing them correctly showed respect for God. It is easy for us to grow careless about obeying God, to live our way instead of God's.

But if one way were just as good as another, God would not have commanded us to live his way. He always has good reasons for his commands, and we always place ourselves in danger when we consciously or carelessly disobey them.

God sends brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah.

Genesis 19:24-26

Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

In the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, we see two facets of God's character: his great patience (agreeing to spare a wicked city for 10 good people) and his fierce anger (destroying both cities). As we grow spiritually, we should find ourselves

developing not only a deeper respect for God because of his anger toward sin but also a deeper love for God because of his patience when we sin.

Signs and wonders were done by the apostles.

Acts 14:3

Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.

We may wish we could perform a miraculous act that would convince everyone once and for all that Jesus is the Lord. But we see here that even if we could perform a miracle, it wouldn't convince everyone. God gave these men power to do great wonders as confirmation of the message of grace, but people were still divided. Don't spend your time and energy wishing for miracles. Sow your seeds of the Good News on the best ground you can find in the best way you can, and leave the convincing to the Holy Spirit.

God testified with signs and wonders.

Hebrews 2:3-4

How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

Eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry had handed down his teachings to the readers of this book. These readers were second-generation believers who had not seen Christ in the flesh. They are like us; we have not seen Jesus personally. We base our belief in Jesus on the eyewitness accounts recorded in the Bible. See John 20:29 for Jesus' encouragement to those who believe without ever having seen him.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Heb+2%3A4> "God confirmed the message" continues the thought from

Those who had heard Jesus speak and then had passed on his words also had the truth of their words confirmed by "signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit." In the book of Acts, miracles and gifts of the Spirit authenticated the Good News wherever it was preached

Chapter 3

An angel appears in a blazing fire in the midst of a bush.

Exodus 3:2-3

The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."

God spoke to Moses from an unexpected source: a burning bush. When Moses saw it, he went to investigate. God may use unexpected sources when communicating to us too, whether people, thoughts, or experiences. Be willing to investigate, and be open to God's surprises.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+3%3A2-4> Moses saw a burning bush and spoke with God. Many people in the Bible experienced God in visible (not necessarily human) form. Abraham saw the smoking firepot and flaming torch (Genesis 15:17);

Jacob wrestled with a man (Genesis 32:24-29). When the slaves were freed from Egypt, God led them by pillars of cloud and fire (13:17-22).

God made such appearances to encourage his new nation, to guide them, and to prove the reliability of his verbal message.

The earth opened and swallowed the complainers.

Numbers 16:31-35

He had hardly finished speaking the words when the ground suddenly split open beneath them. [32] The earth opened up and swallowed the men, along with their

households and the followers who were standing with them, and everything they owned. [33] So they went down alive into the grave, along with their belongings. The earth closed over them, and they all vanished. [34] All of the people of Israel fled as they heard their screams, fearing that the earth would swallow them, too. [35] Then fire blazed forth from the Lord and burned up the 250 men who were offering incense.

Although the families of Dathan and Abiram were swallowed up, the sons of Korah were not wiped out.

Just one day after Korah and his followers were executed for grumbling and complaining against God, the Israelites started all over with more muttering and complaining. Their negative attitude only caused them to rebel even more and to bring about even greater trouble.

It eroded their faith in God and encouraged thoughts of giving up and turning back. The path to open rebellion against God begins with dissatisfaction and skepticism, then moves to grumbling about both God and present circumstances.

The King's hand was dried up when he spoke against the prophet.

1 Kings 13:4-5

Now when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar in Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, "Seize him." But his hand which he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself. The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.

Three hundred years later, this prophecy was fulfilled in every detail when Josiah killed the pagan priests at their own altars. The story is found in 2 Kings 23:1-20.

This prophet had been given strict orders from God not to eat or drink anything while on his mission (13:9).

He died because he listened to a man who claimed to have a message from God, rather than to God himself.

This prophet should have followed God's word instead of hearsay. Trust what God's Word says rather than what someone claims is true. And disregard what others claim are messages from God if their words contradict the Bible.

God multiplied signs and wonders in Egypt.

Exodus 7:3-4

"But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. "When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring out my hosts, my people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments.

God made Moses "seem like God to Pharaoh"—in other words, a powerful person who deserved to be listened to. Pharaoh himself was considered a god, so he recognized Moses as one of his peers. His refusal to give in to Moses shows, however, that he did not feel inferior to Moses.

How were these wise men and sorcerers able to duplicate Moses' miracles? Some of their feats involved trickery or illusion, and some may have used satanic power since worshiping gods of the underworld was part of their religion. Ironically, whenever they duplicated one of Moses' plagues, it only made matters worse. If the magicians had been as powerful as God, they would have reversed the plagues, not added to them.

Vast numbers of Quail arrive in Israel's camp.

