

A LOOK AT WHAT
THE MIRACLES OF JESUS
MEAN FOR YOU

I NEED A MIRACLE

A hand is shown from the wrist up, reaching upwards with fingers slightly spread. The hand is positioned in the lower center of the frame. The background is a vast, light blue sky filled with soft, white, fluffy clouds. The lighting is bright and even, suggesting a clear day. The overall mood is one of hope and seeking.

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

Do you ever need a miracle?

Have you ever heard someone say, "I need a miracle" about a difficult situation? Jesus, the One who left an empty tomb behind, still makes miracles happen.

By looking at some of Jesus' most famous miracles, we will be reminded of our Savior's ability to work miracles on our behalf.

He heals.

He provides.

He calms storms in our lives.

He restores relationships.

He overcomes sin and evil.

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How to Use This Magazine

This magazine was created for you. It's filled with resources, original artwork, stories, photography, and creative written pieces to enhance your own personal study throughout our teaching series, *I Need A Miracle*. It's a resource meant to travel. Bring it with you to weekend services to take notes and follow along with the messages. Take it to your Life Group gatherings to go deeper into God's Word with others. Use it in your own time with the Lord as you process the wisdom and teaching of each message and passage of Scripture. We pray it inspires and encourages you in your own walk with the Lord every day.

HERE IS A BREAKDOWN OF THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS TO GUIDE YOU

1. SERMON NOTES:

Every week, there is a space for you to take notes during the weekend message. It's a great way for you to follow along each week of the series and record how God is speaking to you through His Word.

2. LIFE GROUP CURRICULUM:

These lessons are meant to be explored in the context of a Life Group. In Life Groups, we grow in our faith together and experience life as God intended—in community. In addition to group questions, this magazine includes spiritual rhythm reminders which groups experienced during Rooted and are encouraged to continue practicing together. We invite you to join a Life Group and dive into each message with others during the week. Visit marinerschurch.org/join-a-group to learn more.

3. CREATIVE ELEMENTS:

At the end of each week's content, you'll find creative pieces, including original artwork, photography, personal stories, and creative writing contributed by our amazing Creative Arts Volunteer Team. Each piece is inspired by the themes in Scripture in our teaching series.



FROM THE SENIOR PASTOR

"I need a miracle!" As a pastor, I have often heard these words from people desperate for God to deliver them from the pain or chaos in this broken world. I too have said those words—longing for Jesus to change the trajectory of a situation or bring hope into a challenging circumstance. I am sure at some point you have uttered, "I need a miracle," too.

As we study Jesus in the gospels, we see Him performing many miracles, and in those miracles, we also see God's heart for us. He sees us, He hears us, and He steps into our stories with His incredible love and grace. And through His miracles, we see a glimpse of our future home—a day when all the effects of sin are reversed and evil is no more. He sometimes heals and intervenes miraculously now, but a day is coming when He will make everything right and new.

A team of talented creative volunteers from Mariners Church worked together to create this beautiful magazine, walking through each week of our teaching series. I'm so grateful for their love for our church and their willingness to serve others with their creative talents. Within these pages, you'll find resources, artistic creations, and amazing stories to guide and inspire you. I invite you to bring this magazine back with you week after week to follow along with the messages as we study God's Word together. I also encourage you to use it as a part of your Life Group gatherings to go deeper into the Scripture with others.

I am so glad you're joining us for this series as we look at some of Jesus' most famous miracles and come face-to-face with our Savior's ability to work miracles on our behalf. I pray you are encouraged to enjoy spending time with Jesus knowing that He enjoys being with you.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Geiger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eric Geiger
Senior Pastor



FROM THE VOLUNTEER EDITORIAL TEAM



What is a miracle? Created by a group of volunteers, this publication is full of miracles. Our hope is that as you read through the powerful stories, reflect on each photo and visual piece, and spend time in God's Word, you will encounter your own miracle.

We'll also look at some of the miracles Jesus performed and how they reveal to us that He is the Waymaker in every difficult situation. He calms the storm. He heals and restores. He provides for our needs. But most importantly, we are reminded Jesus is the greatest miracle of all. He is the Son of God who died and rose again to save us from sin and death.

So, what is a miracle?

To discover the meaning, let's turn the page and find out.

With thanks and gratitude,

The Mariners Creative Arts Editorial Team

WEEK 1

Jesus Heals and Reverses

Matthew 9:18-34



MATTHEW 9 : 1 8 - 3 4

¹⁸As he was telling them these things, suddenly one of the leaders came and knelt down before him, saying, "My daughter just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."

¹⁹So Jesus and his disciples got up and followed him. ²⁰Just then, a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years approached from behind and touched the end of his robe, ²¹for she said to herself, "If I can just touch his robe, I'll be made well." ²²Jesus turned and saw her. "Have courage, daughter," he said. "Your faith has saved you." And the woman was made well from that moment. ²³When Jesus came to the leader's house, he saw the flute players and a crowd lamenting loudly. ²⁴"Leave," he said, "because the girl is not dead but asleep." And they laughed at him. ²⁵After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶Then news of this spread throughout that whole area.

²⁷As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" ²⁸When he entered the house, the blind men approached him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." ²⁹Then he touched their eyes, saying, "Let it be done for you according to your faith." ³⁰And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus warned them sternly, "Be sure that no one finds out." ³¹But they went out and spread the news about him throughout that whole area.

³²Just as they were going out, a demon-possessed man who was unable to speak was brought to him. ³³When the demon had been driven out, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed, saying, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel!" ³⁴But the Pharisees said, "He drives out demons by the ruler of the demons."

SERMON NOTES

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEACHING SUMMARY

We see that Jesus has power over demons, over sickness, over death, and over evil. Through His miracles, we see a glimpse of our future home—a day when all the effects of sin are reversed and evil is no more. In the messy middle, He sometimes heals now. And one day He will forever heal. You can come to Him for healing and trust Him for your future healing.

LEAN IN

Do you think healing miracles still happen today? Why or why not?

LOOK DOWN

READ MATTHEW 9:18-26 (pg. 14)

Who were the two people who humbled themselves before Jesus? How were they different? How did their differences play into the significance of Jesus' response to them?

What did the leader and the bleeding woman do to receive the miracle Jesus had for them?

READ MATTHEW 9:27-34 (pg. 14)

What did the blind men have in common with the leader (v. 18) and the bleeding woman (v. 21)?

What did the blind men believe about Jesus by calling him the "Son of David" (v. 27)? Why did Jesus not want them to tell anyone?

RHYTHM REMINDER



prayer

When Jesus cast out a demon (v. 33-34), what was the reaction of the crowd? What was the reaction of the Pharisees? What is your reaction?

LOOK OUT

In this story, there are people who are desperate for Jesus, people who admire Jesus, and people who oppose Jesus. What do each of these postures toward Jesus lead to?

Are these different postures still applicable to our world today? Explain.

LOOK IN

What does Jesus need to restore in your life (e.g., your relationship with Him; your relationship with someone else; health; finances; job; ministry; other)? How do Jesus' miracles speak to you about what you are facing?

How should we be bold in the way we approach God like the desperate people who approached the Lord in this passage?



Eileen's Story:
**Jesus,
the Healer**

written by: Julie Francis

Twelve years after Eileen's gastric bypass surgery to help control weight issues that had plagued her throughout her life, things took a shocking turn. Little did she know, her surgery had caused an unexpected blockage that sent her to the emergency room with sepsis and a 108-degree fever. She was placed in a medically-induced coma for eight days to curb her respiratory failure as the doctors did all they could to save her life. Then, the unexpected happened. Eileen's healing kicked into overdrive and God carried her through the most difficult health situation she ever faced.

Eileen turned her trust over to God, and He got her through the septic scare and the three-month recovery. She knew it was all because of Him. There was no other medical explanation. The doctors were baffled that she did not need a permanent feeding tube or a colostomy bag, and there was no permanent wound damage.

Not only was Eileen healed, but she recalled even more improvements in her life that God had blessed her with. She found she could pray in perfect Spanish despite not knowing the lan-

guage before her coma. It was as if God had provided a way to turn her medical situation around for good so she could let others know that worship, obedience to God, and faithfulness in prayer were the answers she could share with others to get them through their own difficult situations.

Without clinging to God, Eileen knew she couldn't stand on solid ground to continue with her recovery. Her joy comes from God, and she is so thankful she had the proper care surrounding her at the time. She is reminded daily that she was given a gift, even though it was through a life-altering medical issue. She glorifies God for this reminder.

As it says in Luke 7:21-22, "At that time Jesus healed many people of diseases, afflictions, and evil spirits, and he granted sight to many blind people. He replied to them, 'Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news.'" ●

The Orchestrator of Miracles

written by: Angelina Joseph

I usually travel overseas for work or vacation, but it was different this time. I was going to visit my brother who was going through a difficult time in his life. It was a situation requiring family support as he was left with a teenager to raise on his own. My brother is the type of person who tends to go into a cave of isolation and disconnect from friends and family to process a troubling situation. So, my sister and I decided to travel to support him and my niece, but we agreed I would go first.

Before my trip, we prayed with my Life Group for God's protection and healing in my brother's life and circumstances. I was filled with an abundance of peace and confidence when I left for Europe.

When I arrived in Paris, I felt like my luggage was lighter than it was before. Then, I noticed I didn't have my laptop with me. I quickly ran

to the airline counter and asked if a laptop had been found on the plane or in the terminal back in Chicago, where I had my layover. "No," replied the woman at the counter. However, I left my contact information in case they found it.

You can imagine the thoughts running through my mind in today's digital age. I was concerned about my privacy and work information being compromised. I was walking up and down the airport, muttering, "Help me, help me. Lord, help me." At that same time, I opened my handbag to grab my phone so I could call my brother, but I couldn't find the travel purse where I had put my passport, credit cards, and money. Those items were missing too. My losses were happening back-to-back.

Tears were streaming down my face because I didn't know what was happening. Here I was in another country with nothing to prove my iden-

“I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world.

***BE COURAGEOUS!
I HAVE CONQUERED
THE WORLD.”***

JOHN 16:33



tity. Have you ever been in a place where you asked God, “Can we press pause for a moment? Because I feel like I am caught in a whirlwind.” That was me.

