

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter Seven: Miracles

If only you believe like I believe, baby, (If only you believe like I believe) We'd get by. If only you believe in miracles, (If only you believed in miracles so would I). – Jefferson Starship

I should not be amazed. Yet, I am. So many people want miracles for love. Rocket science news flash here: songs are written by people. Those people have had experiences. Experiences like finding and losing love. Miracle songs come from the heart. Hunger songs come from the tummy. We need or want food. We need or want love. It's possible we really do need food to survive. Do we need love? I say we do. The love of someone encompasses caring and closeness to another. Like our mom, we need that. We need love. Is the love of another a miracle?

That being said, we just might need a miracle. What if that person I like does not love me? A parent is abusive? I am stranded on a desert island? We need people. We need miracles. I believe nobody can be an island. The closed hearted person is cold, unfeeling, and reclusive. Who really wants that? Is it a miracle to find a good relationship? How about good parents? I think the reason we wish and pray is because miracles are few and far between. The miracle of love is a battle.

The song above goes on to say that being with that person is all they need. That the sex was a heavenly miracle. I'm not so sure God is inclined to answer sex miracles. I believe miracles are long term. In that, they are lasting. A man is saved from cancer. A woman survives a car crash. Is a miracle a lottery winner? Some would say yes indeed! Is the perfect mate a miracle? A divorcee might say a resounding no! All we need is a miracle.

I feel that we have always been wrapped up in miracles. Although not directly related, I feel that early church history bred the desire for miracles. During the Middle-ages you could buy

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a remittance for sin in what was called an Indulgence. You could be pardoned for a crime. In later years, people began asking for many other things under indulgences. People gave money, did acts of kindness, and forgave others to receive the blessings of God. Maybe they wanted a miracle. They were willing to pay for it too.

The mindset is there. We do and God responds. We believe and God responds. We wish, pray, and hope and God responds. When he does not respond then we do more, give more, and try anything more to get what we desire. I wonder if we have been bred to expect results. Are we spoiled children when we don't get what we want?

A miracle to me is like a precious gem or a tree leaf. It's a gem because we rarely find them. It's the unexpected beautiful treasure. A gem is rich and costly. To find a miracle for free is rare indeed for many. We must pay first. Pay in time waiting, heartbreak, or tragedy crumbling around us. A miracle comes in the nick of time. Just like finding hidden treasure.

So, how is a miracle like a leaf? In two ways. One, is that we need it. There is a story of Jonah. He is a prophet that tried to avoid God. While fleeing on a boat, the men hit a great storm. They believed that throwing Jonah overboard would bring a miracle. It did by the way. Then Jonah is in the water and in need of a miracle. A great fish swallowed him. Throughout this story is peril and miracles. A leaf? I'm building to it, just hold on.

Then we find Jonah preaching to the terribly sinful city of Nineveh. They hear the word of Jonah and repent. It only lasted for a little while and they returned to their evil ways. Yet, Jonah did what God asked of him, finally. Jonah is content and leaves. In time he finds himself sitting near the city in conflict. He does not feel that God should have saved that wicked city. Then the heat comes. He prays to die.

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Jonah is choked at God for asking him to come and preach. He's angry that he did it for wicked people. He's angry at everything. Then God provided a leaf for shade. Jonah calms down. Shade was his just reward for doing what God asked. I guess it's a miracle in the heat. Then the reverse happens so to speak. A caterpillar comes on the scene and eats the leaf. I find it a miracle that there was a caterpillar in the hot desert.

Read this last exchange in Jonah 4:

But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead." 10 But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. 11 And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"

Jonah is all of us. We see miracles all over the place yet were angry. Why? Because it was not the way we wanted it. yet, it was a miracle. The leaf is the little things God does to help us. It's a miracle. The leaf is also representing our way of not appreciating those little miracles. Hence God sent a caterpillar. Have you experienced a leaf and the caterpillar?

God does many miracles. The whole book of Job is God contending with the question: why did calamity befall Job? Here we have a similar question from Jonah "why did, calamity befall me?" We are concerned with the how. Its odd that we are surprised and delighted by miracles. Then we begin to dissect why we do and don't deserved them. It's the same with calamity. Why did we deserve it? Maybe a little effort would save us? Maybe an indulgence would appease God? Can we entice a miracle?