Exodus 16:11-15

And the Lord said to Moses, [12] "I have heard the people's complaints. Now tell them, 'In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.' "

[13] That evening vast numbers of quail arrived and covered the camp. The next morning the desert all around the camp was wet with dew. [14] When the dew disappeared later in the morning, thin flakes, white like frost, covered the ground.

[15] The Israelites were puzzled when they saw it. "What is it?" they asked. And Moses told them, "It is the food the Lord has given you.

God promised to meet the Hebrews' need for food in the desert, but he decided to test their obedience. God wanted to see if they would obey his detailed instructions.

We can learn to trust him as our Lord only by following. We can learn to obey by taking small steps of obedience.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+16%3A14-16> Manna (16:31) appeared on the ground each day as thin flakes like frost. The people gathered it, ground it like grain, and made it into honey-tasting pancakes. For the Israelites the manna was a gift—it came every day and was just what they needed. It satisfied their temporary physical need. In John 6:48-51

Jesus compares himself to manna. Christ is our daily bread who satisfies our eternal, spiritual need.

Fire came down and destroyed the king's messengers.

2 Kings 1:9-12

Then he sent an army captain with fifty soldiers to arrest him. They found him sitting on top of a hill. The captain said to him, "Man of God, the king has commanded you to come along with us."

[10] But Elijah replied to the captain, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and destroy you and your fifty men!" Then fire fell from heaven and killed them all.

[11] So the king sent another captain with fifty men. The captain said to him, "Man of God, the king says that you must come down right away."

[12] Elijah replied, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and destroy you and your fifty men!" And again the fire of God fell from heaven and killed them all.

Notice how the third captain went to Elijah. Although the first two captains called Elijah "man of God," they were not being genuine—God was not in their hearts. The third captain also called him "man of God," but he humbly begged for mercy. His attitude showed respect for God and his power and saved the lives of his men. Effective living begins with a right attitude toward God. Before religious words come to your mouth, make sure they are from your heart. Let respect, humility, and servanthood characterize your attitude toward God and others

Chapter 4

Water flows out of the rock at Horeb.

Exodus 17:6-7

“Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us, or not?”

Again the people complained about their problem instead of praying. Some problems can be solved by careful thought or by rearranging our priorities. Some can be solved by discussion and good counsel. But some problems can be solved only by prayer. We should make a determined effort to pray when we feel like complaining because complaining only raises our level of stress. Prayer quiets our thoughts and emotions and prepares us to listen.

Ananias died for lying to the Holy Spirit.

Acts 5:5

And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.

The sin Ananias and Sapphira committed was not stinginess or holding back part of the money—it was their choice whether or not to sell the land and how much to give. Their sin was lying to God and God's people, saying they gave the whole amount but holding back some for themselves and trying to make themselves appear more generous than they really were. This act was judged harshly because dishonesty, greed, and covetousness are destructive in a church, preventing the

Holy Spirit from working effectively. All lying is bad, but when we lie to try to deceive God and his people about our relationship with him, we destroy our testimony for Christ.

The rod of Aaron puts forth buds.

Numbers 17:8

Now on the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony; and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds.

After witnessing spectacular miracles, seeing the Egyptians punished by the plagues, and experiencing the actual presence of God, the Israelites still complained and rebelled. We wonder how they could be so blind and ignorant, and yet we often repeat this same pattern. We have centuries of evidence, the Bible in many translations, and the convincing results of archaeological and historical studies. But people today continue to disobey God and go their own way. Like the Israelites, we are more concerned about our physical condition than our spiritual condition. We can escape this pattern only by paying attention to all the signs of God's presence that we have been given. Has God guided and protected you? Has he answered your prayers? Do you know people who have experienced remarkable blessings and healings? Do you know Bible stories about the way God has led his people? Focus your thoughts on what God has done, and rebellion will become unthinkable.

Saul is suddenly made blind.

Acts 13:11

“Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time.” And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.

Here Paul learns an important lesson concerning the power of God.

Elijah calls for fire to fall down from heaven.**1 Kings 18:30-39**

Then Elijah called to the people, “Come over here!” They all crowded around him as he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been torn down. [31] He took twelve stones, one to represent each of the tribes of Israel, [32] and he used the stones to rebuild the Lord’s altar. Then he dug a trench around the altar large enough to hold about three gallons. [33] He piled wood on the altar, cut the bull into pieces, and laid the pieces on the wood. Then he said, “Fill four large jars with water, and pour the water over the offering and the wood.” After they had done this, [34] he said, “Do the same thing again!” And when they were finished, he said, “Now do it a third time!” So they did as he said, [35] and the water ran around the altar and even overflowed the trench.

[36] At the customary time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed, “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all this at your command.

[37] O Lord, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself.”

[38] Immediately the fire of the Lord flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the ditch! [39] And when the people saw it, they fell on their faces and cried out, “The Lord is God! The Lord is God!”

Under penalty of death, God had forbidden anyone to be a priest who was not from the tribe of Levi (Numbers 3:10). Levites were assured of lifetime support from the

tithe, so they did not have to spend time farming, worrying about tribal interests, or fearing for their financial future. Jeroboam's new priests were financed by the king and his fees.