Despite all these things happening, and even though my mind was conveying a different message, I had inner peace because I was reminded of the Scripture where Jesus said, “I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world” (John 16:33).

I left the airport and went to the police station where the agent documented the losses and handed me the paperwork with my name and

contact information, including a synopsis of the events. For the time being, my claim could serve as my ID.

I headed to the train station to catch a ride to my brother’s home, but I didn’t buy a ticket because I didn’t have the money. On the train, fatigue took over and I fell asleep. All of a sudden, I heard people talking at the back of the train and asking passengers for their tickets. I told myself, “I will show them my claim and this will settle the matter.” When they got to my seat, I explained why I didn’t have a ticket and instead of being empathetic, the ticket collectors handed me a fee of \$110 to pay.

The next day, I decided to go on a fast,



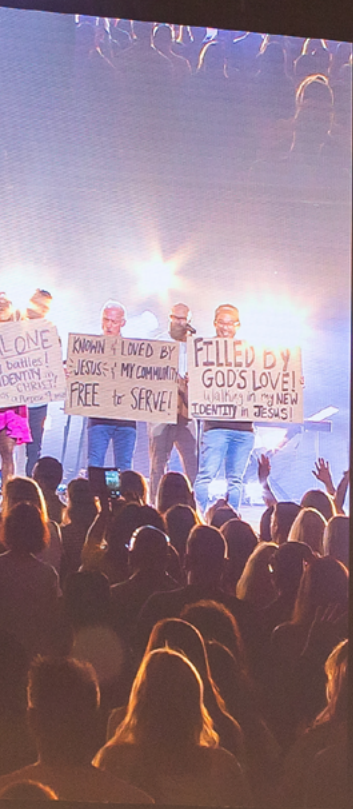
because fasting helps me surrender and focus more on God. I wanted to hear from Him in the reading of Scripture and prayer. On the fifth day of my visit, I got an email from the airline updating me about my laptop. Somebody had found it and turned it into lost and found. This was a miracle! Thank you, Jesus.

Then, on the last day of my fast, I got another call from the police informing me that my travel purse had been recovered in the lost and found at the airport. No other details were given to indicate whether or not all the items were in my purse, but when I picked it up, everything was inside. I was thrilled! Another miracle! Only God could orchestrate such miracles. At that

moment, I was reminded of His love and faithfulness.

The amazing part of this story is that my brother and niece were encouraging and praying for me during my entire ordeal. It helped them to take the focus off themselves and their circumstances to support me during this time. In a nutshell, this adventure became a catalyst to begin the healing of their own hurt.

Whatever you are facing today, one thing I do know is that Jesus is faithful. ●





ROOTED

Rooted is a 10-week small group experience designed to connect you to God, the church, and your purpose.

Together, in a group of 10-15 people from all walks of life, you'll explore the Bible, engage in prayer and serve experiences, share stories, and practice rhythms essential to a healthy spiritual life.



WEEK 2

Jesus Miraculously Provides

John 2:1-11, 6:1-15



JOHN 2:1-11

¹On the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee. Jesus's mother was there, ²and Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding as well. ³When the wine ran out, Jesus's mother told him, "They don't have any wine." ⁴"What has this concern of yours to do with me, woman?" Jesus asked. "My hour has not yet come." ⁵"Do whatever he tells you," his mother told the servants. ⁶Now six stone water jars had been set there for Jewish purification. Each contained twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷"Fill the jars with water," Jesus told them. So they filled

them to the brim. ⁸Then he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the headwaiter." And they did. ⁹When the headwaiter tasted the water (after it had become wine), he did not know where it came from—though the servants who had drawn the water knew. He called the groom ¹⁰and told him, "Everyone sets out the fine wine first, then, after people are drunk, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now." ¹¹Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

JOHN 6:1-15

¹After this, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). ²A huge crowd was following him because they saw the signs that he was performing by healing the sick. ³Jesus went up a mountain and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴Now the Passover, a Jewish festival, was near. ⁵So when Jesus looked up and noticed a huge crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, "Where will we buy bread so that these people can eat?" ⁶He asked this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread wouldn't be enough for each of them to have a little." ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹"There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish—but what are they for so many?" ¹⁰Jesus

said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place; so they sat down. The men numbered about five thousand. ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, and after giving thanks he distributed them to those who were seated—so also with the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²When they were full, he told his disciples, "Collect the leftovers so that nothing is wasted." ¹³So they collected them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces from the five barley loaves that were left over by those who had eaten. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This truly is the Prophet who is to come into the world." ¹⁵Therefore, when Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

SERMON NOTES

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEACHING SUMMARY

Jesus provides in small ways and large ways—from a luxury item at a wedding to food when there is none. He provides for you too, all according to His riches in glory. The boy who gave his food to Jesus participated with Jesus in a miracle.

As we give, we are able to participate with Jesus too.

LEAN IN

What is the most elaborate wedding you have ever attended or seen? What impressed you the most about the wedding ceremony or reception?

LOOK DOWN

READ JOHN 2:1-11 (pg. 28)

Why was the master of the banquet so surprised at the quality of the wine that Jesus miraculously produced from water? How did serving such wine run counter to what was traditionally done?

What does verse 11 say was the end result of this miracle?

READ JOHN 6:1-15 (pg. 28)

Why was the crowd following Jesus (v. 2)? Do you think they were looking for spiritual guidance or just personal benefit? What was your motivation when you first came to Christ?

Why did Jesus ask Philip how they could feed all of the people, if He already knew how He was going to feed them?

How much did the boy provide and how much was left over?
What point was Jesus trying to make by performing this miracle?

LOOK OUT

What are the primary things that the world is trying to provide us with? How do these things compare and contrast with the good news of Jesus?

How can we bring “the better wine” to situations in which we are placed, so that we may point others to Jesus?

LOOK IN

When do you remember God providing for you when you were worried you wouldn’t have enough for your needs?

What does Jesus’ meeting of these needs teach us about Jesus’ concern for our needs and His ability to meet them?

How have you seen God’s glory in a way that has led you to trust Jesus more deeply than you did a year ago?

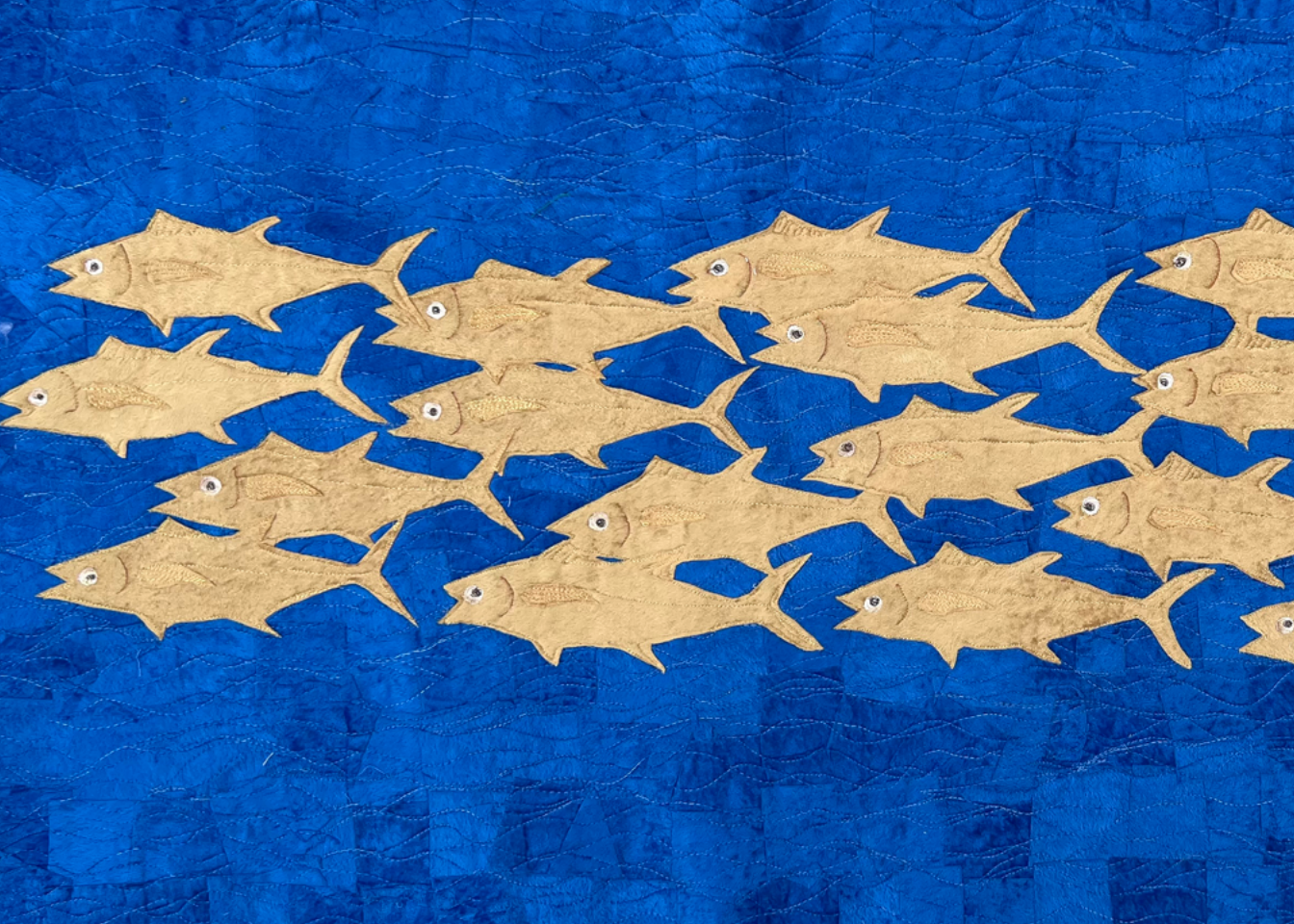
RHYTHM REMINDER



worship



prayer



I Have...

written by: Darlene Welling

HAVE YOU EVER DECIDED TO DO SOMETHING THAT WAS POSITIVE, BUT THE TIMING MIGHT NOT BE RIGHT? I have. In March 2022, my husband, Richard, and I were set to look for a house to purchase. It was a sellers' market. House prices were rapidly increasing and many houses had multiple offers that were thousands of dollars over asking price. Interest rates were on the rise.



“Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you your
heart’s desires.

***COMMIT YOUR WAY TO
THE LORD;
TRUST IN HIM, AND HE
WILL ACT.”***

PSALMS 37:4-5

Fishes & Loaves

by Susie Sprinkel Hudson

HAVE YOU EVER HAD THE CHOICE TO BE FEARFUL AND THINK NEGATIVELY OR HAVE FAITH AND TRUST GOD AT HIS WORD? I thought, “Oh my goodness! Out of all the times to decide to buy a house, this is the worst.” But, my husband and I said, “God owns everything! The Earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. He is not limited or subject to the world’s economy or whatever is happening in this world. He makes a way where there is no way. He is the Oasis in the desert. All things are possible with God. All things are possible to those who believe. We walk by faith and not by sight, and we are blessed and highly favored with our Father. This is a great opportunity to see God do His miraculous work!” We sealed it in prayer in Jesus’ mighty name!

HAVE YOU EVER ASKED, “WHAT DO I DO NOW?” When we asked God, “What do we do now?” We looked at what was in our hands and decided to do what we knew to do. We continually thanked God in advance for the house He had for us and did our due diligence. We looked in areas we wanted to live and outside of the areas to be open for any direction God may be leading us to live in. We wanted to be where God wanted us to be and not live according to our own plans.

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT THAT SOMETHING WAS WHAT YOU PRAYED FOR, ONLY TO FIND OUT IT WASN'T? We put offers on a few homes, and there were multiple offers, but none of ours were chosen. It was frustrating and we were disappointed, but we said, "God has something better for us. He owns everything! Nothing can stop what God has for us. We are blessed and highly favored with God. In Jesus' name!" Keeping our attention on God and reminding ourselves of His Word gave Richard and I continued hope, stability, and comfort through the process.



HAVE YOU EVER TAKEN A LEAP OF FAITH THAT TURNED OUT TO BE WORTH TRYING? In August 2022, we found the house that we wanted. We wanted a turn-key house, but this one needed new flooring, painting, and some reasonable updating. It had so many other things we wanted in a house, plus views, and it was in a prime location. We wanted to make an offer. But what amount?

Our realtor recommended that we ask well below the asking price. To us, her suggestion was unheard of. It might have needed some updating, but in these times where sellers are getting what they wanted and much more with multiple offers, it was very risky. We really wanted this house and questioned if we should offer an amount for less. We prayed about it and felt led to offer the realtor's recommended price. We took a leap of faith and trusted God, instead of succumbing to the fear of multiple offers and looking ridiculous for such an offer if we were not chosen.

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT, AFTER THE FACT, "WHAT DID I JUST DO?" Once the offer was submitted, anxiety and fear were knocking at the door of my mind. I started to feel stressed. But glory to God it was quickly countered with the assurance and trust I have in God and His Word. I prayed and took authority over the enemy in the name of Jesus. At times, fear and negativity would knock at the door and try to bully its way through in very subtle ways, but I resisted it with God's Word. I would speak and pray what God's Word says about it. His Word was my comfort and final authority!

My husband, on the other hand, did not have the “What did I just do?” moment like I did. We were together and in agreement in prayer—uplifting, understanding, and encouraging one another.

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SO THANKFUL THAT YOU CHOSE TO TRUST GOD NO MATTER WHAT? We are so thankful we trusted God at His Word and leading. We found favor with the seller. At first, our offer was accepted at a price far below the asking price. Our realtor was an amazing negotiator and understood people very well. And we continued to trust God. He was with us throughout the whole buying process. Escrow closed in a few weeks. We also had a bonus to our blessing by having a good amount of equity in the house quickly. That’s our God! He goes above and beyond what we ask for! He made a way! God blessed us to be a blessing! Now, we pray our new home blesses others and our story will encourage people for His glory. ●



Provision

by Martha Caputo



Met in the Mystery

written by: Lexi Ragan

A man, with status,
miles from home,
having heard
the Healer had returned.

A son, young,
barely alive
counting down
his breaths 'til death.

A Savior, sacred,
misunderstood as a showman,
seeking belief
that dwelled deeper
than demonstrations.

"Unless you see signs and wonders
you will not believe!"

But no ceasing, still pleading
come down sir, I need you
genuine wrestle
dying child
faraway father
last-gasp soul

caught in between
losing time & life
—no alternative but Jesus.

A shift, in a Word,
divinely credible,
extended with power,
wrapped with medicine,
worthy of enacting a fate change
instant and exact,
moving outside time & space...
faith that sparked a miracle
faster than the speed of light.

A journey, overnight,
back to Capernaum with a heart on fire,
weary feet floating on the promise
of five words, carrying His command
like a lifeline in the waiting,
miles felt like minutes
in the thick of *Because He said so, "Go" →*

A message, halfway home,
that went ahead, as potent as a tangible touch,
confirming news illness had reversed
that afternoon when
"Your son will live" left His holy lips—
the same moment ears opened
and spirit received, the real sign starting at believing.

*The one who took His word for it.
A man that knew he was in the midst of God.*



The Miracle of Community

written by: Carly Owens

2022 was supposed to be my year. I was going to graduate with my MBA after three years of school and working full time. The world would be my oyster, with limitless possibilities in front of me—both personally and professionally.

But then, everything changed.

During the final required course, we were playing a “fun game” at the end of a long day, and in a freak accident, my right foot was severely injured. I could not put any weight on it whatsoever, so I went to the hospital to get it checked and was diagnosed with a toe fracture—I was left with crutches.

My classmates and I laughed it off, thinking I would be off crutches by graduation two weeks later and this would be one of those funny stories we would tell one day. Unfortunately, the original diagnosis of my injury was not the whole story. I later found out the toe fracture was one of three fractures, compounded with a high-grade sprain. In a moment, I had lost my ability to walk, drive, and do simple things to take care of myself, like laundry.

Initially, I was told I would only be off my foot for about eight weeks. But the weeks went by, and I was not getting any better. I still could not put weight on my foot without significant pain, and even simply wearing the walking boot designed to protect my foot caused discomfort.

About seven weeks into my injury, after a specialist referral, I was told I likely had complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS), a nerve disorder that can happen with my kind of injury if the nerves do not heal properly. A couple of weeks later, after no improvement, it became a confirmed diagnosis. My heart sank as my imagined timeline of recovery evaporated.

I used to joke I was “independent to a fault,” but as the injury dragged on, I began to realize my joke covered a deep-seated truth which had become a cornerstone of my identity. The thought of having to find rides to physical therapy for the initial six weeks of appointments was just as daunting as the therapy itself—and at that point, I could not even wiggle my toes, so that is saying something.

Thus began my journey of learning how to ask for help.

FROM NEIGHBORHOOD TO CONGREGATION

I have been a part of Mariners Mission Viejo since its beginning when it was a Mariners in the Neighborhood location. When the leadership began describing the journey of our close-knit community becoming a new congregation, I immediately thought, “Whoa, whoa—that is not what I signed up for.”

But I felt the Holy Spirit nudge me: “What if you are supposed to stay here?”

I could not shake the feeling I was supposed

to be part of this community. So, after an abundance of prayer, I finally relented and committed to stay at Mariners Mission Viejo. While my commitment was sincere—I love feeling needed and discovering new ways to help (two things that are easy to find at a church plant)—it took about a year for me to feel vulnerable enough to be receptive to receiving what the community had for me, instead of just giving.

CHILDLIKE FAITH IN ACTION

This shift started in the Mariners Kids Ministry. This was the one thing I could constantly look forward to; once I made it through the week, I could hang out with the coolest kids around. Serving has always brought me an immeasurable amount of joy, but in this season, it became crucial to my survival.

The kids would ask about my foot injury every once in a while (or even ask if they could play with my crutches), but they always seemed to forget about it and treat me the same way. They were more interested in discussing Marvel movies and summer plans than doctor appointments or other updates. Every Sunday, I felt somewhat “normal” for a few hours.

I felt more like myself serving in Mariners Kids than I did anywhere else during this season.

Plus, kids have a way of speaking profound truths without realizing it. I was in the “teacher” role, but I found these kids taught me more than they will ever know. While building with magnet tiles or coloring a picture and discussing the day’s story, they would make some sort of biblical connection or state a truth that I needed to hear.

There is a reason Jesus talked about the need for faith like a child. In a period where it was easy to let my faith slip, the kids I volunteered with helped me keep it intact, without even knowing it.

15-MINUTE MIRACLES

In addition to the Mariners Kids Ministry sustaining me, my entire church community rallied around me. The first Sunday I showed up at Mariners Mission Viejo with crutches and a walking boot, many people said, “I will pray for you,” and “Let us know if you need anything.” I appreciated the sentiments, but I had zero plans of taking anyone up on their offers to help. After all, being willing to jump in to support people was one of my specialties—I was the helper, not the helpee.

Then the doctor appointments started, and I could not drive myself. I felt utterly helpless.

Enter my community.

As the appointments stacked up, so did the number of people who gave me rides. Often, when I tried to think of someone to ask, the Holy Spirit brought someone to mind, and they usually had a word I needed to hear.

These rides became so much more than just a way to get from point A to point B. In sweet 15-minute increments, these rides gave me the opportunity to connect, laugh, and share my recovery struggles with people, all while hearing more about their lives. It became not only a physical lifeline for me as the weeks went on, but an emotional one too. Proverbs 17:22 says, “A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.” These people truly were the joyful hearts keeping me going.

MY EMOTIONAL LIFELINE

My doctor told me attitude plays a huge role in CRPS recovery and commended me on how I always seemed upbeat and positive. As I reflected on this, it hit me that not only was this due to my faith, but it was also because God gave me a tangible example of how He would always provide for me. He showed me this in the form of friends with vehicles who always had an encouraging word to share.

If I had been driving myself to those appointments, I would not have had those conversations that often became the highlight of my week. Who would have thought losing my ability to drive could bring about something so positive?