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If that were true, then it makes sense that more miracles would happen. In fact, the miracle definition would have to be re-written. It states in Webster's dictionary "*a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency.*" If it's surprising then how can we expect it? If it's not explicable or explainable by science: how is it possible? Maybe miracles can't exist. yet, we pray for them. We wish for them.

A miracle cannot be magical. Are there words we could use like an enchantment or curse to gain a miracle? Are there certain prayers we could say? They might work if we knew exactly what to say. I feel miracles would then not be surprising anymore. They would be expected and commanded if we knew the magical words. Just use this spell and gain a miracle. Many times, I have seen spells fail in the movies. They are hit and miss. Prayers feel that way too. God is under no obligation to jump when we say jump. A wish seems to be just thrown out there in hope. Yet, we gave up a coin trying to push it along. To entice a miracle from something.

It might be surprising to many but I believe I'm a miracle baby. My mom had German measles while pregnant with me. In those days (many moons ago) that was bad news for the baby. Usually it meant deformity or mental illness. In knowing me, some would agree I'm sure. Yet, I am fairly normal. To compound that I was breach. That means I came out backwards. Go figure eh!

I tend to do things in reverse. I make mistakes and then I learn. I open my fat mouth and then I say I'm sorry. I do things and then do try and do them right. I live backwards. My body is not perfect. I am slightly deformed and I do mean slightly. The doctors took me away at birth to

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check my body before my mom held me for the first time. It was standard. Yet, here I am, a healthy 52 yr. old man. If you knew me: it's a miracle!

There is a movie made in 1981 called *Under the rainbow*. It's a parody of the making of the Wizard of Oz. In this comedy, we find the Wizard of Oz being made by Miracle pictures. The slogan is "*if the movie is good, it's a miracle.*" I feel the same about me. I had to write a 15-25-page autobiography in University. I wrote 28 pages because I'm old. I realized that many times God saved me. I have been hit by a car. Almost crushed by a bus. I've been sick with meningitis. Are they miracles that I survived or just mere brushes with death? My slogan is "if I'm still alive, it's a miracle."

I have seen many people hold onto a lucky penny or rabbits foot for good luck. People cross themselves or rub a rosary. Sometimes we just want a little protection. When that fails, then what? We need a miracle. Someone must save us or change the circumstances. Recently I had a friend who began a slow drip towards death. He was diagnosed with cancer about a year ago. All the praying, chemo, and well wishing could not save him. He very painfully and slowly faded away. It must have been terribly hard on his wife and family (and him as well).

Why did it not work out? They laid him to rest the other day. I worry about death but I don't need a miracle right now. I even might say that hopefully I don't ever need one. Yet, we love miracles. Do I want God to pull me from a burning wreck? Ah, no I don't. Let's not have a burning wreck in the first place. My friend needed a miracle. Could we say he did not get one? He is dead. How about the Jonah test? Did God provide doctors, drugs, family, money, and more throughout this terrible ordeal? Will his wife be taken care of in his absence? Is everything in his

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life till 70 yrs. old seen as a miracle? Who knows, but to say his death is unanswered prayer is just not true. What about all the little miracles?

Yet, we pin a miracle on need. I just found out that another friend died in a car crash. Gee, I need better friends, they are all leaving me. I bet he hoped for a miracle car crash story. Instead, he is laying beside my other friend (so to speak). It's not to be disrespectful or morbid. Both of these men hoped for a miracle. I believe they were good men. They did not deserve a painful car crash or a slow drip death. Yet, here we are. I'm alive not needing a miracle. They did but got none.

I don't blame God one bit. If he constantly did surprising miracles they would not be surprising but expected. If he saved our donkey all the time would we tend to lead reckless lives? Who knows? God does not sit there evaluating our existence. He is not sitting back in his lazy boy scrolling through his prayer wish list on an iPad. Scrolling down the list like Twitter looking for the right person to bless. He is not blocking some and giving smiley faces to others.

I heard a sermon series recently on Miracles. The Pastor mentioned that miracles glorify God. They tend to make his plan work better. There is a reason some miracles happen. Maybe? I think some things are not answerable on this side of heaven. We just don't know the whole picture. Yes, it would be nice if God healed us all. Sometimes I feel we miss the little miracles while looking for big ones. My life is that perfect example. I jumped off a cliff and landed on my head. I hit sand and not a rock. I married the wrong first wife yet have two great boys. Miracles?