They had to mix priestly and secular duties, and they quickly fell into party politics. Because they didn't have job security, these priests were easily corrupted by bribes. Jeroboam's disobedience was the downfall of true religion in the northern kingdom.

Under penalty of death, God had forbidden anyone to be a priest who was not from the tribe of Levi (Numbers 3:10). Levites were assured of lifetime support from the tithe, so they did not have to spend time farming, worrying about tribal interests, or fearing for their financial future. Jeroboam's new priests were financed by the king and his fees.

They had to mix priestly and secular duties, and they quickly fell into party politics. Because they didn't have job security, these priests were easily corrupted by bribes. Jeroboam's disobedience was the downfall of true religion in the northern kingdom.

Chapter 5

The bitter waters become sweet.

Exodus 15:25

Then he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them.

The water in the oasis of Marah is contrasted with the springs in the oasis of Elim. Marah stands for the unbelieving, grumbling attitude of the people who would not trust God. Elim stands for God's bountiful provision. How easy it is to grumble and complain too quickly, only to be embarrassed by God's help! We must be patient for God's kindness and help. Don't let your negative attitude erode your trust in God.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+15%3A26> God promised that if the people obeyed him, they would not suffer from the diseases that plagued the Egyptians. Little did they know that many of the moral laws he later gave them were designed to keep them free from sickness. For example, following God's law against prostitution would keep them free of venereal disease.

God's laws for us are often designed to keep us from harm. Men and women are complex beings. Our physical, emotional, and spiritual lives are intertwined. Modern medicine is now acknowledging what these laws assumed. If we want God to care for us, we need to submit to his directions for living.

The dry valley was filled with pools of water.

2 Kings 3:16-25

And he said, “This is what the Lord says: This dry valley will be filled with pools of water! [17] You will see neither wind nor rain, says the Lord, but this valley will be filled with water. You will have plenty for yourselves and for your cattle and your other animals. [18] But this is only a simple thing for the Lord, for he will make you victorious over the army of Moab!

[19] You will conquer the best of their cities, even the fortified ones. You will cut down all their trees, stop up all their springs, and ruin all their good land with stones.”

[20] And sure enough, the next day at about the time when the morning sacrifice was offered, water suddenly appeared! It was flowing from the direction of Edom, and soon there was water everywhere.

[21] Meanwhile, when the people of Moab heard about the three armies marching against them, they mobilized every man who could fight, young and old, and stationed themselves along their border.

[22] But when they got up the next morning, the sun was shining across the water, making it look as red as blood. [23] “its blood!” the Moabites exclaimed. “The three armies have attacked and killed each other! Let’s go and collect the plunder!”

[24] When they arrived at the Israelite camp, the army of Israel rushed out and attacked the Moabites, who turned and ran. The army of Israel chased them into the land of Moab, destroying everything as they went. [25] They destroyed the cities, covered their good land with stones, stopped up the springs, and cut down the good trees. Finally, only Kir-hareseth was left, but even that came under attack.

Elisha often stayed with a kind family in Shunem. When the son suddenly died, his mother traveled to Mount Carmel to find Elisha. He returned with her and raised the boy from the dead. Elisha then went to his home in Gilgal.

The empty vessels were filled with oil.

2 Kings 4:3-7

And Elisha said, “Borrow as many empty jars as you can from your friends and neighbors. [4] Then go into your house with your sons and shut the door behind you. Pour olive oil from your flask into the jars, setting the jars aside as they are filled.”

[5] So she did as she was told. Her sons brought many jars to her, and she filled one after another. [6] Soon every container was full to the brim!

“Bring me another jar,” she said to one of her sons.

“There aren’t any more!” he told her. And then the olive oil stopped flowing.

[7] When she told the man of God what had happened, he said to her, “Now sell the olive oil and pay your debts, and there will be enough money left over to support you and your sons.”

This chapter records four of God's miracles through Elisha: providing money for a poverty-stricken widow (4:1-7); raising a dead boy to life (4:32-37); purifying poisonous food (4:38-41); and providing food for 100 men (4:42-44). These miracles show God's tenderness and care for those who are faithful to him.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Ki+4%3A6>The woman and her sons collected jars from their neighbors, pouring olive oil into them from their one flask. The olive oil was used for cooking, for lamps, and for fuel. The oil stopped flowing only when they ran out of containers. The number of jars they gathered was an indication of their faith. God's provision was as large as their faith and willingness to obey. Beware of limiting God's blessings by a lack of faith and obedience. God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

Chapter 6

An ax head floats.

2 Kings 6:5-7

But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, my master! For it was borrowed." Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And when he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw it in there, and made the iron float. He said, "Take it up for yourself." So he put out his hand and took it.

