

The road of faith is never straight.

By SAR | Miracle Jesus | February 2011



Winter in New England can be challenging. Between bearing freezing temperatures, navigating icy roads and coping with cabin-fever, the best of us are often confronted with trying to be patient—and hopeful—for the glorious bloom of spring to help lift our spirits. And just when we've reach our breaking point, we are reminded that change is imminent in sometimes humbling, albeit humorous ways.

This year, our family decided to heat our home with firewood. One morning I came downstairs to start the fire and tried to do so with a good-size piece of wood. Now for whatever reason, the wood unexpectedly flew up, hit me directly in the forehead, and left an inch and a half cut. I thought stitches would be needed, or for us “rugged types”, some good old-fashioned super glue may do the trick. It did. However, aside from the minor injury putting me temporarily off course on my fire-starting duties, this event got me thinking about how quickly life can

change—like winter to spring—it's inevitable. One decision, one action, one moment and life can be set off on a new course, and often times yielding less than desirable results. The Bible is full of parables meant to teach us these very mindful lessons.

One in particular comes to mind, *The Parable of the Rich Fool*. It tells us of the man who decided to tear down his barns to build bigger ones where he could store his grain and goods, thus increasing his wealth for many years to come. His view was that his life is now good and there's nothing more to do than “eat, drink and be merry.” However, God had other plans. That very night, his soul was required of him, and he died. God asked him “Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”

This is how it will be for anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God. – Luke 12:16-21

It can be so easy to live life, making decisions in a silo (no pun intended). All too often, we forget until a somber moment reminds us—like the hit on the head by a piece of firewood—that life will change and someday God will call your soul

back home, and then what becomes of your decisions or what you have accumulated in your life? In the meantime, who or what was guiding you on your path?

There are so many daily distractions that cloud our judgment and further deter us from finding our way. But God is the one who waits for us to ask him the questions and will provide us the answers. The struggle is to be quiet enough to listen. He alone can lead us to a hopeful spring; but this thought can be so daunting for so many people—when they've lost their way. **When the hopeless meet faith on an open-road walked with an open heart, blessings will be theirs.**

Recently I saw a man on the news that had lost 30 years of accumulated work and possessions that were washed away in a flood referred to as an 'inland tsunami'. As tragic as that was, and as true as the saying goes the *Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away*, it is also nonetheless a solemn reminder that only God blesses and as the Bible tell us, *He adds no sorrow to it*. We do that, unfortunately, to ourselves.

So how do you trust in God that he will replenish your needs, not things, when so many people often spend their life building self-sufficiency, self-security (if such things exist), and the like, thus block those spiritual riches ever from arriving? The Bible teaches us about first seeking God's kingdom and everything will be added unto you. Easily said; maybe not so easily done. Which begs the next question: How then would one first seek the kingdom of God?

The answer requires, perhaps, both a leap of faith both in God and yourself that you are making the right decision in seeking those answers from the One who is to provide them. For many, the answer is clear. Through soul-searching at perhaps the most critical moments of their lives, such as when disasters strike or illness takes over, they found that Jesus was their answer. But it is more than simply adding Jesus to their life. Many were growing restless with a tentative connection to Him and recognized the need to make Him their life, living daily putting their faith into practice. Of course we cannot escape the disasters happening around us nor the everyday occurrences of life that can throw us into a tailspin, but we need to ask ourselves: *What's the point in placing our sense of security in temporal things when they can be so easily taken away?* Such as the foolish rich man who never thought beyond today. When you make God (Jesus) your life there will be a paradigm shift. It's an inevitable result of faith. No longer will you be your own self-sufficiency. Jesus becomes your sufficiency. But learning this is something that takes much time, trust and sometimes pain.

It's true to say that which doesn't kill you makes you stronger, but you don't need to face it

alone. If you really believe in Jesus and His love for you—if you are willing to trust what He wants for your life is good, and “just do it”, then understand this: He has you covered. Believe He will take care of all your needs, and resist taking control.

For example, one winter while in the car with my wife Lara and six children, our car broke down in the middle of a blizzard. At the time we did not have much in way of money or possessions, as we were new to the U.S., and also did not have anyone we could call for help. I remember thinking, whose car overheats in a blizzard? I walked into a nearby pizza restaurant to ask for water for the engine, but before I could even ask, a woman appeared from the back of the restaurant and yelled for us to come in to have a pizza on the house. There we all sat in that warm restaurant, safely out from the cold, and enjoyed a meal that was provided to us at no charge by a stranger, no less. Even as faith-based as I am, I couldn't help but quietly think to myself, “why”. The facts were clear: we had no money and were hungry. But the answer while simple is profoundly true: Jesus had us covered. Circumstances can change so suddenly, as we all know too well, and if your life is not based entirely in Jesus then we may miss the blessings He has prepared to provide us—whether we think we need them or not. **And therein lies the problem that many people face.**

Lara and I have dedicated our lives encouraging people to live the exceptional faith Jesus has for their life. We have experienced this joy for ourselves. But we've found that while some run with the joy of making Jesus their life—many may run away from the exact same thing, but to the deceptive comfort of self sufficiency. *However, what are the yielded results? Where did all the energy spent running really bring you?* As you recognize Jesus wants to be your life, it demands attention and requires change. Trusting Him in everything is a process that begins with taking that first step. How small or large that step may be is different for everyone, and requires trust on a new level—trust that you should never rescind once given. When we learn to not put ourselves first when things don't go the way our limited scope of understanding thinks they should go, then you will find that this letting go of control will bring the expected joy so many have experienced and continue to find comfort from in their lives.