What I really can't stand is taking a miracle and sensationalizing it. As soon as it's in the papers or in the news I'm hating it. The people always say I'm just glorifying God by telling my story. It's to promote God. I suspect it's to promote you. A miracle is not like a prayer or wish.

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We should keep them in private. A miracle can be either public or private. Yet, a famous verse in the Bible is ringing in my ears Matthew 6:5 *“When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites! They love to stand up and pray in the houses of worship and on the street corners, so that everyone will see them. I assure you, they have already been paid in full.”* Keep a miracle as a silent gift.

A miracle is possibly an answered prayer. Maybe you wished for it. If it happens, then be happy. Be mindful of all the blessings you received. It's a Christian thing to pray before every meal. I don't get it. It's to respect the Lord. Oh, I get that. I just hate it that people have to do it in public. Get over it people. God should know you respect him in all you do. Your words are ridicules. So, God won't do a miracle for someone unless they pray, read the Bible, or live a Christian life? Is God angry if you don't give a blessing at a meal? I bet many believe that deep down.

Ah, three ways to entice God for a miracle. I was reading a website that had a list. Unfortunately, they had more than three. I guess when they began it was just three. Then there must have been a brain storm. Oh, I forgot about this part or that. There are at-least 8 ways now, or so. You must believe. You must be devoted to God. You must avoid spiritual warfare. There are more but you get the picture. I personally like the spiritual warfare one. Is it just us who invite the devil to play in our lives? I'm not so sure that is always the case.

Sometimes we are doing the right thing. My friend dying of cancer was a very good minister. Was there something bad in his life that warranted no miracle? Maybe his unbelief hurt him. Possibly he did not believe in God enough. I was reading a story of a miracle. Well, I did not think it really was but who knows. A lady was rammed off a bridge in her car. In the water, she felt God tell her how to get out and what to do. She said she was calmed by the experience.

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Then the woman preceded to take the network tour series telling her story. So, it was not a bad thing that she was rammed off the bridge? What did she do to deserve that? Oh, she must have been a good person that was done wrong. God came in a rescued her. What bothers me is my two friends. Good people that are now dead people. What did they do wrong?

I have read about so many miracles. In another book I mentioned a girl who was thrown into a dumpster as a baby. She was saved by a man who heard the cries. A miracle? People have said of a plane crash that it was a miracle nobody that got hurt. If they died; only a miracle could have saved them. We have all heard about miracles. It's my view that miracles are all over the map. Some are given and others are not. Bad people get miracles just as much as good people do. Miracle seem to go where they want more than where they're needed.

Matthew 5:45 *“so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.”*

Its easy to quote one scripture. Yet, if you go back a few verses we get a bigger meaning. Jesus says that we should help the evil and good. I mention verse 45 because it says *“so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”* We should pray for all people regardless of their holiness. That explains a miracle. Of course, for those who do not believe in God it does not. The dictionary believes someone preforms the miracle. If a random act just happens that way then it might just be dumb luck, not a miracle.

However, if it's God then verse 45 is a killer. Miracles happen because it's Gods will. Who is God to judge if a miracle is worthy? Good question. It comes down to what you believe. Maybe that website was right on how to get a miracle: belief and faith play a role. That's only true when you believe they come from God. A miracle is not based on faith. It's not based on

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holiness. The Bible goes out of it's way to drive that home. Rahab was a prostitute and probably not very holy. What about Ruth? She was a non-Jewish person. You could argue they believed at some point. Yet, was it a miracle that Ruth found Boaz. Was it a miracle that the Jewish spies went to Rehabs house and not another?

It's a miracle the Jewish spies were not caught. It's a miracle that God came into Rehabs life. These stories might not be familiar to you, but the intent is. God shines his love and grace on whom he chooses. He does this for his reasons. I am utterly positive that my pastor friend was loved by God. Only God knows why he suffered for so long and then died. What I believe is that along the way good things happen. Is it possible that what cancer meant for evil God made for good? A message or chance meeting in the hospital just might have changed history.

My pastor friend who just preaching on miracles also mentioned that a miracle is something bigger than us. I suppose the miracle we needed may have gone to someone else. Maybe it was meant for some greater need that did not involve us. Far too often we expect things for us alone. We ask and God jumps. I need a miracle. Yet, all the little miracles along the way are just not good enough. Jonah did not want to save Nineveh. They were not worthy of a miracle. Job's friends wanted to know what Job did wrong? God pointed out at the end of Job that the crashing of waves is a miracle. Did they see life that way?

To me a miracle comes back to Moses in the desert. Just think about this. Moses is saved by a miracle as a baby. He is placed in a basket within a crocodile infested river. The pharaohs daughter not only saves him but raises him as her own. Then Moses flees to the desert because he has killed a man. Finally, Moses is able to see seven miracles that drive his people out of slavery in Egypt. The Moses story is a miracles story.

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There is Moses trapped against the sea as the Egyptian army is baring down on him. He is screwed. The people grumble and freak out. Then God provides a pillar of smoke and fire. He splits the sea and they are saved. They pass into the desert on the other side. Over and over God provides and over and over the people grumble. Maybe time in the desert is a miracle. We need time to grow, mature, and become who we need to be.

I had an English teacher who was a troubled teen. At 25 he decided to get his act together. Years later he is the head of the English department at my university. Who at 24 thought this boy was trash? Who thought it was a miracle at 30 that he was a head master? If a miracle is supernatural. If it defies logic. If it stumps science. Then maybe it's a miracle. Dumb luck or God does not matter. Some incidents are truly amazing. What happened to my teacher friend is a miracle.

It comes back to this. Who can ask for a miracle? I believe anyone can ask. God loves us all. Not just those who love him. I know that's hard for most but the Bible is pretty clear on it. We can do nothing to gain a miracle. The Bible is pretty clear on that too. By faith we are saved. Yet, God asked Jesus to die for the whole world. Not just his chosen ones. I can't stress enough that God's will supersedes your will. God's plan supersedes your plans. I am fairly positive my friend who died in a car crash had other plans. He did nothing wrong. God chose not to give a miracle.

Sometimes Wikipedia is helpful. In regards to miracles, they said that random coincidences happen all the time. I'm sure they do more than we think. They also felt that not all of them could just be random. That seems so un-darwinish. Isn't everything just random dumb luck. What astounds me is those staunch Darwin people. They prefer random to design. They

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prefer chaos to plan. In my thinking, why would anyone just want their lives governed totally by random chaotic fate.

I just finished a book called Gulag Archipelago by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. It is a stunning book about the Russian period between 1917-1953. The Stalin years. They say that about 85 to 100 million Russian people died at the hands of their own government. Where they all guilty? The book points out probably 95% of them were not guilty of anything but being born Russian at the wrong time. Fate? Random? Darwin? Bad luck? Incredibly enough, I think it's a miracle that more did not die.

I can't fathom the number of miracles that would have been needed to save them all from Stalin. That book was horrible. Stalin and his crew were horrible. Yet, some miracles were scattered throughout this book. The writer had chance meetings with the right guard. He found himself in the right camp. One time he lied about his credentials. They moved him and he faked it until he knew the job. Others were not so lucky. Sometimes luck is all you have. Maybe your luck is a miracle?

Miracles appear in other places too. They are found in Germany, Cambodia, and other countries throughout history. There are countless stories of people hiding in basements, latrines, and forests just to escape death. God allows and God intervenes. The people in peril prayed and wished for a miracle. Many died and many were saved. Miracles?

It comes down to freedom. God is free to decide. Of course, he is, he is God. Yet, we are free to decide too. Free to believe. Free to hate. Free to kill, and free to love. If we say this earth is a fallen world, then miracles are needed. People are just not that nice much of the time. Oh no, some people are downright evil (Stalin). Oscar Schindler saved many Jews during the second

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world war. It's a miracle. Yet, he was haunted by the ones he missed. Is God haunted by the ones he has to let die? Does the puzzle of life best fit a few miracles that make sense? We just don't have those answers.

With all this said, should we ask for miracles? I mean, it seems silly to ask, if their dumb luck. It seems silly if only God choses. Why ask? Sometimes we should be careful how we read the Bible. It's easy to say: ask for anything in Jesus name and it will be given to you; have faith enough to move mountains and it will be done. We are such funny people. We take some things literally and others we ignore like take up your cross and follow me. Do you own a cross?