The incident of the floating ax head is recorded to show God's care and provision for those who trust him, even in the insignificant events of everyday life. God is always present. Placed in the Bible between the healing of an Aramean general and the deliverance of Israel's army, this miracle also shows Elisha's personal contact with the students in the groups of the prophets. Although he had the respect of kings, Elisha never forgot to care for the faithful. Don't let the importance of your work crowd out your concern for human need.

The Lord brings water from the hollow place.

Judges 15:18-19

Then he became very thirsty, and he called to the LORD and said, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of your servant, and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" But God split the hollow place that is in

Lehi so that water came out of it. When he drank, his strength returned and he revived. Therefore he named it En-hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day.

The Lord's strength came upon Samson, but he was proud and boasted only of his own strength. "With the jawbone of a donkey... I've killed a thousand men!" he said. Pride can cause us to take credit for work we've done only because of God's strength.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jdg+15%3A18> Samson was physically and emotionally exhausted. After a great personal victory, his attitude declined quickly into self-pity—"Must I now die of thirst?" Emotionally, we are most vulnerable after a great effort or when faced with real physical needs. Severe depression often follows great achievements, so don't be surprised if you feel drained after a personal victory. During these times of vulnerability, avoid the temptation to think that God owes you for your efforts. It was *his* strength that gave you victory. Concentrate on keeping your attitudes, actions, and words focused on God instead of yourself.

Five loaves and two fish feed thousands.

Matthew 14:15-21

That evening the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and it is getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves."

[16] But Jesus replied, "That isn't necessary—you feed them."

[17] "Impossible!" they exclaimed. "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish!"

[18] "Bring them here," he said. [19] Then he told the people to sit down on the grass. And he took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and asked God's blessing on the food. Breaking the loaves into pieces, he gave some of the bread and fish to each disciple, and the disciples gave them to the people. [20] They all ate as much as they wanted, and they picked up twelve baskets of leftovers. [21] About five thousand men had eaten from those five loaves, in addition to all the women and children!

The miraculous feeding of the 5,000 occurred on the shores of the Sea of Galilee near Bethsaida. Jesus then sent his disciples across the lake. Several hours later they encountered a storm, and Jesus came to them—walking on the water. The boat then landed at Gennesaret.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+14%3A13-14> Jesus sought solitude after the news of John's death. Sometimes we may need to deal with our grief alone. Jesus did not dwell on his grief but returned to the ministry he came to do.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+14%3A14> Jesus performed some miracles as signs of his identity. He used other miracles to teach important truths. But here we read that he healed people because he "had compassion on them." Jesus was, and is, a loving, caring, and feeling person. When you are suffering, remember that Jesus hurts with you. He has compassion on you.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+14%3A19-21> Jesus multiplied five loaves and two fish to feed over 5,000 people. What he was originally given seemed insufficient, but in his hands it became more than enough. We often feel that our contribution to Jesus is meager, but he can use and multiply whatever we give him, whether it is talent, time, or treasure. It is when we give them to Jesus that our resources are multiplied.

The ravens bring bread and meat to Elijah.

1 Kings 17:5-6

So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook.

In a nation that was required by law to care for its prophets, it is ironic that God turned to ravens (unclean birds) and a widow (a foreigner from Jezebel's home territory) to care for Elijah. God has help where we least expect it. He provides for us in ways that go beyond our narrow definitions or expectations. No matter how bitter our trials or how seemingly hopeless our situation, we should look for God's caring touch. We may find his providence in some strange places!

By a miracle, Elisha supplied the town with good water.

2 Kings 2:19-22

Now the leaders of the town of Jericho visited Elisha. "We have a problem, my lord," they told him. "This town is located in beautiful natural surroundings, as you can see. But the water is bad, and the land is unproductive."

[20] Elisha said, "Bring me a new bowl with salt in it." So they brought it to him. [21] Then he went out to the spring that supplied the town with water and threw the salt into it. And he said, "This is what the Lord says: I have made this water wholesome. It will no longer cause death or infertility." [22] And sure enough! The water has remained wholesome ever since, just as Elisha said.

Chapter 7

The bread is multiplied with additional supply.

2 Kings 4:42-44

Now a man came from Baal-shalishah, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And he said, "Give them to the people that they may eat." His attendant said, "What, will I set this before a hundred men?" But he said, "Give them to the people that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have some left over.'" So he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD.

Elisha's prayer and method of raising the dead boy show God's personal care for hurting people. We must express genuine concern for others as we carry God's message to them. Only then will we faithfully represent our compassionate Father in heaven.

Jesus heals two men of blindness.

Matthew 20:29-34

As Jesus and the disciples left the city of Jericho, a huge crowd followed behind. [30] Two blind men were sitting beside the road. When they heard that Jesus was coming that way, they began shouting, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

[31] The crowd told them to be quiet, but they only shouted louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

These blind beggars could see that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, while the religious leaders who witnessed Jesus' miracles were blind to his identity, refusing to open their eyes to the truth. Seeing with your eyes doesn't guarantee seeing with your heart.