It was much more than just the miracle of car rides. From random texts, to people checking to see if I needed anything, to being reminded every Sunday others were praying for me, there is simply no way I would have been able to maintain an upbeat attitude without the help of this wonderful, close-knit community I was initially terrified of joining.

What I was most afraid of has become what I cherish the most.

MAKING PEACE WITH AN UNKNOWN ENDING

As I write this, I am six months into this awful disorder and still not able to drive or put weight on my foot. But I have not missed a single appointment or gone a day without some reminder of the community who is cheering me through this recovery. Talk about miraculous.

While I do not know how this story will end, or when and if I will regain full independence, there is one thing I know: I do not want to be independent to a fault anymore.



This season has shown me asking for help is hard, but living without community is even harder. God has used His community to provide for me in countless ways over this season, and I am profoundly grateful.

On a recent Sunday, someone told me, "We need to throw a party when you get your boot off," and I think we just might. ●

Mariners Santa Ana

CELEBRATING ONE YEAR
IN DOWNTOWN SANTA ANA



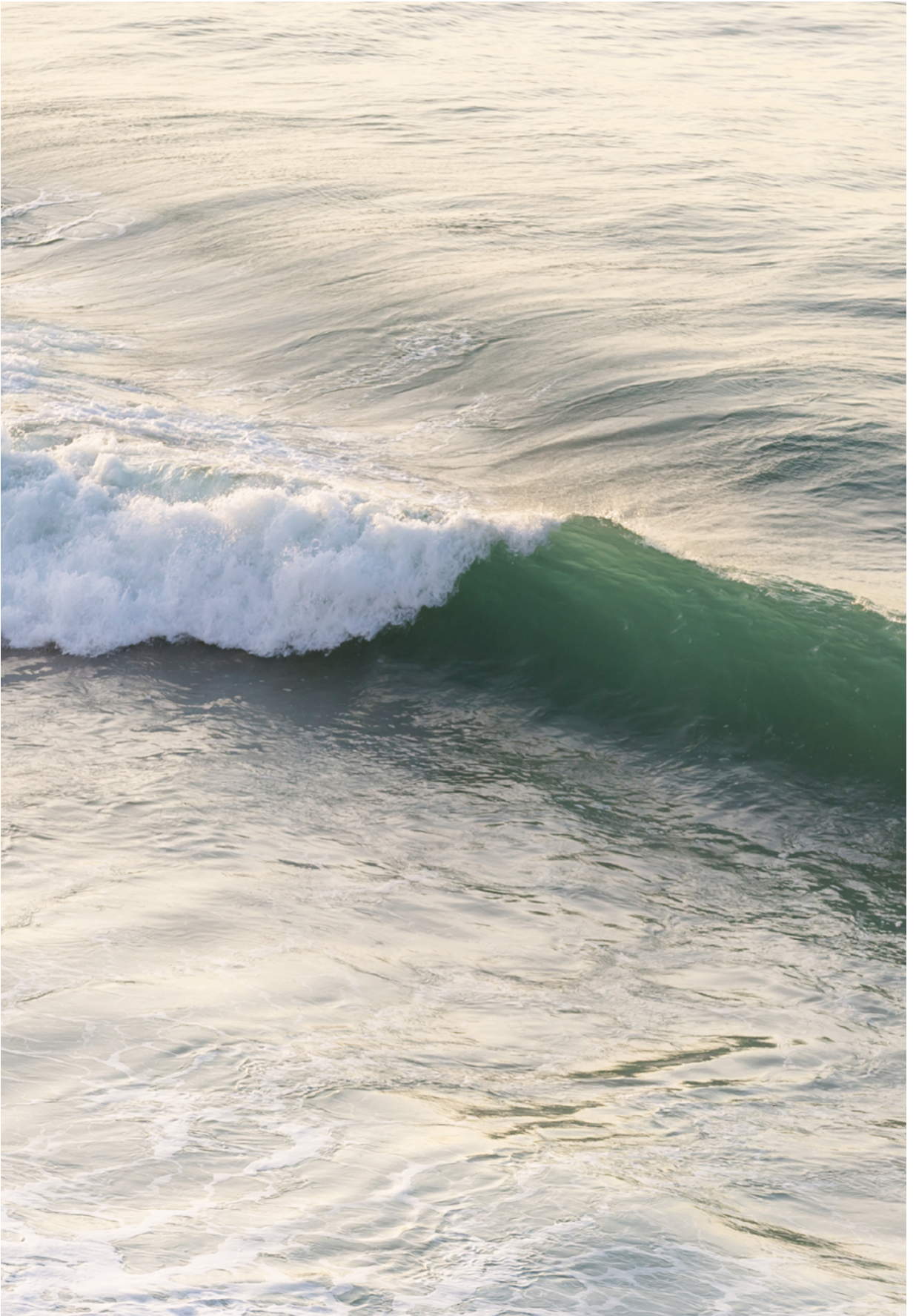


God's Miraculous Work in Our Cities
by Bill Lee

WEEK 3

Jesus Walks on Water and Calms Storms

Mark 4:35-41, Mark 6:45-52



MARK 4 : 3 5 - 4 1

³⁵On that day, when evening had come, he told them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the sea." ³⁶So they left the crowd and took him along since he was in the boat. And other boats were with him. ³⁷A great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher! Don't you care that we're going to die?" ³⁹He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Silence! Be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰Then he said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" ⁴¹And they were terrified and asked one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

MARK 6 : 4 5 - 5 2

⁴⁵Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶After he said good-bye to them, he went away to the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷Well into the night, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸He saw them straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Very early in the morning he came toward them walking on the sea and wanted to pass by them. ⁴⁹When they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out, ⁵⁰because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke with them and said, "Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." ⁵¹Then he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. They were completely astounded, ⁵²because they had not understood about the loaves. Instead, their hearts were hardened.

SERMON NOTES

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEACHING SUMMARY

Jesus has the power over water—power to walk on water and power to calm it. He has the power to calm the storms in your life too. There will always be storms, even storms within, and Jesus is the One who can bring calm in the midst of chaos.

LEAN IN

What is the most tumultuous weather event or other natural disaster you have ever experienced?

LOOK DOWN

READ MARK 4:35-41 (pg. 46)

What clues are there in this passage that this miracle was witnessed by others?

What is different about this miracle than the previous ones we've studied so far in the series? Do you find this miracle harder or easier to believe? Explain.

When the storm was happening, what did the disciples say to Jesus? What was their reaction to Jesus speaking to the wind and the sea?

RHYTHM REMINDER



worship



prayer

READ MARK 6:45-52 (pg. 46)

What does it mean that Jesus “wanted to pass by them” (v. 48)?

What makes the disciples think they are seeing a ghost?

How do they react to seeing Jesus?

LOOK OUT

What’s different about how unbelievers respond to horrifying circumstances and how Christians respond to them?

LOOK IN

What do we have our faith in when we deeply fear our circumstances?

Which do you fear most: circumstances you cannot control, or the God who controls all of your circumstances?



Dawn is Just in Sight
by Charlene Tsai

That Blind-Breaking Light

written by: Kyle Gunderson

"And their eyes were opened..." — Matthew 9:30

The taller I built the wall of things I thought I wanted,
the darker my world became.

Yet I kept stacking it higher and higher,
falling into the devil's blinding game.

Occasionally, I saw a flicker of light
slip through the wall's cracks, but that
shimmer living on the other side was soon
covered by a mountain of Earthly plaques.

There it is! The *next* shiny thing.
In a world so dull,
where else would I cling?

Adjusting to this darkness, my unseeing eyes
searched for the next building blocks.
But suddenly from the other side,
the wall shook as I heard thunderous knocks.

Even taller now, I kept building to put up a fight.
I smiled as the wall stood still in silence...
However, I noticed there was no longer any light.

Was this my fate, into the darkness would I succumb?
The knocking returned, this time stronger—
it was the sound of a mighty drum.

Hands outstretched blindly, no way to let Him in,
This wall I built blocked out all His light
with the weight of all my sin.

Still, I followed the imprint of His steps
as deep as a tear-filled sea,
crying out, "Son of David,
have mercy on me!"

"Do you believe that I can do this?"
said a voice from the other side.

"Yes, Lord!" I shouted back, in desperate reply.
The groom was now on His way to see His bride.

He broke down the door—I saw darkness retreat,
piece by piece I tore down the wall,
and laid it all at His feet.

"Let it be done for you according to your faith."
New sight, I could now see!
So I couldn't help but spread the news
of the miracle God had just done for me!

The taller I built the wall of things I thought I wanted,
the more I felt alone.
Now we build together in His blind-breaking light.
Now I build with Jesus Christ, my cornerstone.

Janine's Story: Meeting Christ in the Quiet

written by: Kathryn McLeland

Music was instrumental in Janine's family growing up. From listening to classic rock to singing in the church choir, Janine always had a song in her heart and mind for any situation—each moment held a melody in the soundtrack of her life.

Ultrarunning also filled Janine's heart with joy, including training on the trails for hours to prepare for races. She also enjoyed listening to music while sorting packages as a delivery driver.

But then, in the spring of 2019, her hearing started to diminish. After several doctor appointments and subsequent hearing tests, she returned her hearing aids, which no longer worked for her. The world, once full of song, fell silent. There was no music, no laughter, and she was unable to perform her job duties on the road. Janine was honest with God about her frustration with going completely deaf. Music, conversation, and laughter were such fundamental parts of her life, and she felt God had taken it all away.

Thanksgiving 2019 was a dark time for Janine, as she sat around the table with her quick-witted

family who were laughing and joking while she was left in silence.

"My world went silent, and my quality of life suffered greatly. I'm a bit of an extroverted introvert to begin with, but when I lost my hearing, I withdrew from people simply because it was difficult and frustrating to communicate," she said.

Despite feeling withdrawn, Janine had always enjoyed technology and used this gift to move through barriers of communication: "When I found the translation apps for my phone, that helped a little."

However, even with modern technology, Siri could only translate so fast.

"It was a frustrating and sometimes amusing process as the translation apps couldn't keep up and sometimes got the words wrong," Janine said. "I did provide people with some laughs when the translation apps came up with strange translations."