Maybe we should know God a little. He is said to be love. He would send his Son to die for you and me. Gods Son Jesus freely chose to die for you and me. Maybe God would move mountains for you. Maybe he wants to give us anything. Nehemiah was a great king. Yet, he made a terrible mistake. He was dying. He asked God to save him. God granted that request. Notice the fallout. He lived anther 15 years. Miracle healing? However, in those extra years he let neighboring countries like Babylon visit his kingdom. They invaded Jerusalem years later and plundered it all. He bore another son that became a very evil king. Its possible that the miracle was a curse. Just because we want more time, it might be the wrong prayer. It's a miracle we should not receive.

I prayed like crazy that I could have my first wife back. I served her and her boyfriends. I sucked it up like the good little Christian. I have a new wife (14 years sorta) that is more my type. I did not get a miracle from my original prayer. Yet, I did receive an answer (miracle) 5 years later. My life has improved personally ten-fold because God said no the first time. Be careful what you wish for they say. I know! I do!

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It would be far better for us to notice the little miracles. I had a friend who mocked me by saying “should we be mindful of the socks we wear?” I said yes. I still do. Do right before the Lord. To gain credit for a miracle? No, to be a good person, yes. With all the people I’ve met. It’s a miracle that any are good at all. I have seen enough evil. Dress nice. Be respectful. Do the best with what you have been given.

Here’s a good question: pray before every meal or pray in the morning for every meal? Who needs to see and know that you prayed? Was it to gain favor with God? Possibly you should pray in private. Just don’t do it in public to look good. God does miracles because he can. Not because he’s obligated. Is he obligated because you pray before every meal? I know it’s respect. Yet, when does respect become redundant.

Evil people get miracles. Maybe even more than good people. Yes, we should ask for miracles. There is no harm in asking. There is harm in expecting. I like my professor saying the 80/20 rule. 80% of the time pray for others and the kingdom of God. 20% for yourself. God has a way of evening things out.

It’s gut-wrenching. Joseph Stalin had a choice to be good or evil. The people he killed did not. A whole country and the world have never been the same because of his choices. God chose to give Nehemiah more time. Many people were taken in captivity years later. Nehemiah is a good person that made a few bad choices. Presidents make choices. Pastors make wishes and prayers. Oh, yes, they do. They make mistakes too. The seemingly holy are not as smart as you think.

A miracle is special. I love the special. I believe that special means not very often like ice-cream. Who can ask God for a miracle? It brings me to two verses. The first is found in the

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Psalms. 24:3-4 *“Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?*

The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol.” Far too often we think this us. It’s not. Only Jesus could come before the Lord like that. So, praying in the name of Jesus makes considerable sense. He intercedes for us.

The second is found in Luke 18:26-27 *“Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?” 27 Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.””* If miracles are impossible or non-sense. Then it makes sense that an impossible God could do it. Much of the time Gods ways are nonsense to us anyways. Yet, miracles happen from time to time. We read about them. We pray for them. We also wish for them. A miracle feels like a good thing.

I really don’t care how you do it. Wish for a miracle. I just prayed for a miracle. Is it your timing? Is it your way? Is “you” in the middle of the wish or prayer? A miracle is real to me. They are special. If you get one know this. There were probably lots of little miracles to get to the big one. There will be a bunch more after too. Probably they were not yours either. If we would treat prayer and wishes with just a little respect, we might find that we see more miracles than we first believed.

I like this. Treat a miracle more than it appears and less than you expected. All miracles big and small are miracles. Where our earth is situated in space is a miracle. All over this world are random acts that kill and save. We need miracles. Yet, do we receive many too. Are we spoiled brats? A miracle should not be flaunted. Yet, it should be appreciated. We expect too much.

Wishing for a miracle is hope in something greater to rescue you. Praying for a miracle accomplishes the same thing. It might be a miracle if we are happy when a miracle comes.

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Equality, we should remain happy when they don't. Be happy with what life does give you.

Otherwise, miracles might drive you crazy. Some many people are borderline on miracles. There are those who believe and those who don't. Yet, the term "*just in case*" applies to most of us no matter what side your on.

That said, is it sane or insane to believe in miracles? A miracle by A god sounds crazy. To put your hope on a miracle sounds crazy too. People do judge us by what we believe in. People who have received a miracle are either lucky or considered insane. Where do you fall in the world of prayer, wishes, and miracles? It's this all crazy talk? Let's venture into that in the next chapter.