All who came to Jesus were healed.

Acts 5:16

Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.

People who passed within Peter's shadow were healed, not by Peter's shadow, but by God's power working through Peter. What did these miraculous healings do for the early church? (1) They attracted new believers; (2) they confirmed the truth of the apostles' teaching; and (3) they demonstrated that the power of the Messiah, who had been crucified and risen, was now with his followers.

God's glory was healed through the raising of Lazarus.

John 11:38-44

"Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them.

But Martha, the dead man's sister, said, "Lord, by now the smell will be terrible because he has been dead for four days."

[40] Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that you will see God's glory if you believe?" [41] So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. [42] You always hear me, but I said it out

loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so they will believe you sent me." [43] Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" [44] And Lazarus came out, bound in grave clothes, his face wrapped in a head cloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"

Jesus had performed many miracles, but most people still didn't believe in him. Likewise, many today won't believe despite all God does. Don't be discouraged if your witness for Christ doesn't turn as many to him as you'd like.

Chapter 8

Those who look at the brazen serpent on the pole shall live.

Numbers 21:6-9

So the Lord sent poisonous snakes among them, and many of them were bitten and died. [7] Then the people came to Moses and cried out, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take away the snakes." So Moses prayed for the people.

[8] Then the Lord told him, "Make a replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to the top of a pole. Those who are bitten will live if they simply look at it!" [9] So Moses made a snake out of bronze and attached it to the top of a pole. Whenever those who were bitten looked at the bronze snake, they recovered!

God used poisonous snakes to punish the people for their unbelief and complaining. The wilderness where they traveled has a variety of snakes. Some hide in the sand and attack without warning. Both the Israelites and the Egyptians had a great fear of snakes. A bite by a poisonous snake often meant a slow death with intense suffering.

When the bronze snake was hung on the pole, the Israelites didn't know the fuller meaning Jesus Christ would bring to this event (see John 3:14, 15). Jesus explained that just as the Israelites were healed of their sickness by looking at the snake on the pole, all believers today can be saved from the sickness of sin by looking to Jesus' death on the cross. It was not the snake that healed the people but their belief that God could heal them. This belief was demonstrated by their obedience to

God's instructions. In the same way, we should continue to look to Christ (see Hebrews 12:2).

The demons were subject to the disciples.

Luke 10:17

The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name."

The disciples had seen tremendous results as they ministered in Jesus' name and with his authority. They were elated by the victories they had witnessed, and Jesus shared their enthusiasm. He helped them get their priorities right, however, by reminding them of their most important victory—that their names were registered in heaven. This honor was more important than any of their accomplishments. As we see God's wonders at work in and through us, we should not lose sight of the greatest wonder of all—our heavenly citizenship.

.

Naaman is healed of leprosy.

2 Kings 5:1-14

The king of Aram had high admiration for Naaman, the commander of his army, because through him the Lord had given Aram great victories. But though Naaman was a mighty warrior, he suffered from leprosy.

[2] Now groups of Aramean raiders had invaded the land of Israel, and among their captives was a young girl who had been given to Naaman's wife as a maid. [3] One day the girl said to her mistress, "I wish my master would go to see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy."

[4] So Naaman told the king what the young girl from Israel had said. [5] "Go and visit the prophet," the king told him. "I will send a letter of introduction for you to carry to the king of Israel." So Naaman started out, taking as gifts 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and ten sets of clothing. [6] The letter to the king of Israel said: "With this letter I present my servant Naaman. I want you to heal him of his leprosy."

[7] When the king of Israel read it, he tore his clothes in dismay and said, "This man sends me a leper to heal! Am I God that I can kill and give life? He is only trying to find an excuse to invade us again."

[8] But when Elisha, the man of God, heard about the king's reaction, he sent this message to him: "Why are you so upset? Send Naaman to me, and he will learn that there is a true prophet here in Israel."

[9] So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and waited at the door of Elisha's house. [10] But Elisha sent a messenger out to him with this message: "Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will be restored, and you will be healed of leprosy."

[11] But Naaman became angry and stalked away. "I thought he would surely come out to meet me!" he said. "I expected him to wave his hand over the leprosy and call on the name of the Lord his God and heal me! [12] Aren't the Abana River and Pharpar River of Damascus better than all the rivers of Israel put together? Why shouldn't I wash in them and be healed?" So Naaman turned and went away in a rage.

[13] But his officers tried to reason with him and said, "Sir, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, wouldn't you have done it? So you should certainly obey him when he says simply to go and wash and be cured!" [14] So Naaman went down to the Jordan River and dipped himself seven times, as the man of God had instructed him. And his flesh became as healthy as a young child's, and he was healed!

The little girl's faith and Naaman's quest contrast with the stubbornness of Israel's king (5:7). A leader in mighty Aram sought the God of Israel; Israel's own king would not. We don't know the little girl's name or much about her, but her brief word to her mistress brought healing and faith in God to a powerful Aramean captain. God had placed her for a purpose, and she was faithful. Where has God put you? No matter how humble or small your position, God can use you to spread his Word. Look for opportunities to tell others what God can do. There's no telling who will hear your message!

