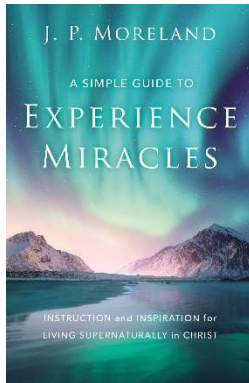


A Simple Guide to Experience Miracles

Instruction and Inspiration for Living Supernaturally in Christ

J.P. Moreland¹



“My goal in this book is to invigorate your love for God. In the stories and thoughts I share, I want to build up your confidence that we can truly know the reality of the biblical God and his power today. I also want to increase your expectation and hope that God can and often does miraculously intervene to bring help and comfort, and to show that it makes rational sense to step out and engage kingdom power. I believe that by doing so you will strengthen your courage to witness to and act on behalf of the gospel of Jesus.” (p. 2)

Chapter 1 – Why So Many Westerners Are Embarrassed by Miracle Stories

[Read miracle story on p. 1]

“I’m especially writing for those of us in Western cultures who have been raised with a worldview that downplays the reality and existence of the supernatural.... At the core of a maturing Christian life lies the intentional, steady development of confidence in God and the Bible.” (p. 12)

“While most Bible-believing Christians retain a mild doctrinal belief in the supernatural and miracles, they live as practical atheists, with very little expectation of seeing the miraculous.” (p. 16)

“The kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.” ~*St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 4.20*

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Ramsay MacMullen, a professor of History and classics at Yale, in his book, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, A.D. 100-400* studied conversions in the early Church from a *secular* point of view. His conclusion was that people became Christians in the first few hundred years (that is, before it became fashionable) not because it was such a compelling philosophy, but because of the *power of God*—because the preaching and teaching of the early Christians was backed up (was given authority) by the transformative power of God in their lives.

“Faith is viewed as a privatized expression of emotion. But this view does not reflect a biblical concept of faith; in fact, it represents practically the opposite of biblical faith. Biblical faith is *trust or confidence in something that is based on knowledge or good reasons.*” (p. 17)

“There was a time in my life when I believed with a confidence level of 60/40 that God answers prayer. I decided to embark on an investigative journey to strengthen what I already believed, and I will honestly say that I’m now closer to 85/15 in my belief that prayer actually works. For comparison, as a philosopher, I’m only about 90/10 sure the external world is made of matter!” (p. 19)

Questions for discussion:

1. *How often do we medicate spiritual problems?*
2. *How can we base our knowledge of reality on science when science itself can’t even explain our existence?*
3. *Is faith for you an intellectual leap or is it a logical expression of trust based on your knowledge or experience?*
4. *What kinds of things in your daily life do you base on probabilities rather than certainties?*

Chapter 2 – Miracles: What They Are and How to Recognize Them

[Read miracle story on pp. 25-26]

How Can We Really Know A Miracle Has Occurred?

“I define a miracle as an event or intervention that is caused by the **special action of God** or some other supernatural being that is **an exception to the ordinary**, law-governed course of nature for some specific purpose.” (p. 27)

“Our goal is to formulate answers to these two questions:

- Can we actually know that a miracle has happened, or can we at least have more reason to believe than disbelieve that some event is a miracle?
- How can we tell the difference between a genuine miracle and a mere coincidence?”

What Does it Mean to Know Something? (Epistemology)

“There are two kinds of knowledge: (1) knowledge by direct awareness or *experience*, and (2) *propositional knowledge*.” (pp. 27-28)

“*One can know something without being absolutely certain that one is right.... Propositional knowledge is a true belief based on adequate—not completely certifying—grounds*” [e.g. you cannot absolutely prove that *you* exist] (p. 30).

“We can know something is supernatural while admitting we might be wrong and still have unresolved questions. In such case, the possibility we are mistaken does not discount the solid grounds we have for claiming knowledge.” (p. 31)

“Whenever two factors are present, investigators are rationally obligated to draw the conclusion that the event was brought about intentionally for a purpose by an intelligent agent:

- The event was a very unlikely one (small probability)
- The event is capable of independent characterization. In other words, it is capable of being identified as a special occurrence.”

Let’s call this the ‘intelligent agent principle’ (IAP)” (pp. 31-33)

[See car accident story, pp. 33-34]

[Tell story of my Grandfather’s funeral reception]

[See lottery story, p. 42]

Question for discussion:

1. What stories can you tell from your own experience that fit the IAP principle of miracles we can believe in?