

## “Everyday Miracles” April 19, 2009

If I say felt board Jesus...do you guys know what I am talking about? Felt Board Jesus, anyone? If you know what I'm talking about, there is probably a very good chance you, like I, learned about Jesus, and Moses and all things Bible and miraculous from cut out felt biblical characters affixed to a felt board like this one.

For so many of us, that was our earliest experience of faith formation. I'll never forget this one lesson when I was a kid...our Sunday school teacher, Mrs. Jones, said Jesus could walk on water. You may have seen this image earlier. This painting depicts the story from Matthew Matthew 14:24-33...As Mrs. Jones began to tell the story...a good *lean in* story...she lowered her voice...*“At about four o'clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them walking on the water. They were scared out of their wits. “A ghost!” they said, crying out in terror.”*

Now that part of the story is fascinating and perplexing enough, but the next part is for me, and I'd guess for many of you, the most challenging part...Peter, impetuous Peter, said, “Hey boss, if that's you, really you I'm coming out to get you...Jesus said...come on then. And what this picture shows ([painting on screen 2](#)), is the point Mrs. Jones drove home “yes, not only is Jesus walking on water but...Peter began to sink because he didn't believe, really believe.” That's what I was taught...and this kind of became a litmus test for faith...if you have true faith, then you'll believe Jesus walked on water...and that's what a miracle is.

And so it went with the rest of the miracles too.

Jesus calming the storm...  
Jesus turning water into wine...  
Jesus giving sight to the blind...

Okay...is everybody ready? Hold on to something or somebody, I'm about to make a hard right turn. I'm leaving these miracles right here and headed another direction. Maybe they happened just as they are written, maybe they didn't...I don't know. What I do know is that so very often we get stuck behind these stories as if they were a big tree, and we miss the grand, beautiful forest behind them. In the last few weeks we've had a really interesting dialogue that I initiated through facebook and on our blog [endless deep.org](#) which I'll say a little more about in a little while. But, we've been talking about miracles. Many of you have been part of that discussion.

What has emerged is a wonderful dialogue about people's experience of the miraculous in the everyday...people being able to articulate the beautiful

simplicity of miracles and their personal connection to them. The writer and lecturer Wayne Dyer said, “**I am realistic, I expect miracles.**” Think about that for a second...I am realistic...I expect miracles. Wayne Dyer is a guy who very much believes that positive thinking can achieve positive outcomes. What if each of us *expected* miracles to happen?

### MESSAGE Pt. 2

When it comes to miracles Jesus himself said it...**“You're looking for proof, but you're looking for the wrong kind. All you want is something to titillate your curiosity, satisfy your lust for miracles.”** You see Jesus knew it...he taught it...The point of those miracle stories isn't to challenge your sensibility or your beliefs...they are stories about our human need for compassion, healing, peace, justice...all of these things that make real, miraculous change in our lives...in our world...and moreover that we...WE have the capacity to initiate this change. Well, a few weeks ago I posed simple question on my facebook page regarding miracles...

Stanley Abell wonders...what do YOU consider to be a miracle? Have you ever experienced it? Can you name it?

Then we posted the same query on our new blog [endless deep](#)...and again, what began to emerge was experiencing the miracle of simplicity, identifying a completely fresh and different way to look at miracles...

One person stated simply: **I believe in miracles. They may not be “miracles” in the sense of some of the events reported in the Bible, but they are truly miracles to me.**

Another said: **Having a child grow inside your body and be born into this world. Even though it happens all the time, I don't think it is any less than a miracle.**

Yes, yes...the everyday miracle. It was becoming clear to me that there is a beautiful simplicity in miracles. Are miracles in the eye of the beholder?

Another seemingly answered this question saying: **Seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary. I think the miracle has as much to do with vision as it does anything else.**

The vision...hmmm. If we can envision it can it be? Can we actually be part of the miracle? And of course, I am obligated by law to share a lyric with you from the new U2 record...The song is called *Moment of Surrender*...the lyrics simply says vision over visibility. Vision over visibility, what would that look like?

### MESSAGE Pt. 3:

This so reminds me of my friend Joshua Mbithi. Joshua is the housefather of Neema Children's Home in Kenya.

They care for children who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Like Wayne Dyer...he expects miracles to happen. Joshua expects them to happen through prayer...and...

One person on endlessdeep said, "**I am wondering about miracles vs. answered prayer. Is a miracle an answered prayer that you just didn't get around to saying?**" Well, we can split hairs on the difference between meditation and prayer...But through prayer, Joshua believes in miracles every day. Time and time again, his cupboard will be bare, his medicine chest empty...and miraculously, someone will stop by with food, or donate medicine.

If I'm really honest, I have to admit that sometimes I tease with Joshua...oh come one Joshua, but then a Gardener shared this letter with me from a doctor working in central Africa...

#### **MESSAGE Pt. 4:**

A friend of mine gets the final say on miracles this morning. She was one of the people who responded on facebook. I believe her response captures the essence of the way we might think of miracles. She said:

**I believe that to feel "a peace that passes all understanding" despite circumstances is the real miracle of God. I also believe that sometimes miracles occur that change circumstances but I don't understand how or why.**

The beauty and honesty of that last sentence really struck me..."*I also believe that sometimes miracles occur that change circumstances but I don't understand how or why.*" I think sometimes our desire...our craving...for certainty in life robs us of the simple beauty of everyday miracles. How wonderfully disarming to say I don't understand how or why, but that's okay. I was so intrigued by Lisa's statement I wondered what was behind it...I asked her if she would mind sharing it with me...

A couple of years ago, Lisa and her husband gave birth to a seemingly healthy child. There were not particular complications in childbirth. On the day they were to leave the hospital to go home, the discharging nurse came in to release the baby. All their bags were packed, the car was pulled up to the curb ready to go home. When the nurse came in to cut the yellow security Identification bracelet off the baby's ankle, for whatever reason, the scissors wouldn't work. The nurse excused herself to go find a pair. In that time that the nurse was hunting for a new pair of scissors, something just didn't sit well with her...something didn't seem right...nothing she could put a finger on...but she just felt it. When she returned, she took the baby's temperature and it was abnormally high.

Upon further investigation, there was apparently some sort of serious glucose deficiency. The bottom line was, this beautiful baby had a life-threatening condition. Upon further examination the baby flown to Children's Hospital in Philadelphia where she stayed for several weeks. The story ends happily. After intensive treatment, the baby was okay...she was released and was able to come home.

After reflecting on this story over and over again, Lisa was finally able to articulate what she believed the miracle was...for the longest time she was convinced it was that she had been surrounded by loving friends and family and constant prayer. But then, at some point after reflecting on the broader picture, she remembered...she realized...that other babies were sick too, and these babies had loving families surrounding them with prayer too, but...some of those babies didn't make it. Where was the miracle there?

Finally she said, yes, it was miraculous that somehow my baby regained her health, but I've come to believe that wasn't the miracle. The miracle was that nurse who, because of freak failure of her equipment...had the extra moment to just sense...just feel something wasn't right. Had it not been for that nurse...

**I...I also believe that sometimes miracles occur that change circumstances but I don't understand how or why...** I have to admit to you, I have spent a great deal of my life in the search for certitude...concrete answers to the hows and whys. I've wanted the answers to be as cut and dried and easy to understand as Mrs. Jones' felt board Jesus. I'm afraid sometimes this pursuit has led me to miss some of the really miraculous stuff in life...like waking up in the morning...like appreciating every day...appreciating the miracle in the ordinary.