Philip preached and performed signs.

Acts 8:6

The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.

Chapter 9

The lame man leaped and walked.

Acts 14:8-10

At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made well, said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and began to walk.

Peter and John heal the man at the temple gate.

Acts 3:1-10

Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. [2] As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. [3] When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money.

[4] Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!" [5] The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting a gift. [6] But Peter said, "I don't have any money for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"

[7] Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and anklebones were healed and strengthened. [8] He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

[9] All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. [10] When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded!

The Jews observed three times of prayer—morning (9:00 AM), afternoon (3:00 PM), and evening (sunset). At these times devout Jews and Gentiles who believed in God often would go to the Temple to pray. Peter and John were going to the Temple for the afternoon prayer service.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A2> The Beautiful Gate was an entrance to the Temple, not to the city. It was one of the favored entrances, and many people passed through it on their way to worship. Giving money to beggars was considered praise worthy in the Jewish religion. So the beggar wisely placed himself where he would be seen by the most people who were on their way to worship at the Temple.

The lame man asked for money, but Peter gave him something much better—the use of his legs. We often ask God to solve a small problem, but he wants to give us a whole new life and help for all our problems. He may say, "I've got something even better for you." You may ask God for what you want, but don't be surprised when he gives you what you really *need*.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A6> "In the name of Jesus Christ" means "by the authority of Jesus Christ." The apostles were doing this healing through the Holy Spirit's power, not their own.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A7-10> In his excitement, the formerly lame man began to jump and walk around. He also praised God! Then others were awed by God's power. Don't forget to thank people who help you, but also remember to praise God for his care and protection.

Anointed handkerchiefs and aprons from Paul bring healing to the sick.

Acts 19:11-12

God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.

"The province of Asia" refers to Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey. During this time, Paul and his coworkers spread the Good News throughout the land.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A13> These Jews traveled from town to town making a living by claiming to heal people and drive out demons. Often they would recite a whole list of names in their incantation to be sure of including the right deity. Here they were trying to use Jesus' name in an effort to match Paul's power.

Paralyzed man of many years was healed.

Acts 9:33-34

There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed. Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up.

Peter traveled to the ancient crossroads town of Lydda, where he healed crippled Aeneas. The believers in Joppa, an old port city, sent for him after a wonderful woman died. Peter went and brought her back to life. While in Joppa, Peter had a vision that led him to take the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile, in Caesarea.

Paul, through Jesus, heals Publius's father.

Acts 28:7-9

Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us courteously three days. And it happened that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with recurrent fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him. After this had happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured.

Paul continued to minister to others, even as a shipwrecked prisoner. On this trip alone, the Roman army officer, the chief official of Malta, and many others were affected. It is no wonder that the Good News spread like wildfire.

Chapter 10

An evil spirit is cast out of a woman.

Acts 16:18

She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.

The "Spirit of Jesus" is another name for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had closed the door twice for Paul, so Paul must have wondered which geographical direction to take in spreading the Good News. Then, in a vision (16:9), Paul was given definite direction, and he and his companions obediently traveled into Macedonia. The Holy Spirit guides us to the right places, but he also guides us away from the wrong places.

As we seek God's will, we need to know what God wants us to do and where he wants us to go, but we also need to know what God does not want us to do and where he does not want us to go

The blind receive their sight.

Luke 7:20-22

When the men came to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, 'Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'" At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind. And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.

The proofs listed here for Jesus being the Messiah are significant. They consist of observable deeds, not theories—actions that Jesus' contemporaries saw and reported for us to read today. The prophets had said that the Messiah would do these very acts (see Isaiah 35:5, 6; 61:1). These physical proofs helped John—and will help all of us—to recognize who Jesus is.

Unknown believers were casting out demons

Mark 9:38

John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us."

Jesus was not saying that being indifferent or neutral toward him is as good as being committed. As he explained in Matthew 12:30, "Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me is actually working against me." In both cases, Jesus was pointing out that neutrality toward him is not possible. Nevertheless his followers will not all resemble each other or belong to the same groups. People who are on Jesus' side have the same goal of building up the Kingdom of God, and they should not let their differences interfere with this goal. Those who share a common faith in Christ should cooperate. People don't have to be just like us to be following Jesus with us.

The Lord confirmed his word with signs.

Mark 16:20

And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.] [And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself

sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.]

Mark's Gospel emphasizes Christ's power as well as his servanthood. Jesus' life and teaching turned the world upside down and continue to do so. The world sees power as a way to gain control over others. But Jesus, with all authority and power in heaven and earth, chose to serve others. He held children in his arms, healed the sick, washed the disciples' feet, and died for the sins of the world. Jesus' followers today receive this same power to serve. As believers, we are called to be servants of Christ. As Christ served, so we are to serve.