Despite feeling out of touch, Janine felt surrounded with prayer from her circle of friends and family. Her constant prayer to God included



Walking Through the Storm
by Rebecca Slymen



this request: "Please give me ears to hear, Lord."

Her friend and former Rooted leader suggested receiving prayer from an Elder in the prayer room. "The Elder shared with me about his eye affliction and told me that he might lose his sight. I started to feel a calming presence during his prayer."

At that point, Janine started to research cochlear implants. With the support of her family, her Life Group, and her hearing loss support group, she went in for her first implant in January 2020. The first words of the robotic-sounding audiologist sparked a new sense of hope. By the grace of God, Janine utilized hearing calibration technology, rehabilitation activities, and exposure to restore word recognition by filtering in noise. A year later, she decided to get a second cochlear implant, and after some adjustments,

continues to make gradual improvements in retraining her brain today.

Birds singing, water rushing, the flutter of wind in the trees, the climax of a rock ballad...Janine could hear again! Regaining her hearing in this way gave her a new sense of "hearing" God's voice because that was all she had. Being in nature is her place to listen to God's voice. The sound of silence is where God drew her to Himself through His Word, church community, and His still, soft voice.

Now, Janine says, "I rarely listen to music on the trails. I spend that time thinking, listening to God's voice through those thoughts, and praying while I'm running or hiking."

Despite the loss of hearing, God also used this quiet time to enhance her view of the world around her. As Janine's lens for sight was reca-



Calming of the Storm

by Susie Sprinkel Hudson

librated without the external hum of sound, so her love of photography reignited too. Drawing from her experience as a photojournalist, she started to spend more time capturing His creation with her camera.

Janine was able to run or hike every day before and after her surgery, which helped in the recovery process of retraining the organs of her inner ear to improve balance, and most importantly, helped strengthen her relationship with God. Nature continued to be the place God communicated His care for her through peace and rest while the rest of the world was silent; this was a divine turning point. To this day, God is restoring her hearing with renewed faith. He is using her trial to bring so much meaning into her life, all the while increasing her faith in Him as He shows her more of His plan for her life.

Reflecting on this gift, Janine can now appreciate her season of silence. "Now I am grateful and thankful that He used this loss to make me realize how blessed I am with this second chance and miracle hearing." One of the verses which Janine meditated on was Philippians 4:13, which says, "I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me."

Her response now is worship and gratitude: "I'm grateful to God that He answered all of the prayers on my behalf. I'm thankful to have some wonderful prayer warrior women at Mariners who have been supportive. These are truly my ears to hear (my miracle) and they are a blessing. I eventually feel like God may be leading me to work with people who have hearing challenges like me." ●

WE ASKED MARINERS KIDS TO SHARE A MIRACLE GOD HAS DONE IN THEIR LIVES OR IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE IMPORTANT TO THEM. HERE ARE SOME OF THEIR RESPONSES!

NAME Madellyn	AGE 10
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~~When I almost died~~
 A miracle god has done for me is when I almost died when I was a baby



NAME Olivia * Olivia	AGE 9
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my miracle that god did is made my family



NAME

Carter

AGE

10



My grandma had heart issues and had to be airlifted to Rocksprings



Now shes alot better and people thought she might not live.

WEEK 4

Jesus Pursues and Overcomes Sin from All Nations

Mark 7:24-30, Luke 7:1-9



MARK 7:24-30

²⁴He got up and departed from there to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it, but he could not escape notice. ²⁵Instead, immediately after hearing about him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶The woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth, and she was asking him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, because it isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." ²⁸But she replied to him, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." ²⁹Then he told her, "Because of this reply, you may go. The demon has left your daughter." ³⁰When she went back to her home, she found her child lying on the bed, and the demon was gone.

LUKE 7:1-9

¹When he had concluded saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. ²A centurion's servant, who was highly valued by him, was sick and about to die. ³When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, requesting him to come and save the life of his servant. ⁴When they reached Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy for you to grant this, ⁵because he loves our nation and has built us a synagogue." ⁶Jesus went with them, and when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell him, "Lord, don't trouble yourself, since I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. ⁷That is why I didn't even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I too am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under my command. I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." ⁹Jesus heard this and was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found so great a faith even in Israel."

SERMON NOTES

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEACHING SUMMARY

Jesus shocked the Jewish community when He performed miracles for those on the outside—the Gentiles. Jesus came to bring forgiveness to people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. His pursuit of all people has not stopped, and He has invited us to join Him. As we do, we enjoy the miracle of God uniting people together.

LEAN IN

Have you or someone you know had a near-death experience? If so, describe the experience and how you or the person you know survived.

LOOK DOWN

READ MARK 7:24-30 (pg. 60)

What is the significance of the description of the woman? Why is her background important in this story?

What social barriers are crossed by the woman and by Jesus in this story?

What does this reveal to us about Jesus? How would religious Jews have looked upon this?

What did the Syrophenician woman ask of Jesus? Why did Jesus resist before granting her request?

READ LUKE 7:1-9 (pg. 60)

The definition of faith is provided in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.” How was the centurion’s faith revealed in this story?

What does this passage reveal about the gradual process of faith? Why is faith not just a one-time only event?

LOOK OUT

Are there any categories of people in our community that might be quick to dismiss Jesus simply because they believe He did not come for them? Why might they think this? How can we help overcome their doubt or skepticism?

LOOK IN

Describe a time when you had no choice but to put your faith and trust in God and let Him work out His purposes in a desperate situation you were facing. What was the outcome? How was your faith affected? How was your relationship with Him impacted?

The faith of the centurion rested solely in the power of Jesus’ words. In what ways do you feel your faith in Jesus shows itself to be too small? How can you more readily trust Jesus’ words?

RHYTHM REMINDER



share your
story



repentance



worship

The Glue to the Great Divide: How Christ's Beauty Closes the Gaps of Brokenness

written by: Mareya Low and Lexi Ragan

EPIPHANIES ON THE PLANE

In the summer of 2022, a team from Mariners Church traveled to Uganda, Africa on a Faith Adventure. Mareya and Lexi, two of the participants, first met at one of the outreach training sessions prior to departing overseas. Initially, their connection sparked over an acknowledgement that they were both involved in the Mariners Creative Arts Ministry. But it wasn't until the Lord placed them next to each other on the plane that they truly began to understand how He intended to use them in unique partnership for His glory.

From the moment they were sent into the sky, Mareya and Lexi couldn't help but marvel over God's creation in the clouds as they reflected on the many expectations they had for this trip. With a sketchpad in Mareya's lap and a journal in Lexi's, they observed the shifting skies as the many hours drifted by.

During their travels, Psalm 139:8 (NIV) naturally surfaced in conversation: "If I ascend to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there." With this, they were reminded of God's all-consuming presence, no matter how far away they were from home.

While they processed this in the air, little did they know how deeply they would reckon with it on the ground; He would come to show them the reality of His reconciliation between the darkest of spaces and widest divides.

MIRACLE OF HOPE DURING THE HOUSE VISITS

Few words can sum up the stunning nature of Uganda. It is a special place where God's glory is painted everywhere, where the rich and vibrant glow of His creation beams with life despite every fragmented valley in the dust. Even more so, the rare radiance of the people, who celebrate community and prioritize connecting with Jesus, shined like Mareya and Lexi had never seen before. At the same time, there was an unfamiliar need within the streets. Regardless of who they were, everyone waved back, showing Mareya and Lexi the desire to be seen on an entirely new level. As they would come to find out, it was obvious that while the need was high, the country's contentment in Christ was even higher. This caused Mareya and Lexi to challenge the bubble of comfort that existed back home and ask themselves what they really needed in life.

Their first day of serving showed them an abundance of opportunity to extend the hands and feet of Jesus, particularly through relationship. Splitting off into small groups with the teen volunteers of Gaba Community Church, Mareya and Lexi traveled to lower income communities with gifts and the gospel. As Sarah led the way with new friends Shaka and Glory by their side, they carried mosquito nets, bars of soap, beans, and posho with them to each household they visited. The first home sat at the bottom of a slope and consisted of four young brothers who

were living together in a small house. As Sarah interpreted what they were saying, Mareya and Lexi listened to the pain harbored in losing their grandmother, looking for work, longing for community, and lacking resources to thrive. The older brother expressed that he enjoyed art and pointed to a cow horn behind the tree he painted green and speckled white. In that moment, the Lord began bridging a gap as they connected in a conversation about creativity.

Mareya and Lexi began to realize these people, who were from an entirely different culture and context of life, were just like them. On a heart level, they too had similar dreams and desires to realize their creative potential. The only difference was the opportunities they had, and a limited access to art supplies. This was the first encounter God used Mareya and Lexi as artists to inspire others to dream—despite barriers causing dreams to feel unattainable. During this time, Sarah encouraged Mareya to tell the brothers about the pursuit of her own artistic dreams and share the hope she has from a future empowered by God. Shortly after, Lexi remembered she had a small Bible in her backpack and felt the nudge to give it to the older brother. Mareya had also packed extra art supplies before the trip, believing she could share the universal gift of art in Uganda. At that moment, she clearly understood this was an opportunity to inspire a fellow artist to exercise the gift God gave him. With great purpose, she handed him the extra sketchbook and colorful pens she had packed that very day. Suddenly, something beautiful began to unfold: he received the sketchbook as a treasure, holding the paper with utmost care, and started sketching a portrait of her. It was a powerful event altogether.

MIRACLE OF PEACE UNDER THE PRAYER TENT

From then on, seeing Jesus move among the ministry in Uganda only became more real. As the Mariners team continued to dive into the community on deeper levels, something significant took place during the medical outreach day. Accompanied by Gaba Community Church under white tents, several medical stations were made available to those needing care. But they didn't only prioritize physical health here—an entire section was dedicated to soul care. Without intentionally planning it, Mareya and Lexi both chose to serve under the prayer tent. This was yet another moment when the Lord led them to partner with each other in His divine work of bridging gaps between pain and peace.