I too, however, can struggle at times with this concept, and others I hope would benefit from knowing this and accepting the fact that trusting takes constant faith; but we're human and we still have real duties and responsibilities. Not too long ago, I went into a momentary panic when we could not pay the rent. But we trusted God and refused to give panic any power, when I unexpectedly bumped into a man who knew nothing of our current plight. His first

words were I heard you were in town. I have a rent-free house I thought you may like to live in with your family. So needless to say, we paid what was owed where we were living and immediately moved out into this new “gift”. We know, and have learned, that behind every challenge, behind every fear or apparent failure is an opportunity for God to show us His plan His way. *But how much do we trust in Him and trust that we are walking His plan?* Provided we are not self-sufficient, but are God-sufficient amazing things happen. There is no other way. *Is there fear and uncertainty living outside of the worldly normal?* Of course there is, but rest assured in the knowledge that God will have His way with you and the situation. However, that is provided you have your life securely based in Him and not trying to take control in your own hands. The only way to move is forward once you have opened your future in God. You can never go back once you’ve experienced his grace.

Once the eternal hand of God rests on your destiny nothing of the world will ever satisfy you again. Once realized, you will pass through to a homeland of heaven where there will be no crying, no pain, and no fear. The realization that you live in God’s economy, not the world’s economy it is really very liberating.

Remember that the world may say “You can’t pay, you are finished, you’re destined to be doomed”, in God’s economy, He says, “I want you there and will make a way for you. Trust me!” Sure, you have bills to pay and needs to be met, but after putting your life in God’s hands, you find that He pays the bills He wants paid. The ones you have trouble paying, He often does not want in your life in their current form. Believe it—correct the situation and get in God’s flow for that time.

Understanding the difference between a want and a need

God promises to supply all our needs. The one problem is often times many of us have lived a life so absorbed in our own passions and lusts that we no longer understand the difference between the two. One fair observation is to see that God never feeds a lustful desire or a spirit of lust. *Ask yourself where is your need based? In what part of your life will it be added?*

Something that is obtained through lust or unhealthy desire usually always turns into a burden, because what you order you pay for; but what God orders He pays for, and it is, at its core, pure good. As circumstances change in our lives or as we progress to be more Christ-like in our character and actions, rest assured there will be many cross currents to deter you off your path: currents of other’s opinions, currents of good ideas, currents of feelings of defeat, etc. But we need to reflect on good ideas.

A contradictory notion, but good ideas can be faith and relationship killers. God shows us a new direction and we get so excited about the possibilities that we run in that direction with reckless abandon. Ultimately, however, we get out of step with God’s timing and the bottom falls out of what we are doing; despite our intentions of wanting to succeed. Dealing with this result can be a real struggle with discouragement trying to disillusion our walk.

At one point of our faith journey, Lara and I were led to purchase a development we felt God wanted us to use to support our mission, and we intended to do so under what they call a REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust). God opened many, many doors for us, but I will mention only two examples.

First, the most prominent real estate broker in the city at that time, where the property was located offered to work for us at no cost. His fees were estimated to have been in excess of half a million dollars. We then also needed a specialized attorney with expertise in dealing with and understanding the complexity of REITS. While walking with my children in the city one day, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart as we passed a man; and He said, “there is your attorney”. After meeting the man at random, and talking together for a brief time, I found out that he was indeed an attorney with the experience we needed. In fact, his company had established REITS many years prior, and further he was the ‘best of the best’ as well as a partner in the firm. As God would have it, I met him the following week in his office where he offered to also provide us with free legal work estimated to be approximately one million dollars, which was necessary for such an ambitious undertaking. Matters were moving right along, when the attorney sent me to find what they call ‘angel investors’. [Angel investors are individuals who provide their own capital for business start-ups, assuming more risk typically than other investors.] Only he explained that for our case, we would need both *real* Angels as well as angel investors.

Seeing this as a true test of faith in Christ’s blessings, from that point on, I made a series of business connections with different financially affluent men around the country. However, despite a well-laid plan, none were prepared to get involved with something so obviously based in extreme faith. As a minister, I never pretended to be an expert in real estate, but it didn’t lessen the hard blow reality of their decisions. On the surface, I suppose it is easy to understand why they preferred not to part with their hard earned cash and risk it all on an idea that offered faith as its service with an unknown return on investment. To someone not walking such a Christ-centric path it would appear that faith was a potential liability; but for us it was very entertaining in one sense, yet heartfully frightening in another.

God had showed us so clearly the direction of our new venture which would serve primarily as a 24 hour / 7 day a week new Christian center offering classes and worship, that would occur in a movement of His spirit in that particular city.

The short of it—effectively we were given \$1.5 million in free work and advice, but the men I stood in front of selling my vision to, of which I believed in 100 percent, for one reason or another, did not see it quite the same way. And thus ended this vision—an opportunity that was not missed but rather squandered. Despite the results, in such an instance I knew that all is never lost. Lessons were learned, new directions were shown to us, and we continue to serve our mission regardless of not having a “home” for it.

Maybe we should say it’s to be continued but during that time, it was a daily wrestle with good ideas and God ideas. I can say this with strong conviction that nothing is wasted in God. His plans are eternal and will be fulfilled His way on His time with His instruments.

God rarely works in straight lines.

One part of us craves for the easy straight road but by experience we find God’s road has many twists and turns that are designed to build in us the character to hold the calling of what He has planned for our lives. Walk your path and stay steadfast in your beliefs and enjoy watching God’s handy work sculpt your life. I can honestly say that after 11 years of living this truth, Jesus never fails you. But you need to let Him be creative!

Miracle Jesus is a non-denominational Christian organization promoting a clear message of salvation and love through Jesus Christ rather than individual doctrine of a church. For more information, please visit our website at www.miraclejesus.com.