Chapter 11

The paralyzed and lame are healed.

Acts 8:7

For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.

Jesus encountered and drove out many evil spirits during his ministry on earth. Evil spirits, or demons, are ruled by Satan. Most scholars believe that demons are fallen angels who joined Satan in his rebellion against God. They can cause a person to be mute, deaf, blind, or insane and also tempt people to sin. Although they can be powerful, they are not able to read our minds and cannot be everywhere at once.

Demons are real and active, but Jesus has given authority over them to his followers. Although Satan is allowed to work in our world, God is in complete control. He can drive demons out and end their destructive work in people's lives. Eventually Satan and his demons will be thrown into the lake of fire, forever ending their evil work in the world (Revelation 20:10).

The signs of a true apostle was perfumed among them.

2 Corinthians 12:12

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.

Paul was not merely revealing his feelings; he was defending his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul was hurt that the church in Corinth doubted and questioned him, so he defended himself for the cause of the Good News, not to satisfy his ego. When you are "put on trial," do you think only about saving your reputation or are you more concerned about what people will think about Christ?

Promised son was raised from the dead by Elijah.

1 Kings 17:17-24

Some time later, the woman's son became sick. He grew worse and worse, and finally he died. [18] She then said to Elijah, "O man of God, what have you done to me? Have you come here to punish my sins by killing my son?"

[19] But Elijah replied, "Give me your son." And he took the boy's body from her, carried him up to the upper room, where he lived, and laid the body on his bed. [20] Then Elijah cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, why have you brought tragedy on this widow who has opened her home to me, causing her son to die?"

[21] And he stretched himself out over the child three times and cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, please let this child's life return to him." "

[22] The Lord heard Elijah's prayer, and the life of the child returned, and he came back to life! [23] Then Elijah brought him down from the upper room and gave him to his mother. "Look, your son is alive!" he said.

[24] Then the woman told Elijah, "Now I know for sure that you are a man of God, and that the Lord truly speaks through you."

Even when God has done a miracle in our lives, our troubles may not be over. The famine was a terrible experience, but the worst was yet to come. God's provision is never given in order to let us rest upon it. We need to depend on him as we face each new trial.

In a showdown with the false prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, Elijah set out to prove to evil Ahab that only the Lord is God. Elijah then killed the false prophets by the Kishon Valley and fled back to Jezreel.

A special gift of healing are given to some.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another he gives the gift of special knowledge. [9] The Spirit gives special faith to another, and to someone else he gives the power to heal the sick. [10] He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and to another the ability to prophesy.

He gives someone else the ability to know whether it is really the Spirit of God or another spirit that is speaking. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, and another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. [11] It is the one and only Holy Spirit who distributes these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

All Christians have faith. Some, however, have the spiritual gift of faith, which is an unusual measure of trust in the power of God.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+12%3A10> "The ability to prophesy" does not just refer to predicting the future; it can also mean giving a message received from God to the community of believers: "One who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them" (14:3).

The prophet Joel had written the words of the Lord, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy" (Joel 2:28). As with the gift of faith, the ability to share one's faith with power is available to everyone (see 14:1-5), but to some the Spirit gives a special measure of this gift. Paul wrote in Romans, "In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well.

So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you" (Romans 12:6).

Some have interpreted "prophecy" to be fulfilled in various sermons throughout church history. Others, however, say that prophecy is not a sermon, but a spontaneous, Spirit-inspired message that is orally delivered in the congregation for the edification and encouragement of the body of Christ.

<http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+12%3A10> Opinions differ over exactly what Paul meant by "unknown languages." Some believe that this refers to earthly languages that a person did not know before (the same as the gift described in Acts 2:4-8). Other scholars say that this refers to an "ecstatic" language, a "heavenly" language. Most likely the second view is correct. Probably the only time that the word "tongues" refers to other earthly languages is when describing Pentecost. The rest of the time in the New Testament, the word refers to ecstatic languages unknown to anyone—languages of angels (13:1).

Disciples had authority to cast out unclean spirits.

Matthew 10:1

Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Jesus *called* his 12 disciples. He didn't draft them, force them, or ask them to volunteer; he chose them to serve him in a special way. Christ calls us today. He doesn't twist our arms and make us do something we don't want to do. We can choose to join him or remain behind. When Christ calls you to follow him, how do you respond?

Chapter 12

A dead man lives when his body touched the bones of Elisha.

2 Kings 13:21

As they were burying a man, behold, they saw a marauding band; and they cast the man into the grave of Elisha. And when the man touched the bones of Elisha he revived and stood up on his feet.

Elisha was dead, but his good influence remained, even causing miracles. This demonstrated that Elisha was indeed a prophet of God. It also attested to God's power—no pagan idol had ever raised anyone from the dead. This miracle served as one more reminder to Israel that it had rejected God's word as given through Elisha.

Jesus gave power and authority to his disciples to heal the sick.

Luke 9:1

And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.