Mareya and Lexi ended up praying under the tent for two hours straight, but in this period, it was as if time stood still. As Pastor Fred translated each request, they took turns lifting up prayers for the people. While they didn't have a physical Bible with them, the Word that was pressed intentionally into their hearts began pouring out to minister to each situation. Of course, the stories were not always easy to digest. Mareya and Lexi could clearly see the need in each person's eyes; however, in every story there still glimmered a thread of hope that could not be snapped because of Christ. With hands interlocked and heads bowed, His peace was always available in the midst of the battle.

As Colossians 3:15 (NIV) exhorts, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful." Without realizing it, Mareya and Lexi were living out this Scripture in real time as they prayed continually and allowed the Word, alive and active, to guide them.

THE GLUE TO THE GREAT DIVIDE

Jesus is in the serious business of redeeming a world that desperately needs mending. And as the Mariners team witnessed, to this present day God is working purposefully with His active hands and feet of love.

Throughout the remainder of their faith adventure, Mareya and Lexi continued to see God working to bring beauty even in the broken through the actions of ordinary people. At the Wentz Medical Center they saw doctors and surgeons keep Jesus at the center of all they do as they provided accessible care for their community. On the streets of Uganda, they saw joy in the spontaneous worship that broke out among the Mariners team and the local children; together, they sang, danced, and praised Jesus freely in an unconventional space, reflecting the beauty of God's Kingdom.

From artists dreaming during the house visits, to the breakthrough under the prayer tent and spontaneous praise spreading throughout the streets, two realities were simultaneously present: *brokenness and beauty*.

But how can beauty and brokenness dwell in the same place, and what does this speak to? If the great divides in life are breaking this world apart, Jesus is the ultimate glue putting all things back together. ●

Psalm 100: Crossing The Divide

by Mareya Low



Leah's Story: Miraculously Mended

written by: Lexi Ragan



AN UNEXPECTED TURN

When Leah found out that she was pregnant, what is usually cause for celebration sent fear down her spine. Such unexpected news brought life to an extremely emotional halt in 2020 while she was working with Africa Renewal Ministries in Uganda—a ministry attached to Gaba Community Church. Her first instinct was to disappear from the local community before anyone had the chance to cast her out. So, she began the process of resigning from her job.

Leah refrained from telling the father of her child about the pregnancy. In fact, she confided in the pastor before anyone else. “In my head, it made sense...my dad had run away from my mom when she was pregnant. I didn’t want to look at him like the person who ran, so I just gave him permission to go before he ran.”

RUNNING BACK TO ABBA FATHER

With the pandemic creating waves of isolation, Leah was left to sit in solitude with her unborn child. As her baby began to grow, family and friends eventually found out. “Not everyone took the news with grace.”

With no more job, no reliable friends to confide in, a family that was distant, and no father for her baby, Leah pushed everyone she knew away until she could not lean on them for help. “Everything seemed like it was falling through the cracks.”

But it was here, in recognizing that she could no longer bear the challenge alone, that she made the life-changing decision to turn back to Jesus with everything she had. The running was over and she was coming home, into the eternal arms of the Abba Father who never once let her go.

Leah’s pregnancy started becoming the most beautiful season of her existence as she began

to reacquaint herself with the compassion of her Savior. She was now ready to be vulnerable with God and she started to ask Him to help her work through feelings of deep-seated resentment and pain.

“This was the time I started telling God about my dad, how I felt about him, and the questions I had.” In telling her Heavenly Father about the hurt her Earthly father had caused, such release brought divine healing in her relationship with Jesus. She continued to pour out all of her fears about motherhood, and prayed that her daughter would not fall into the same cycles she had been susceptible to—believing that even if circumstances did not change, God was still in control.

MOTHERHOOD MIRACLES

As a soon-to-be mother, the Lord heard Leah’s prayers and was faithful to give her the strength to let go of the past. She began healing and letting go of the ill feelings she harbored. God gave her grace to forgive.

When the time came, God enabled Leah to carry her baby girl, Malaika, without any complications. During this tender time of reliance on the Lord, she was learning more about the capacity of God’s heart and realizing how the birth of her daughter inspired the rebirth of her relationship with God; new motherhood was starting to feel Heavenly. All along, God was using her pregnancy to restore the parts of her that were broken. “God started showing me, ‘Regardless of how far you have fallen, you are still mine and I am going to prove it to you.’ And indeed, he proved it to me.”



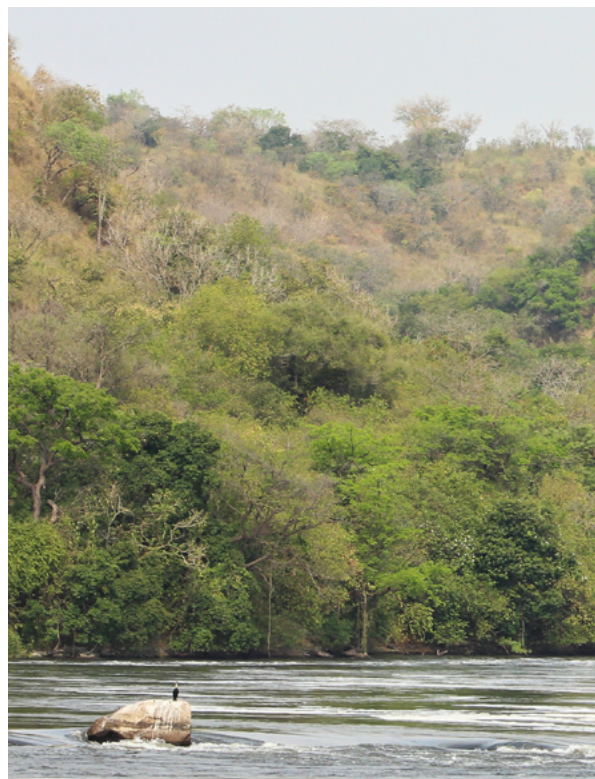
A BRAVE RETURN

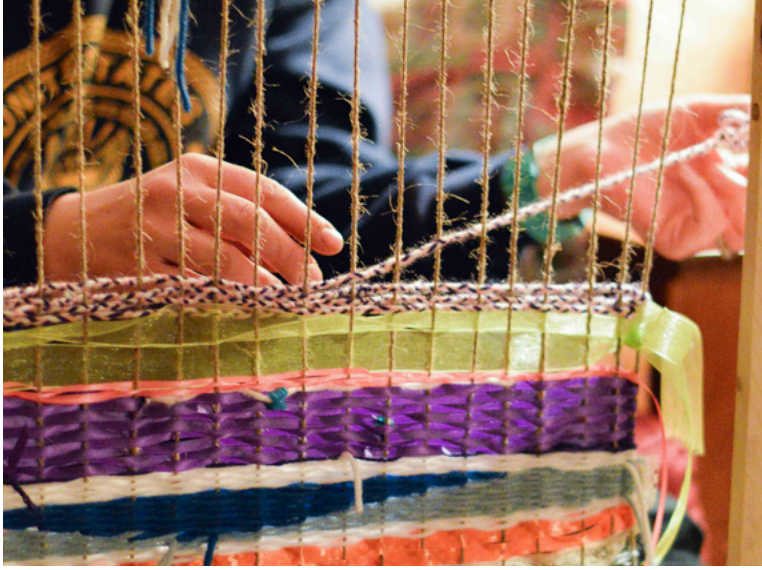
As the demands of raising a baby became a reality, the time came to return to work. “When I was pregnant and I had really given myself to God, there was a time when the Holy Spirit told me I would go back to Africa Renewal Ministries. But in my head it was impossible due to the nature of my pregnancy.” That is, until the Lord started reviving her spiritual gift of writing.

At the same time she was looking for a job, Africa Renewal Ministries needed someone in the partnership facilitation office who could write. “Because I had resumed writing and posting, Pastor Peter had read my blog. When he saw me writing again, I think the Holy Spirit, who told me to write again, went to him and told him, ‘She deserves a chance again.’”

Before she knew it, God had opened a clear door for Leah to return to the ministry. In trusting the Lord and prioritizing the life Malaika deserved, she finally allowed herself to live a life worth living—free from the past weight of burdens as she embraced her calling to help others. “God can bring healing in ways that we least expect; He can use everything for His glory.”

Today, Leah’s days are filled with gratitude beyond what her heart can contain or words can express. She is currently thriving at Africa Renewal Ministries, growing with the Lord as she watches her daughter Malaika grow up. “I am so grateful God is using my story to bring others hope.” ●



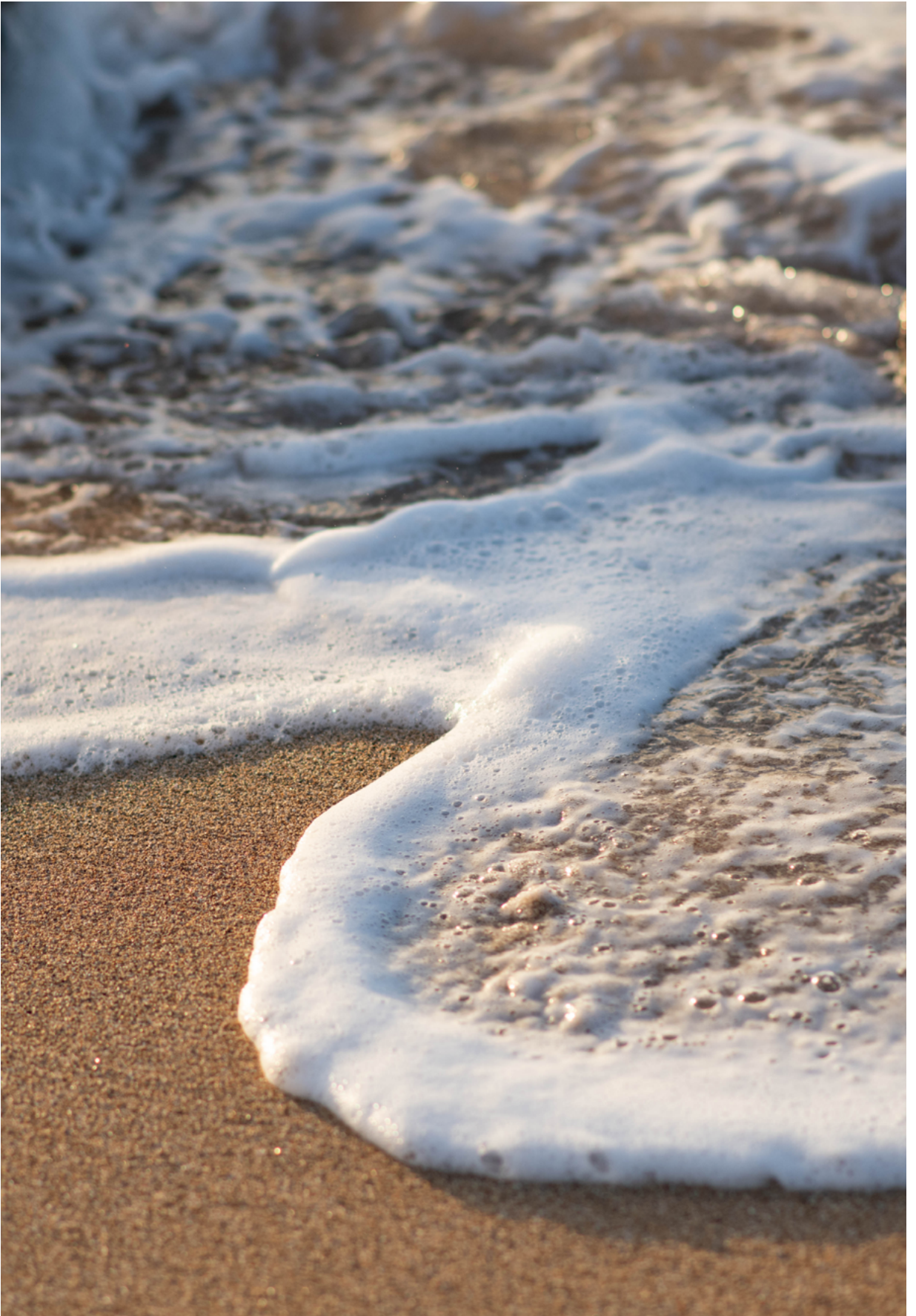


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WEEK 5

Jesus Restores

Luke 8:42-48



LUKE 8 : 4 2 - 4 8

⁴² because he had an only daughter about twelve years old, and she was dying. While he was going, the crowds were nearly crushing him. ⁴³A woman suffering from bleeding for twelve years, who had spent all she had on doctors and yet could not be healed by any, ⁴⁴approached from behind and touched the end of his robe. Instantly her bleeding stopped.

⁴⁵“Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the crowds are hemming you in and pressing against you.” ⁴⁶“Someone did touch me,” said Jesus. “I know that power has gone out from me.” ⁴⁷When the woman saw that she was discovered, she came trembling and fell down before him. In the presence of all the people, she declared the reason she had touched him and how she was instantly healed. ⁴⁸“Daughter,” he said to her, “your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

SERMON NOTES

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEACHING SUMMARY

When Jesus healed the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years, He drew attention to her. He wanted the crowd to know she had been healed so she could be restored to the community—so she could be touched again as it had been 12 years since the “unclean” woman had been embraced or welcomed.

Jesus can restore for us too.

LEAN IN

Are you more of a fixer-upper type person, or do you prefer new things?

Have you ever restored something, such as a piece of furniture or article of clothing? Describe the commitment that was required to bring it back to life.

LOOK DOWN

READ LUKE 8:42-48 (pg. 74)

What did this woman suffer from? What were some of the consequences associated with having this issue?

Why do you think the woman was terrified to have been called out by Jesus?
What is it that gave her peace instead?

LOOK OUT

Is restoration possible without desperation? Explain.

To where or what do people turn to when they get desperate?
How do those things compare to faith in Christ?

Jesus restored this woman physically, socially, and religiously.
How might these manifestations of restoration speak to the
ways in which we seek to minister to our community?

LOOK IN

This woman's utter dependence on Jesus made the way for her complete healing. She couldn't depend on her community or herself—all she had was Jesus. What or who are you depending on for your wellbeing?

Have you ever wanted God's power to change something in your life so badly, but felt hesitant to ask Him for it, or even hesitant to ask others to pray with you for it? Why?

RHYTHM REMINDER



repentance



serve your
community



share your
story



worship

I Need a Miracle

written by: Sangita Patel

In 1999, I was introduced to Jesus through Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN). At the time, I was struggling and feeling rather empty and disconnected inside. My mother's passing had left a hole in my heart, which I tried to fill by staying busy, focusing on my career, and striving to be perfect. As you can imagine, seeking worldly success only led to more emptiness.

Then, one night, my TV decided to go on the fritz and was stuck on TBN. As I watched the channel, I began to wrap my mind around Jesus, and I felt peace and freedom from perfectionism and worldly striving. It was as if a weight had been lifted from me. However, my relationship with God was more one of negotiating for how I would live and what I wanted.

Fast-forward to 2010. While I was out shopping, I was helped by a kind woman wearing a cross necklace at the Burberry store. Upon asking, she invited me to Mariners, her home church. From there, my life drastically changed for the better. I completed Rooted in 2014, became a Life Group leader, and I was baptized in 2019 at Mariners. I recommitted my life to Jesus and drew even closer to God. Subsequently, I felt called to join the prayer team and the Outreach Ministry.

Being saved has brought me the peace and healing I craved but never thought was possible. More importantly, I think about the loss of my mother, and realized I don't want uncertainty as to where my loved ones will spend eternity. We all have loved ones that we pray for and are hopeful for their salvation, which is why I wrote this prayer template. I pray this intercessory prayer builds hope in your heart for a miracle. ●

Abba Father,

Father, thank You for Your undeserved grace, tender mercies, and unfailing love for me. You are awesome and I love You with all my heart, mind, body, soul, and strength. You are the one and only true living God and there is no other. Thank You for making a way for sinners like me to be reconciled to You and live in Your Presence for all eternity in Heaven. I am grateful I am in Your Presence, and it is my heart's desire to see my family and loved ones saved as it aligns with Your desire that not one shall perish.

Father, thank You for sending Lord Jesus who is the only way to Heaven and the Truth, the Way, the Life. Give me strength, wisdom, and boldness to fearlessly share the gospel with my family and loved ones so they end up in eternity with You. Usher them from the bondage of spiritual darkness into Your glorious light. Prepare their hearts so they are receptive to the good news.

Father, I lift my father, siblings, niece, nephews, relatives, and the South Asian community at large domestically and globally to come to know You as their Lord and Savior. I ask that You remove scales so my loved ones see Your goodness and unfailing love. Wash them clean and give them a garment of Jesus' righteousness. Give them a desire to know You personally and a hunger and thirst for Your Word.

Abba Father, oh gracious and merciful One, forgive me of any known and unknown sins as I ask for the above. I sit in expectancy. Thank You in advance for the miracle of salvation for the above. I ask for all of this in Your son Jesus' holy and precious name.

Amen



Beginning to See
by Andrea Holt



"Who Touched Me?"

by David Harrington



Answering God's Call

written by: Annette Gross

In Matthew 19:14 (NLT), Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

These words reveal Christ's heart for children. For Jeff Bates, it begins with the Holy Spirit prompting him with a calling.

Living in Irvine and attending Mariners Irvine, Jeff and his wife joined a Rooted group in early 2020. After Jeff went to Man Camp, Mariners' annual men's retreat, God laid on his heart a need to start attending the Mariners Mission Viejo congregation and serving in whatever capacity God directed. Jeff shared God's call with his wife and she was all in, confirming what she had already felt convicted of by the Holy Spirit.

The following Sunday, Jeff and his family made Mariners Mission Viejo their home. Though it was hard to leave Mariners Irvine, they chose to

trust the Lord's leading and were excited about what lay ahead.

The Mission Viejo congregation began as a Mariners in the Neighborhood site in 2020 during the pandemic with a purpose to support the needs of people in the community. Jeff knew he was being led by God to serve, so he met with the Discipleship Pastor within the first month and expressed his desire to serve wherever needed. They discussed many ideas, but the most pressing was the need for leadership in the youth ministry.

Jeff had helped lead a youth ministry during his college days, but that was 15 years ago, and he wondered if it was the right fit for him now. He discussed and prayed about it with his wife. They decided that it was the right fit for his personality and heart, confident it was where God was leading. Youth ministry would allow him to



Jeff at Mariners Mission Viejo



follow his passion to make an impact on the Mission Viejo youth community.

In August 2021, Jeff began leading the youth program at Mariners Mission Viejo. There were four middle school students at the start, and over the course of a year, those students began inviting their friends. The number grew to about 15 or so attending weekly.

Jeff shared that it is not about numbers but about relationships and connection. The youth were diving deep, developing trust, and building community with each other.

The growth in regular attendees also spurred the addition of a high school group. This provided the opportunity for attendees to meet with their peers, developing deeper conversations that have led to stronger connections based on shared experiences and mutual needs.

One of the more rewarding aspects for Jeff is watching students be vulnerable with each other and support one another with hugs and reassuring comments. It has been a blessing to see them blossom and create a loving community as they learn to trust and grow with each other while navigating and overcoming challenging life experiences.

Even though youth work can be time consuming and challenging, Jeff and his wife view his service as their ministry, making his time away from his family more meaningful. Periodically, his family joins him at youth events so they can see the impact their serving is having on students. Since some of the youth group students volunteer to help with young children, Jeff's children also interact and connect with the students who are a part of the youth ministry.

Jeff is thankful for the support he receives from Mariners. He has four volunteers that lead Youth Life Groups and help him to separate the students into their groups. The youth group also looks forward to moving into their permanent home in the near future.

Jeff's choice to answer God's call can also serve as a reminder for all of us to consider how we can connect with others and allow God to use our gifts in His service. The rewards far outweigh the sacrifices. ●





Returning Home
by Andrea Holt

Chances of Grace

written by: *Jordie Poblete*

It was a beautiful winter's day before Christmas in San Diego, with blue skies and clean air. A stark contrast to where I was heading: prison. It was my first time ever being in a prison, and I was going there to lead worship for the inmates.

As I approached the tall, barbed wire fence surrounding the perimeter for D Yard at the R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility, I was given instructions.

"Please open your guitar case."

"I.D. please."

"Please sign this acknowledging our 'no hostage' policy that's in effect."

I'd later find out the policy meant if I were taken hostage by an inmate while visiting, no correctional officer on-site would negotiate or defend my safety.

I had brought my guitar with me because I was part of a new ministry partnership that Mariners Church had just begun a few weeks ago.

Prison Fellowship is an organization which essentially brings the gospel and people who believe to prisons around the U.S. Their mission is simple: don't forget those who are in prison.

One such person who came to the ministry launch event at Mariners Irvine was a man named Martin. He was formerly incarcerated for murder for more than 10 years at the same San Diego facility where I was going to lead worship.

"My story is my own," he told the gathered crowd who signed up to learn more about the ministry. "I own up to what I did, and I did the time. But while I did the time, I knew it had to be made right not only according to the law, but God's law."

Martin proceeded to describe his encounters with various groups who brought church and faith to the prison, and how he gradually began to find God and make amends.

"If it wasn't for those people who hadn't forgotten me and gave me the good news, I would probably be much more messed up and not gotten out," he said.

Now, here I was at D Yard, hoping to reach another Martin.

D Yard is considered a medium-security section of the facility. It is the middle level of security for those who committed "medium" offenses.

It was in the prison yard of that block that our group came to set up our “hope” event. A prison yard is exactly that—a large expanse of dead grass with some pull-up bars and an outdoor toilet with no privacy.

I won’t ever forget the setting that D Yard had though. It was perfectly framed by a tall desert mountain range, just a few miles away from the U.S.-Mexico border. And that beautiful blue sky was visible from every corner of the yard. There were also these large, blue metal doors converging from different buildings. Inside each of those buildings were the inmates in their cells where they spent most of the day.

At 2:30p, their “programming” had them come out to the yard for some recreational time, which was only about 30-45 minutes.

Once those blue doors opened at every building, the inmates clad in denim blue filed out slowly. They took in the sun and the fresh air. And as I began to play my guitar, the amplified sound reverberated through the yard and made its way into the inmates’ ears. Intrigued, they began to slowly make their way toward me. They looked like travelers from a far-out land as I saw them at a distance. But the closer they came, the more detail about who they were began to emerge: tattoos that were insignias of their gangs; some used walkers because they were older inmates; brown and white skin; some wore glasses and were young like me; bandages covering bruises.

I was afraid and anxious because these people were there for a reason. They killed and stole. They were convicted. They were sentenced to spend years here.

These types of people are what prisons are for, I thought.

But as I began to sing for the hundreds gathered, I could barely give any words to describe the moment. I will tell you, more than 90% of the people who were released into the yard gathered for the “hope” event. Lyric sheets for the songs were distributed to them to sing along. Their pastor gave a message. Martin, their former fellow inmate, gave a testimony, and then there was an opportunity for them to respond in faith to become part of the family of God. As we ended, I decided to sing another song over them.

It’s a song that has been sung around the world in many churches, but it hit differently for me when I sang it in that prison yard.

“You take what the enemy meant for evil, and You turn it for good.”

One voice became, two, became three. Four. Then hundreds.

It was a choir of prisoners.

It was a choir of those who felt that particular truth of God and received His great gift of grace. God’s presence was felt by everyone, including the correctional officers and their captain who were keeping a watchful eye, and saw the miracle taking place.

“I was doubtful anyone would respond, but they did. It’s something that I’ve never seen from the inmates before,” the captain later said.

In other words, a miracle—a Christmas miracle. Who knew in such a place that something divine could show itself? ●

The Miracle of Open Doors

written by: Brandon Gross

In the spring of 2020, the leaders of Sunburst Youth Academy, a military-based program for at-risk youth, were searching for a place to hold their graduation ceremony. God's faithfulness to Mariners Church over the years proved to be the answer, with a facility large and open enough to host the celebration.

Following the graduation ceremony, God opened the door for a new partnership and an opportunity to bring the gospel to cadets every weekend.

The Sunburst program focuses on providing the students with community and support that come from real-world training, military discipline and routine creation, counseling, and mentorship. Upon completing the program, cadets graduate and receive assistance with the next steps in their life. While they are going through the program, each cadet has the option of attending a chapel service, which is currently hosted at the Sunburst facility by Mariners Church.

Every weekend, cadets join a Mariners Hosted Here worship service and experience opportunities to connect, grow, and learn more about what it means to follow Jesus. In the past couple of years, we've seen more and more cadets choosing to attend, with some saying "I Believe" for the first time.

My story with Sunburst Youth Academy began with a "yes" to a simple invitation to come and see what God is doing through these special chapel services. After one visit, my heart was overflowing in ways I hadn't previously experienced. Tears of joy streamed down my face during the car ride home—pure and unfiltered gratitude surfacing for all God has done not only in my life but in the lives of us all. It was at that moment I knew there was a story that needed to be told, and more importantly, it was an opportunity to witness His grace.

Enter the most recent experience I had at Sunburst with a few of my closest friends from Mariners and the conversations that followed.



JORGE MOLINA

PASTOR

THE SUNBURST OUTREACH HAS BECOME A STAPLE IN YOUR LIFE. WHY HAVE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY INVESTED SO MUCH TIME WITH THIS SPECIFIC PROGRAM? The cadets (students) are vulnerable, at-risk teens. They come from an unchurched environment in most cases and need the grace and strength only God can provide to endure. The relationship we have with Sunburst came from an invitation to bring the gospel to teens. This is so missional for each of us.

YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN SMALL MIRACLES, AS YOU'VE TOLD ME ON MULTIPLE OCCASIONS "THEY'RE ALL BIG MIRACLES." HAVING BEEN TO SUNBURST MULTIPLE TIMES, I AGREE NOW MORE THAN EVER. WHAT MIRACLES HAVE YOU OBSERVED THAT SHOWCASE GOD'S WORK AT SUNBURST? So many miracles, but this is the one that stands out most to me: a

public school and a military reserve base asked us to bring the message of Jesus to their facility and program.

Seeing the growth of the students in their spiritual journey is a miracle—that they are vulnerable enough to take that journey, and as you saw firsthand, that the teachers and sergeants are receiving Christ and drawing closer to Him.

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR SUNBURST OVER THE NEXT YEAR, AND HOW CAN THE MARINERS COMMUNITY HELP MAKE IT A REALITY?

I would like to see us continue streaming the online messages for the cadets, for us to bring counseling services to the teachers and military personnel, and for us to share the online services with the parents of each cadet.



MARY ANNE SWART

MENTOR

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO VOLUNTEER AT SUNBURST? I heard about Sunburst and what a cool opportunity it was for us from my psychology professor. His excitement piqued my curiosity, but I didn't think that I would have the time in my schedule to go until he offered to waive the weekly assignments if we volunteered. Truthfully, that was a large part of my decision to check it out.

HOW HAS THIS EXPERIENCE CHANGED YOUR LIFE AND WALK WITH GOD? This experience has caused me to think about how my own feelings of inadequacy do not matter when I have a powerful God at work within me. Every week I drive to Sunburst feeling woefully unprepared and inadequate, and every week I leave feeling full of excitement and joy. Every Sunday, it becomes evident that it is God at work, not me. I feel most prepared not when I have reviewed the study magazine or outlined a conversation, but when I have spent significant time praying over the girls and our time together.

WHAT MIRACLES HAVE YOU OBSERVED AT SUNBURST? Once, my friends and I were debriefing our experiences on the drive home when I expressed my desire to give my girls a gift. But we weren't sure what kind of gifts we were allowed to give since they live under such strict regulations. I decided that they couldn't get in trouble for having Bible verses. As I considered what Scripture I wanted to give them, God gave me the idea to find verses that spoke into the prayer requests I had just asked of them. I prayed God would show me which verses to use because He knew what would speak into their lives better than I ever could. Over the course of the next week, I found each girl

a verse that I thought corresponded with their requests and, even better, could start a conversation related to the gospel.

When I brought the girls their doodled verses the next week, they were shocked I had spent the week thinking about them and praying for them.

One of the girls had requested prayer about the future. When I told her about my prayers for her and presented her with the verse, her eyes grew wide and she told me during the week, she had met with the Air Force, talked at length about the future, and decided that is the path she wants to pursue after Sunburst. She confided that when originally asking for prayer, she had secretly felt very skeptical, thinking, "Mary Anne is not just going to show up next week with a book saying, 'Here's the plan for your future that God gave me!'" But she realized God had actually listened to me and my prayer had worked.

I think that moment marked a change in our conversations. No longer was God someone just to learn about, but someone who might actually care about us and listen to our prayers.

WHAT WOULD YOU SHARE WITH SOMEONE THINKING ABOUT VOLUNTEERING AT SUNBURST?

Do it. You will be humbled. If you are worried that you are inadequate, don't—you are. Pretty much everyone is. That's what makes it so beautiful—you realize that any progress or success you achieve comes wholly from God and has nothing to do with yourself.

However, at the end of the day, all these kids want is someone to listen to them. They aren't desperate for fancy theological answers or eloquent arguments, but someone who will listen to them, someone who will treat them as important, someone who will show them their experiences are worth hearing. I have recognized from the fast-paced, out of breath, almost desperate way the girls talk over each other they are not used to being listened to. One of the girls told me she "just wants someone to tell her that she is proud of her." You can be that person. ●





VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTORS



Everyday Miracles

written by: Lexi Ragan

Miracles don't only happen on a monumental scale. Sometimes, the most precious of them take place in mundane moments and can easily stay hidden in the everyday rhythms of our lives. They are happening everywhere, all the time, in all shapes and sizes. When caught in the routine rush of this world, moments like this can be overlooked, and we risk missing out on the wonders God has intentionally designed for our eyes to capture and hearts to cherish. Where have you seen Him move miraculously when you least expected it? The size of the miracle does not have to be huge for the impact to be lasting *and* enormously profound.



Scan the QR code to read more stories of God working in amazing ways in everyday life and share your own!

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Restoration
by Natanyah Caputo

Special thanks to everyone who courageously shared their stories of how Jesus has worked in their lives with our church. Thank you for inspiring all of us to trust our miracle-working Savior!

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