Note Jesus' methods of leadership. He empowered his disciples (9:1), gave them specific instructions so they knew what to do (9:3, 4), told them how to deal with tough times (9:5), and held them accountable (9:10). As you lead others, study the Master Leader's pattern. Which of these elements do you need to incorporate into your leadership?

Some receive the gift of the working of miracles.

1 Corinthians 12:28-30

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?

All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

What is your response when a fellow Christian is honored? How do you respond when someone is suffering? We are to be happy with those who are happy, and if they are sad, share their sorrow (Romans 12:15). Too often, unfortunately, we are jealous of those who rejoice and apathetic toward those who weep. Believers are in the world together—there is no such thing as private or individualistic Christianity. We need to get involved in the lives of others and not just enjoy our own relationship with God.

Peter raises Tabitha from the dead.

Acts 9:36-41

There was a believer in Joppa named Tabitha (which in Greek is Dorcas). She was always doing kind things for others and helping the poor. [37] About this time she became ill and died. Her friends prepared her for burial and laid her in an upstairs room. [38] But they had heard that Peter was nearby at Lydda, so they sent two men to beg him, "Please come as soon as possible!"

[39] So Peter returned with them; and as soon as he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room. The room was filled with widows who were weeping and showing him the coats and other garments Dorcas had made for them. [40] But Peter asked them all to leave the room; then he knelt and prayed. Turning to the body he said, "Get up, Tabitha." And she opened her eyes! When she saw Peter, she sat up! [41] He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then he called in the widows and all the believers, and he showed them that she was alive.

Tabitha made an enormous impact on her community by "always doing kind things for others and helping the poor," by making coats and other garments (9:39). When she died, the room was filled with mourners, very likely many of the people she had helped. And when she was brought back to life, the news raced through the town. God uses great preachers like Peter and Paul, but he also uses those who have gifts of kindness like Tabitha. Rather than wishing you had other gifts, make good use of the gifts God has given you.

.

By hearing the faith, one can work miracles.

Galatians 3:5

So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

The Galatians knew that they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed, not when they obeyed the law. People still feel insecure in their faith because faith alone seems too easy. People still try to get closer to God by following rules. While certain disciplines (Bible study, prayer) and service may help us grow, they must not take the place of the Holy Spirit in us or become ends in themselves. By asking these questions, Paul hoped to get the Galatians to focus again on Christ as the foundation of their faith.

.

Working miracles does not bring one salvation.

Matthew 7:22-23

"Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?'

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

"Judgment day" is the final day of reckoning when God will settle all accounts, judging sin and rewarding faith.

If I have all faith and do not love, I am nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:1-2

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

Chapter 13 defines real love; and chapter 14 shows how love works. Love is more important than all the spiritual gifts exercised in the church body. Great faith, acts of dedication or sacrifice, and miracle-working power have little effect without love. Love makes our actions and gifts useful. Although people have different gifts, love is available to everyone.

Chapter 13

False Christs and prophets will deceive with signs and wonders.

Matthew 24:24

"For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

In times of persecution even strong believers will find it difficult to be loyal. To keep from being deceived by false messiahs, we must understand that Jesus' return will be unmistakable (Mark 13:26); no one will doubt that it is he. If you have to be told that the Messiah has come, then he hasn't (24:27). Christ's coming will be obvious to everyone.

The staff of Aaron swallowed the staffs of the magicians.

Exodus 7:11-12

Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

How were these wise men and sorcerers able to duplicate Moses' miracles? Some of their feats involved trickery or illusion, and some may have used satanic power since worshiping gods of the underworld was part of their religion. Ironically, whenever they duplicated one of Moses' plagues, it only made matters worse. If the magicians had been as powerful as God, they would have reversed the plagues, not added to them.

Be not deceived by signs and wonders.

Revelation 13:13

He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men.

Throughout the Bible we see miracles performed as proofs of God's power, love, and authority. But here we see counterfeit miracles performed to deceive. This is a reminder of Pharaoh's magicians, who duplicated Moses' signs in Egypt. True signs and miracles point us to Jesus Christ, but miracles alone can be deceptive.

That is why we must ask with respect to each miracle we see: Is this consistent with what God says in the Bible? The second beast here gains influence through the signs and wonders that he can perform on behalf of the first beast.

The second beast orders the people to worship a statue in honor of the first beast—a direct flouting of the second commandment (Exodus 20:4-6). Allowing the Bible to guide our faith and practice will keep us from being deceived by false signs, however convincing they appear to be. Any teaching that contradicts God's Word

is false.

The beast and the false prophet were thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 19:20

And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.

The fiery lake of burning sulfur is the final destination of the wicked. This lake is different from the bottomless pit referred to in 9:1. The Antichrist and the false prophet are thrown into the fiery lake. Then their leader, Satan himself, will be thrown into that lake (20:10), and finally death and the grave (20:14). Afterward, everyone whose name is not recorded in the Book of Life will be thrown into the fiery lake (20:15).

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*.

Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary