

Megashift

Igniting Spiritual Power

James Rutz

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The New Kingdom Explosion

Exciting Miracles and Church Growth

If you read this book with your heart, you will have to refocus your eyes--on wider and higher horizons. You will start to do things you thought were out of your reach. You will become able to handle problems that would flatten you today.

You will have a kind of freedom you thought impossible. You will solve personal problems you expected to carry around for the rest of your life. And you will no longer face a daily routine, but a daily adventure, perhaps even a world-changing pilgrimage on a spiritual frontier at the very edge of what's knowable, what's doable, what's imaginable.

There's been a megashift

Very few people realize that the nature of life on Earth is going through a major change. The Creator whose epic story flows through the pages of Scripture has begun to dissolve the strongholds of evil. This new drama is being played out every hour around the globe, accompanied sometimes by mind-bending miracles.

God has apparently decreed that plain folks like you and me are now a central part of an accelerated plan for a total transformation of the world. That plan is centered around small clusters of loosely networked but highly committed Christian people who have been empowered to do extraordinary things.

I'll start by describing one such event.

As I was leaving New Delhi, India, in March of 2003, I phoned a friend who leads a huge and growing network of house churches, Rodrick Gilbert. I confessed to him, "Rod, I've got a credibility problem back in the States when I teach about resurrections. Could you send somebody over here to the hotel before I leave, somebody who's come back from the dead, so I can get a picture?"

So he graciously brought....

Savitri and Arjun

At six o'clock on an April evening in 2001, five-year-old Arjun Janki Dass

died in New Delhi from an accidental electrocution.

His parents took him to a medical clinic where they worked on his body for two hours--without success. The doctor charged them 5,000 rupees (about \$110) and told them to call a mortician.

Instead they called Rodrick at the nearby Deliverance Church. He then called upon Savitri, one of his staff members.

1. Savitri brought two other Christians to Arjun's home, and the five of them began praying over the dead body at 10:00 PM. They prayed their hearts out for six hours. Then at 4:00 AM the next morning, Arjun snapped back to life--no brain damage, no problems.

Today he's a normal eight-year-old. I met with Savitri, Arjun, and his mother (Mina), and took photos, and the boy is A-OK.

Savitri is a 60-year-old widow, a Dalit ("untouchable") from the lowly Dom caste. She spent her life as a street sweeper, which made her, in the caste system, part of the lowest of the low. The broom was her livelihood, but she's a fine, humble lady, a former Hindu turned to Christ.

As we were parting, I asked Savitri through an interpreter, "How many resurrections have you been involved with in the six years that you've been doing ministry?"

She answered quietly, "Sixteen."

You're in a new world

How long will it be before you start working some miracles yourself? That depends.

1. It depends mostly on God's timing. Since about the mid-1980's, a tide of miracles has begun to engulf the entire planet. As time goes on, miracles are multiplying like loaves and fishes. By now, so many people have seen actual miracles that it has almost become more difficult to doubt than to believe.

2. It also depends some on where you are. Robert Edwards, a local friend, once prayed and brought a very dead baby back to life on a visit to India, but in the 20 years since then has done almost nothing like that. And you may recall that Jesus Himself was almost completely stymied by the unbelief in His home town (Mark 6:5).

3. Finally, it depends a lot on you--which is the theme behind this chapter.

It depends on your obedience.

It depends on the strength of your faith--or your desperation!

It depends on your faithfulness in your mission. Many miracles happen in the process of evangelism.

It depends on your ears as you learn to listen to God.

Grind-It-Out Obedience

The first catalyst of miracles is simple obedience.

* A distinguished Indian evangelist named Sadhu Chellappa was on a mission trip to a village north of Madras, when in the middle of the night he suddenly sensed God speaking to him: "Leave this house quickly and run away!"

Not exactly a convenient thing to do. But Chellappa was used to accepting even strange instructions from the Lord without discussion, so he quickly dressed and ran into the darkness.

After a while, he was in the open country. Then as he passed beneath a large tree, he felt God tell him, "Stay here and start to preach."

Now, this was puzzling--there was no one to be seen. Why did God want him to preach to an empty tree in the middle of the field in the middle of the night? But he stopped under the tree and began to preach the Gospel.

Finally he reached the point at which he called on his unseen listeners to give their lives to Jesus. He was surprised to hear a voice from the top of the tree and see a man climb down, crying.

He tearfully gave his life to Jesus. When asked what he was doing out there at night in the middle of nowhere, the man said, "I was going to hang myself."

* For 21 years Mrs. Chang had lain in bed at her home in China, unable to move her arms and legs. Finally the pain got to be too much, and she asked her eldest son to take her to the hospital, 40 miles away.

The doctors there discovered that some of her organs were almost dead, so they advised the son, "Take her home so she can die with your family."

But before she left, a Christian nurse came by her bed and slipped her a copy of the Gospel of Mark. "Read this when you get home," she whispered.

When Mrs. Chang got home, about the first thing she did was to ask her son to read something from the booklet. Opening it to page one, he began, "This is the good news of Jesus Christ..." Before he could read any further, Mrs. Chang's bones started to move. Within moments, she sat up, completely healed! She promptly gave her life to the Lord.

The very next day, on her way to the village well to draw water, she was asked by everyone, "Say, aren't you Mrs. Chang? What doctor healed you? We want to use him too!"

Mrs. Chang invited all the women to her simple home. When a large group had assembled, she stood up and began speaking: "This is the good news of Jesus Christ."

In only four weeks, all 600 people in the village decided to follow Jesus! When the report got around, a police force arrived to stamp out this "new sect." They beat the villagers, shot their animals, burned their crops, and left, thinking that would be the last they would ever hear about Jesus Christ.

They were wrong. The 600 stood steadfast, and within four years, 70,000 had turned to Christ throughout that whole region. The star of this story? The faithful and obedient nurse. She was a nobody responding to the love in her heart, reaching out (despite the risk) to an unimportant lady. May her obedience be sung and celebrated by millions.

* I have a good friend named Barclay Tait who sells vacation real estate in Niceville, Florida. Back in 1977, he was a 36-year-old basketball coach. That summer, he decided to hitchhike to a Christian conference in Front Royal, Virginia.

Arriving four days early, he went to a nearby forest and pitched his tent by a stream. On the last day, a tall thin hiker with a notebook under his arm suddenly appeared, startling him as he read his Bible.

They introduced themselves, and Barclay explained his presence: "I came out here to meditate." The hiker, whose name was Dave, replied, "Well, I'm an intercessor. What would you like me to pray for?" Feeling overwhelmed, Barclay said, "Uh, frankly, I'd like prayer for a wife--one that God would choose for me."

It was a brief conversation. The man wrote the request in his notebook, promised to pray and walked on.

Fast-forward 11 years to 1988. Barclay has been married for a while, and he and his wife, Sherry, have been divinely guided to move to Asheville, North Carolina, though they don't know anyone there. Within three hours, however, Barclay has a house and a job. Also, a chance encounter in the Holiday Inn parking lot leads them to a Christian group on a hilltop outside of town at the home of a UNC professor.

Arriving just before the 7:00 PM meeting, they see about fifteen cars parked by a rustic log house. They walk in and find people chatting--all strangers to them. But just then, the host walks in from the kitchen and stops dead in his tracks.

"*I know you!*" he exclaims, pointing his finger. "You're Barclay Tait!" Barclay draws a blank.

"Just a minute; I have something to show you," the host announces. He scampers upstairs, leaving the puzzled Tait standing in the middle of the suddenly hushed room. In a moment he reappears with a well-worn ledger book. "See here? This is where I wrote your prayer request in column one when I met you in Front Royal in 1977: 'Barclay Tait: God's choice for a wife.'"

Barclay looks and sees it's the most detailed, methodical prayer journal he's ever seen.

"I prayed for you for seven years," proclaimed Dave. "Then in the middle of the night on December 30, 1984, God woke me up out of a sound sleep and said, 'Write in your journal, *Prayer Answered*.' So I did. See?"

Barclay and Sharon look at each other with their mouths open. They sit down, and their eyes fill with tears. Quietly, Barclay tells Dave, "That was the day we were married."

Faith and Desperation

The second factor in miracles is faith and desperation.

* On a Sunday morning in 1996, Thai missionary Lun Poobuanak was conducting a quiet service for the few Christians in a Buddhist village in Kalasin Province, Thailand.

He was interrupted by the arrival of the village leader, who challenged him, "Because the monsoon rains have not come, the harvest in our fields is almost ruined. If you will ask your God for rain this month, all 134 families in the village will worship your God and become Christians."

Lun warned them not to play with God. The leader replied, "We're serious. We swear we will follow your God. If not, He can judge us."

So the Christians prayed and fasted for three days. On the fourth day, there was a cloudburst so heavy that all the canals and rice fields were flooded. All 134 families became Christians.

* In the small southern Mexico village of Chiconamiel, an epidemic of black measles swept through in 1998 and quickly killed about 40 people.

Two of the victims were teenage girls, daughters of a widow who was a fairly new Christian. By the time the girls died, there was no one left in town healthy enough to help her carry the girls' bodies to the graveyard. So the poor woman had to drag both bodies there herself.

Because of the plague, there were only two young men still strong enough to dig graves, so there was a line of 21 corpses waiting to be buried. The woman tenderly laid the bodies at the end of the line, and since it was hot, sprinkled white lime powder over the bodies as a disinfectant.

Then she set off walking down the mountain.

The next morning, after 8 hours of walking, she reached the town where her Christian contacts lived. But since the men were in the midst of a heavy prayer and fasting meeting, she had to wait two hours more to see them. By that time, they didn't think they could climb back up the hill to Chiconamiel before nightfall, so they waited till the next morning.

When they finished the uphill trek, it was evening again and the girls' bodies were only three or four away from being buried.

The men gathered around the bodies in a circle, as the disciples did for Paul when he had been stoned and left for dead. They prayed in the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they called the girls by name. Both dead girls sat up!

The young men then had a good laugh as they watched the girls trying to spit the lime powder out of their mouths.

This is one of many highly varied occurrences in southern Mexico (plus the highlands of Guatemala) that have sprung from the work of Freedom Ministries staff. To date, they have seen over 300 come back from death. (They've stopped counting.)

Freedom Ministries was founded and is led by David Hogan, an American who has been present for 22 of these events. He no longer rushes to the scene of a reported death when they send for him. Like Jesus with Lazarus, he often delays in order to complete previous ministry assignments God has given him. And when he does arrive, he preaches a sermon to the bystanders. Gospel first, resurrection afterward.

* Nigeria: On the morning of November 30, 2001, Daniel Elechukwu, the pastor of Power Chapel Evangelical Church in Onitsha, Nigeria, with his friend Kingsley Iruka, took a Christmas present of a goat to his father in a village near the town of Owerri.

On the way home, going down a steep road, the brakes failed on Daniel's 20-year-old Mercedes 230. Gathering speed, it hurtled downhill and smashed into a stone pillar.

Without a seat belt, Daniel was catapulted violently forward. His head hit the windshield, and the steering wheel knob punched into his body. Iruka, shocked though not badly hurt, turned to Daniel, hoping all was well. But the sight appalled him. Blood was pouring from Daniel's nose from a head injury, and then he began to vomit blood from heavy internal hemorrhaging.

Rescue presently came. Marvelously, Daniel held up until he was placed in a local hospital's intensive care, or the best Nigerian equivalent of it. His wife, Nneka, was sent for. She found Daniel still alive but just barely. He

hung onto life to ask her to have him taken to his family doctor's hospital in Owerri--a very serious mistake. It meant anything but a smooth ride for one and a half hours.

Within minutes of being lifted into the ambulance, Daniel felt himself dying. He tried to whisper his last words and instructions to Nneka. But his speech slurred, became incoherent, and stopped as he drifted in and out of unconsciousness.

The ambulance driver pushed on at full speed, however, warning sirens blaring. Reaching Owerri Regional Hospital, they ran in shouting, "Emergency! Emergency!" Daniel's doctor was not on duty, so a member of the medical staff took charge and checked Daniel's limp form. He turned to Nneka with a sad face. He could only certify that Daniel was already dead.

Naturally, Nneka was shocked. But a Bible verse had been ringing in her mind from Hebrews 11: "Women received their dead raised to life again." Then conviction seized her. That meant *her*.

The text in Nneka's head made it impossible for her to accept the plain evidence that Daniel had gone or allow him to be buried. Her agitation dictated that something must be done. But at 11:30 PM when they brought Daniel's body to Dr. Jossy Anuebunisa at the St. Eunice Clinic, he confirmed the death.

From there the body was taken to the Ikeduru General Hospital Mortuary, not far away. The resident mortician, Mr. Barlington R. Manu, carried out the normal checks at 1:00 AM Saturday.

The mortuary having no cold storage facilities, the mortician administered the usual chemical preservative injection and prepared the body for the embalming on the following morning. With a staff member, he laid the body on the mortuary slab between two other dead people. Everyone then retired for the night.

Convinced that her husband would live again, Nneka wanted the body taken to the church in Onitsha where Reinhard Bonnke was to speak at a dedication ceremony of the Grace of God Ministries. So the next morning, Sunday, December 2, they went to take the body from the mortuary.

But the mortician was worried about their intentions. To hide the fact that a body was being taken away, he dressed it for a funeral as a pretext, placed it in a coffin, and shut the lid. They took Daniel in his coffin and set off on the long drive to Onitsha.

Arriving at the Onitsha Church compound, the state security officer and ushers saw them driving up with a coffin and ordered them to turn around and leave. But Nneka pleaded with them and persisted, so after checking the coffin for a terrorist bomb, they relented and allowed the body to be

taken out and carried into the church, but only the downstairs part.

The church bishop's son Paul and another pastor on the church staff, Bathcomery Nkwando, laid the body on a table and found that rigor mortis had made the limbs "stiff as an iron rod," they said. Two other staff pastors joined them to guard the body. Upstairs, meanwhile, Bonnke went on preaching and praying with no knowledge of the body downstairs.

Before long the pastors noticed a slight twitching of the stomach of the corpse. Then they saw the corpse draw a breath and begin breathing "in short bursts." Encouraged, they called for a video camera and threw themselves into powerful petitionary prayer, stripped the body of the mortuary gloves, socks and shirt, and began massaging it from head to foot. As this news broke out in the sanctuary above, it created pandemonium. Then at 5:15 PM, nearly two days after his death, Daniel opened his eyes, sat up, and leaned on Pastor Lawrence.

People began crowding into the hall to see this resurrection man. Lawrence was worried Daniel would not have enough oxygen, so he carried him into the church sanctuary where Daniel spoke for the first time since his death. "Water! Water!" they gave him sips of water and then warm tea.

To give him a clear space, they seated him on a chair on the platform, where hundreds of people saw him slowly recovering. He had not yet collected his thoughts, and for a while could not recognize anyone, not even his own son. But by evening, however, he was fully coherent. And now he is 100% fully lucid. This was caught on video and has been documented like no other resurrection.

* A markedly different kind of resurrection was seen in South Africa in 1999. I spoke with South African pastor Jimmy Crompton to verify the news report about a friend of his named Ronny Sampson.

Sampson is a retired businessman who was enjoying a quiet visit with his daughter in Johannesburg when loud screaming sent him running into the street.

He met a totally hysterical woman carrying the body of her daughter, which had just been found at the bottom of a swimming pool. Sampson commented later, "Nobody knew how long she had been there, but she was completely blue, had no pulse, and had ceased to breathe."

While others called an ambulance, Sampson took the woman and child into his daughter's house and started to pray.

After 20 frustrating minutes of fruitless prayer, he finally became quite angry and started shouting loud commands at the "spirit of death" that held

the girl.

That made the difference. Suddenly, the child turned over, regurgitated a huge amount of water, and started to scream. In fact, her screams helped the ambulance to find the house quickly.

The paramedics pronounced the girl completely healthy, and examinations showed there was no brain damage. A Dutch television team came from Holland and made a docudrama of the event.

None of these events had a star who set out to engineer a miracle. They were all people who got boxed in by circumstances and fought back with the only thing they had: their faith. The next time you get boxed in, think about that.

How Do You Resurrect Someone?

There is no one "technique" for resurrections. The "methods" run the gamut.

* I think of the missionary in Guatemala who simply read all of Isaiah 53 over and over to a circle of Indians silently mourning the death of a boy until he came back to life.

* I think of Duad, Manu, and some other members of the Indian Pentecostal church in Dunger, Northern India, who simply prayed in Jesus' name and placed their Bibles on the body of a six-year-old boy who was near to being buried--whereupon he opened his eyes.

So, other than a lot of prayer, there is no method but God. Resurrections are His show, not ours.

Now you've seen some examples of how obedience and faith are factors in the miracles you may perform in the future.

Preach it, Bro

If you want to see miracles, the third catalyst is to spread the Gospel. Miracles tend to happen when you're presenting Christ to people.

* Sanji Adonga, an Every Home for Christ staff member, was passing out tracts in a sprawling North African city of a million.

One Muslim in his 20's got really mad, tore up his tract, threw it in Sanji's face, and threatened to kill him.

The next morning at daybreak, moments after Sanji awoke, someone knocked on his door. It was the same young man, who introduced himself as Abdulai Masa and announced that now he wanted another tract. "But how did you find my address?" Sanji asked. "Last night, a set of hands seized my shoulders and shook me awake violently. I swung my arms, but

there was nothing to hit. I turned on the light, sat up shaking, and lit a cigarette. Then a strong voice filled the room. 'You have torn up the truth! The message you were given was God's truth that points to eternal life. It told of the only way to lasting peace and happiness, and you have torn it up!' Then the voice gave me your address and told me to come at sunrise."

Abdulai took a six-month Bible course and is now a house-to-house evangelist.

* An Egyptian I'll call Rahmad likes to go to remote villages to preach the Gospel. At 70, he has his own simple way of speaking directly to people's hearts, and whole families get saved.

In 2000, he was in a village on the banks of the Nile, where twelve men and seven women accepted Christ. But "on the way home some bearded men approached me, obviously religious fanatics. I was suspicious and wanted to avoid them, but they had already started throwing stones at me. I was unprotected and saw my end coming. But as the first stones hit my body I was surprised that they didn't hurt. Then I saw why: they were turning into dust as they hit me! I thanked God out loud, and my attackers realized that a miracle was happening before their very eyes--so they fled, afraid."

* In the Zhoukou district of China, a rather new Christian began evangelizing on the streets. While he was preaching, a man came up and started swearing at him and beating him with a heavy stick.

The preacher began praying, "Lord, You have to answer my prayer now, or I'm going home (going to die)!" then he had a thought. "In Jesus name, I *bind* you!" He declared.

Immediately, his attacker collapsed into a kneeling position and was unable to move. Soon, five of his relatives came and tried to lift him up--with no success.

The young preacher, now emboldened, warned, "He is bound. If I don't pray for him, the only way you can move him is to hoist him into a truck."

At this the crowd began shouting, "Please let him free!" So the preacher relented. "All right, in Jesus' name, get up." The man quickly stood.

Many in the village believed because of this wonder. Chinese Christians never set out to do miracles. They insist that miracles just happen in the course of evangelizing. I believe them. Because of this principle, many Western mass evangelists find themselves running "healing crusades" instead of Gospel crusades.

* A distinguished but modest friend of mine--I'll call him Larry--was invited by German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke to visit his tent crusade in Botswana in 1986.

Seated on the platform with his wife, Mallory, looking out over the audience of 10,000, Larry was amazed to see numerous healings, including eight blind people who came forward and received their sight.

The next day at lunch, Larry got to chat with Bonnke, who said, looking a little downcast, "Gosh, Larry, I'm sorry you happened to come at such a slow time. We only had eight blind people healed last night."

Sharpen your ears

The fourth factor in learning to do miracles is learning to listen to the Holy Spirit.

I feel hypocritical writing to you about this, because my own spiritual sensitivity is somewhere just above plankton. But I do have spiritually wired friends whom I can turn to. Take, for instance, Barclay Tait. God tells him all sorts of things about people he meets.

* For one example out of hundreds, in 1999 he was sitting on a bench at the outlet mall in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, when three couples and two children wearing jeans and T-shirts walked by.

Hearing something in his spirit, Barclay stood up and said, "How y'all doing today? Which one of you is Eddie?" A short man hesitantly raised his hand. "Well, Eddie, God wants you to know that you made the right decision in your ministry. It was hard, but you did what the Lord wanted, and now He's going to bless you. So just ignore the folks who are criticizing you."

Of course that started Eddie crying. It's very touching when you find that God cares enough to send a special messenger to give you a boost. Over the next few years, the Spirit of God is going to be using such messages more and more.

* Sometimes the Spirit of God will prompt you to do something, but so quietly that you wonder if it's not just your own thoughts rattling around in your head. George Otis, Jr., tells the story of his dad's response to the Spirit's gentle prompting about a former boss--in this case, William Lear, the genius behind the Lear executive jet.

My father had worked for Lear in the late 1950s as his corporate general manager. Despite the latter's reputation as a hard-living eccentric, my father retained a fondness for him. Years after leaving

Lear's employ, my father was prompted by the Lord to call Bill. Although the two had not spoken for many years, he still knew how to reach his home in Reno, Nevada.

Bill Lear answered the phone.

"Bill, this is George Otis. I know this may sound odd, but the Lord placed you on my heart this morning. I just had to call and find out what's happening in your life. God's thinking about you, Bill."

There was a long silence on the other end of the line.

"It's good to hear from you," Lear said tersely. "But could you call back in ten or fifteen minutes?"

The second time Bill's voice sounded brighter.

"I need to share something with you, George. Something amazing. When you called a few minutes ago, I was sitting at my desk preparing to take my own life. I haven't been well, and I thought my revolver was the answer."

Lear invited Otis to fly to Reno. With Otis's help, he found Jesus Christ as his Savior. He died shortly afterward, at peace, a child of the King.

* My friend Wolfgang Simson is an intellectual German, but he recently found himself in a predicament that required him to lay down his intellect and trust God like a child. He was scheduled to speak to a houseful of church leaders in Cairo at 5:45 PM. His contact put him in a cab at 5:00, showed the driver an address, put it back in his pocket, and said farewell.

Half an hour later, the cab pulled up--in the wrong place! And Wolfgang didn't even know what the right address was. Moreover, his Arabic was almost nonexistent. He knew how to count from one to ten, and he knew the words left and right and straight ahead, but that was about it. He said a brief prayer for help, and God immediately answered. *"Prophecy to the taxi driver!"*

"Lord, I-I'm a Lutheran," he stammered in his native German, "and I don't even know which direction it is."

"PROPHECY!" came the distinct voice of God again.

So with only 15 minutes left, Wolfgang obediently began barking orders at the driver. "Alatuh! (straight ahead) "El shemahl!" (to the left). . . . "El Yameen!" (to the right). Every corner, every alley was a decision, and he strained to feel the Holy Spirit's promptings as the cab bounced through Cairo's chaotic streets in the Egyptian heat. He even took short cuts only a professional driver could have known. It was a high speed proof test of Isaiah 30:21: "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the

way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

Exactly 15 minutes later the cab came to a stop right in front of the meeting house. The wide-eyed cabbie, keenly aware of the supernatural nature of this trip, refused to take any fare!

The moral of this story is that the world has changed, and God wants to speak to you directly, in practical ways, and you need to gear up for this, to learn to listen to Him.

* In 1998 Wolfgang (editor of *Friday Fax*, a fount of information on church growth) felt God wanted him to move from India to a more strategic location. He asked a number of his Christian friends to seek God for guidance on his behalf.

It wasn't long in coming. One of them, Bernard, said, "You're going to go back to the homeland of your mother."

Another said, "Borders, I see a place surrounded by national borders."

Another said, "I see a nice, clean river. Your place is near a bend in the river. It's hilly country,"

Another said, "Yes, it's the Rhine River."

Another added: "Your home is in the middle unit in a triplex. It's got green doors, green window frames, and there's a chimney on one end. And don't worry about money, because God's got it covered."

On that basis, Wolfgang and his wife Mercy packed up and went to his mother's homeland, Germany. Arriving there, they went to a town near the Rhine and soon found the triplex with the green windows and doors and the chimney. (In July 2000 I stayed with the Simsons, and their home is indeed in a little finger of German territory that juts out into Switzerland near Zurich; there are Swiss borders on three sides within 700 meters.)

The unit was for sale and he found the owner and introduced himself. "Hello, I'm Wolfgang Simson."

"Oh yeah," he replied, "the guy who's going to buy my house. God told me someone named Simson was going to buy it. You must be a Christian too, so here's the keys. Don't worry about money, we'll do the paperwork later. Just give me the down payment when you get it."

After they got most of their things moved in, Wolfgang decided to clean out the mailbox, as the unit had been vacant for a while. One envelope in the pile was from Switzerland. It was addressed only to the street number. Inside was a letter from a man he'd never heard of, saying, "The Lord has given us this address and impressed upon us that we are to send you fifty thousand Swiss francs. Please send us your name and account information

so we can wire the money."

Intermission time

Time out for a minute. Why am I telling you these things? Am I trying to impress you? No. I'm trying to reorient you. Am I trying to get you excited about all God's doing? Sure, but I'm going for more than an *ooh* or *ahh* or *Hallelujah*. I'm hoping you'll join the excitement and become a working part of the miracle scene--and add even more people to the crowds coming to know Christ every day. I hope you'll open your eyes, spread your wings, and learn to fly out of whatever cage you may be cooped up in.

Face it, your future changed when you picked up this book. You can't go back. You "know too much," as B-movie mobsters used to say. It may be time for you to disengage from whatever lifestyle you've been living and take on a new identity.

If you're like most of us, you've fantasized now and then about getting a fresh start on life. Well, that's what God is offering you right now. He's trashing many of the mindsets and traditions that have held us all back for centuries, and He's setting up networks of strong disciples who know how to hear and take orders from Him directly. This global power shift is giving you the opportunity to leave behind bad habits and sins, deadening relationships, a weak self-image, or anything else that could slow down your sprint to the finish line.

God is using these heart-turning miracles to challenge you to change your outlook and your values. If you accept this challenge, you'll find yourself doing things you never thought you could do before.

For right now I'll continue with these miracles, because until your eyes have seen a number of the pieces of the puzzle, your heart may not comprehend the scope of the jigsaw masterpiece He is fitting together.

It's not about you!

Sometimes God does a miracle unrelated to our needs, mostly to show us how wonderful He is. On several occasions, He has brought someone back to life for a few set hours or days--for a specific mission, usually evangelistic.

* In the state of Bihar, India, there is a notoriously anti-Christian tribe called the Malto. When a crew with Campus Crusade's *Jesus* film attempted to schedule a showing there in 1998, they were strongly rebuffed. A few days later, a 16-year-old Malto girl died. But that evening, just as her parents were about to bury her, she told them that the God of

the film crew had sent her back for seven days "to tell as many people as I can that He is real!"

The girl and her mother went searching, and the next day, they found the crew in a nearby village and invited them back for a showing. For seven days she told her story in every village they could get to, drawing crowds for the film. Hundreds of people became Christians and started churches. After seven days the girl still looked fine, but she collapsed and died once again.

* Two years later and a half a world away, a 12-year-old gypsy girl died in Argentina. She had been a Christian for some months, but her attempts to be a witness to the tightly knit gypsy community had been rejected.

In the wee hours of the morning, in the middle of her funeral wake, she suddenly sat up in her casket, causing the people in attendance to jump up, rejoice and dance, and start dismantling the funeral setup.

"Don't take anything down!" The girl said. "Jesus told me to return just to tell you that He loves you and that you have to accept Him if you want to be saved. That's the only reason I'm here. At ten o'clock Jesus will come back for me, so leave everything like it is."

At 10:00 AM, her Lord Jesus came back and took her home. Her gypsy friends swarmed into the kingdom.

The Bible lives today

Many people, even dedicated Christians, read the miracles in the New Testament with glazed eyes, as if they were reports from a parallel universe. Many of today's incidents are reruns of familiar stories from the Bible.

* In the Punjab state of India, a city called Ferozpur lies next to the Pakistan border. Everyone in that town knew a certain man who was so deranged that he had to be kept on a chain like a wild animal for eight years.

But in April 1997, God used an evangelist named Dale to heal and deliver him. When he later ascended Dale's platform, with a helper carrying the now useless chain, the crowd broke out in wild cheering.

On the last day of the mission in that Gospel-hostile region, 50,000 came to hear more and to be healed. The healings included 94 deaf-mutes, 191 polio victims, 35 with tumors, 25 blind people, 12 with kidney stones, and many other illnesses.

"And they came to Jesus and saw him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were awestruck" (Mark 5:15).

* Marilyn Hatfield, a former housekeeper of mine, is a high-energy lady who once put on a Christian camp for teenagers at Wilderness Ranch near St. David, Arizona. She only had about \$30, so she prayed earnestly over the choice of food.

Came the first meal on Friday, and extra people showed up. Her two grocery sacks of chicken, rice, beans, oatmeal, powdered milk and little else suddenly looked pretty small.

But she set up a buffet line, said grace, and stood back as the crowd swept through: 20 adults, 16 boys, and two girls--and the teens were voracious eaters. They especially swarmed over the chicken, which had all fit neatly into a slightly rounded pile in one medium cake pan.

She kept glancing at the pan nervously, and her eyes began to pop out when she saw that the pile of chicken never went down. The more they ate, the more there was. Perhaps 70 to 90 pieces were taken--much more than she started with. In fact, as Marilyn went to pull out a second piece for herself, she watched the pan intently, and as she yanked her piece from one end of the pile, she was shocked to see the other end jump like popcorn. (She was tempted to play with it by pulling out more, but decided, *Nooo, that might not be such a good idea.*)

The rice, beans, oatmeal and milk grew apace with the chicken, and by the end of the meal, there was enough food left over to feed the 17 teens and three adults who stayed for the whole next week.

"And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full" (Matthew 14:20).

* In a small Russian town of Dedivuchi, near Pskov, Russia, a team of three missionaries came to minister in May 2000.

After one meeting in a three-room flat, a thin brown-skinned woman brought her five-year-old daughter to an American named Eric Olson and asked for prayer. The girl was paralyzed on her right side as a result of being dropped by a careless doctor at birth, and her right hand was curled and tucked in next to her body.

As Olson took her hand and prayed, he began to notice a strange vibration in his right wrist and felt a little teardrop on his hand. The longer he prayed, the more openly the girl cried, so finally he gave her back to her

mother. But a minute later, she stretched out her arm ... then fingers ... and then raised her arm straight out in front of her body!

As her mother burst into tears and praised God, Olson got the idea of making bubbles with a bottle of soap he had. As he waved the wand the smiling girl reached out and popped bubbles with both hands.

"Then saith He to the man, Stretch forth thine hand" (Matthew 12:13).

* At the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Dr. Brad Ihrig was part of the Youth with a Mission team. He started pouring out cups of Gatorade to folks thirsty from the heat and was astounded to discover that his one gallon bottle was staying full no matter how much he poured. After nearly 100 people got a drink, the Gatorade level had fallen about one inch.

That's an echo of the widow with her bottomless cruse of oil in the time of Elijah:

"They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, 'Bring me another one.' But he replied, 'There is not a jar left.' Then the oil stopped flowing" (2Kings 4:6).

These days, such events happen continually. Information from more than a million front-line Christian workers now flows daily to the desks of researchers. In the last month, I've had to throw away a stack of reports like these about five inches high. Just too many to catalog.

Every 25 minutes

When I was a kid in Sunday school, I was really impressed that 3,000 people were saved on the Day of Pentecost. I thought, *Wow, that'll never happen again!*

How wrong I was. It now happens around the globe every 25 minutes.

That adds up fast. Be encouraged: By tomorrow there will be 175,000 more Christians than there are today. That means, no matter how rotten a day you have today, when the sun comes up tomorrow you will have 175,000 new brothers and sisters in Christ in 238 nations around the world!

Campus Crusade for Christ estimates we'll see a billion new believers in the next ten years. Any way you calculate it, the Kingdom is expanding at a heart-pounding pace.

From our vantage point in North America and Europe, where church membership is going nowhere, this sounds like a fantasy. But it's true. This is the biggest megashift in history. We are in the early stages of a total

transformation of our planet.

What about you?

Once you become an eyewitness to a few miracles--or began to "assist" in a few yourself--your priorities will get a good shaking up. For example, once you discover you have a gift for healing eye problems or find you can plant a new church every six to eight weeks, your enthusiasm for spending your Saturdays watching the tube or puttering around the house will evaporate.

Pessimism is passé, boredom is obsolete, and defeatism is dead. Adjust to it! Makes no difference if your mental landscape was laid out by John Calvin, Bill Gates, or MTV: If you don't upgrade your head, you're about to become antiquated. Don't succumb to pride and conceit, just get with God's program.

The few miracles I've listed only hint at the big picture, which could fill an encyclopedia. So let's ask the big question: Where do you fit into that picture? Could you have a place in this tornado? You bet. Paul hammers on this point in 1 Corinthians 12. You *do* have a spiritual gift (probably several, in fact), so as they say, use it or lose it.

At long last there *is* a way to use it. And it's not by wasting away in a pew, counting the dead flies in the fluorescent light fixtures.

There is a new Christianity unfolding before our eyes, and it's bringing enough adventure to fill a Hollywood action movie. We're helping God create a new world.

Say Goodbye to Limits!

Faith creates new realities. That is what the Bible means by, "Faith gives substance to things hoped for."

Ever feel cramped? Tired of tight limits on your life? Want to double or triple the size of your personal universe? Then faith is the answer.

"According to your faith be it unto you," Jesus said more than once.

Participants in the new Christianity live in a new world where the old, ordinary limits are fading fast. Pushing the envelope of faith is our lifestyle.

* If you have AIDS or are HIV-positive, your best bet is a quick trip to Africa, where people are being cured in churches.

For instance, the Synagogue Church of All Nations was founded seven years ago with eight people. Now this church in Lagos, Nigeria, has 250,000, more or less. Their pastor, T.B. Joshua, can't pray for everyone who attends, but he prays for quite a few. So far over 10,000 have been

cured of AIDS, each attested by two medical certificates (before and after). In fact, to belong to their "AIDS Congregation" you must present three certificates, the third dated three months after your healing. He is currently seeing about 1,000 AIDS victims a week healed at his church in Nairobi.

Hundreds of resurrections

If you needed anything else to persuade you to rethink your life, this is it: God is once again in the business of raising people from the dead. I'm talking about many hundreds since the mid-'80s, perhaps over a thousand by now. There's a blizzard of reports. And I'm not referring to "Near Death Experiences" (NDEs), but to people who were stone dead for up to three days.

Five years ago I was amazed to hear of resurrection reports from eight countries. Now it's exploded to 52. Some of these people were dead for less than an hour, some three days. The causes of death were all over the map.

The process of resurrection ranged from effortless to hours of extreme prayer. There is no single method that worked best. In fact, the Holy Spirit seems to be at pains to keep us from imagining that some technique or standard system will "work" at all. The only thing that works is Jesus.

Why the sudden flood of resurrections? In part it's because Christians around the world are starting to realize, *Hey, we can do this!* In part it's because God is calling you and me to a new plane of existence. Are you ready to move up?

Skeptical?

Are you skeptical? I'm skeptical myself. That's why I took a few trips, made a few hundred phone calls, paid a few thousand dollars in research fees, and rejected a few miracle stories when they turned out to be just stories.

But an overdose of skepticism can poison your life. It can turn into cynicism, which has rightly been called "the intellectual cripple's substitute for intelligence," and a retreat from life.

When something is true, you harm mainly yourself by rejecting it. For instance, take the resurrections that have recently occurred in 52 countries. Suppose you decided to investigate them yourself, got on a series of airplanes, and flew around the world to check out each and every one. What would you find? Judging from the percentage of wild rumors, urban myths, exaggerated tales, and outright lies that I found in my own research, I'd say you might find one or two of the 52 that didn't check out. Maybe.

Is that a good reason to deny them all? I think not--not unless you're willing to commit intellectual suicide for the sake of defending a belief system based upon excluding *massive* evidence. You cannot build towers of truth on the quicksand pools of skepticism.

The Lord is Not Stingy

A lot of today's miracles cannot be traced to any human efforts--not our faith or obedience or evangelism or sensitive response to the voice of God. They just happen because God saw a need and decided to handle it himself.

* On Christmas Eve, 1998, a young Hindu named Mohan Kanojia rounded up 25 of his friends to form a hit squad and kill a church planter, 55-year-old Mannu Lal. After a few drinks and sacrifices to evil spirits, they set out on their mission of murder.

They never got close to Lal. On the road, Jesus Himself suddenly appeared in great authority, booming out one nerve-shattering command: "ENOUGH!" The shaken assassin repented and today is planting churches *alongside* Lal among leather workers in Madhya Pradesh state, India.

* A sweet-tempered Bible college student named Domingo was caught up in Muslim-Christian riots in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2000 which left many dead. Amid the ashes and ruins, police found the body of Domingo with his head severed nearly altogether. They threw his body on a truck platform with many others. Domingo found himself in a big room with a bright light. Deeds were being written down. Then an angel told him to return to his body because "It is not your time yet." He came back. No one touched him. No one prayed for him as far as we know. The Lord did it all.

* In Kashmir state, India, a devout Muslim named Jalaluddin had a dream. A man in a white robe asked him, "Do you want real peace?"

"Oh yes," he replied, "but I've been unable to find it."

"Read the holy writings," said the man.

"What are the holy writings? And where can I find them?"

"The holy writings are the Holy Bible, and you can get one from the India Every Home Crusade, 3 Bishop Rockey Street, Faizabad Road in Lucknow."

A few days later, the EHC office received a letter, saying, in part, "I don't know who you people are or whether this address is correct, but I am writing exactly as told in a dream. If you receive this, would you please

immediately send me something that is called a Holy Bible?"

Today Jalaluddin is a church member, happily testifying about the Christ who speaks to Muslims.

* In 1974, 30 children died after eating contaminated food from a street vendor in Seoul, Korea. On that day, David Yonggi Cho, famed pastor of the world's largest church there, was in an elders' meeting when he received an urgent call to go home.

On arrival, he found Samuel, his five-year-old son, dying. Cho later declared, "I simply did not want to accept the death of my son. But after hours of intense prayer and crying, he died anyway."

"I was beside myself. I had to watch him grow cold and stiff, yet I still could not give up. I told God, *I will not leave this room until You give me my son back.*"

Cho prayed and praised God till after midnight. Finally, he stood and thundered, "Samuel!" He clapped his hands loudly. "Samuel! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk!" The boy sprang to his feet.

There's more: Samuel told his father that he had met Jesus in Heaven and that he had seen many deceased Christians from Cho's church there, who shouted, "Look, here comes the pastor's son!"

Then Jesus told the boy, "I cannot keep you here because your father will not let you go. So I'm taking you back to him."

Samuel is now president of a computer company.

"I cannot keep you here because your father will not let you go." These words cast light onto what kind of prayer it will take to transform your city. Life-changing prayer is not a recitation of words; it's a massive exercise in insistent faith.

Your words have more power than you think

In *The 2 Minute Miracle*, my colleague Lynn Reddick relates a story from a friend of his, gospel singer Candy Hemphill Christmas. It's about a childhood friend of hers named Bobby.

Over the years he became rebellious as anger, bitterness, and resentment took root in his life--against God, his parents, and his church. His life became consumed with drugs as he gradually became shackled with addictions.

One day Bobby disappeared. His brokenhearted parents didn't know if he had killed himself with an overdose or been murdered by a drug gang. For two years they didn't hear anything from their son, not one phone call or letter. He simply vanished.

Bobby's dad felt the crushing grip of months of pent-up frustration and pain while driving on the outskirts of the Arkansas city where he lived. He pulled his car off on the side of the road, got out, and walked some distance from the highway. He pointed his finger toward the north and yelled with all his might, "BOBBY, COME HOME!" Turning to the south, east and west, he shouted the same words.

Two days later, this dad heard a knock at the door. There stood Bobby. *Bobby was home.*

It didn't take long before his dad asked, "Son, what brought you home?"

"Dad," Bobby said, "I was sitting on the front porch of an old shack on the edge of the desert in Arizona, stoned out of my mind. A wind started blowing and suddenly grew stronger. I could have sworn that I heard your voice in the wind, BOBBY, COME HOME! I got here as fast as I could."

Proverbs 18:21: "Life and death are in the power of the tongue."

Be an overcomer. Start today.

I hope these miracles have awakened something deep within you. For over 3,000 years, your ancestors in the faith prayed and cried and fasted to see what you have seen in these pages. But their time was not right. God gave them only visions and glimpses of the great events to come. Few of His people were ready for them, so He saved this cascade of momentous changes for your day.

Can you feel in your spirit the excitement at what the Lord is doing?

This is the most massive event that will ever touch your life. Don't be a spectator!

The New Engines of Change Forces Behind It All

Prayer warfare

Prayer ain't what it used to be.

When I was a kid, the last thing you ever wanted to get roped into was a prayer meeting. They were always dull as dust, predictable as the sunset, and fun as a funeral.

Worse, they seldom yielded major results. Each person praying would cover several pet topics, droning on in evangelical jargon without focusing on anything in particular--which yielded results commensurate with the pale effort.

Today in our prayer gatherings, prayer is war--intelligent, all-out,

take-no-prisoners war.

Some examples: In September 2001, in Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh, India, I interviewed a beautiful lady of about 30 who had been active in ministry for two years and had baptized 50 women and planted 16 house churches. Her name is Poonam Jadhav, and she is a model of politeness and decorum. A mother of two, she is a quiet woman.

The previous May she was just starting a seminar for Chhindwara women when the Hindu temple next door began blaring loud music with its sound system and creating havoc. They all went out and began walking around the temple, praying and binding the power of the shrines and idols there, anointing them with oil. The priest, a man named Rahminen, came out to hassle them, so they bound his powers too and finished circling the temple 70 times.

At that point, the temple sound system broke down, and they were able to finish the seminar in peace. Three days later, as it ended, they were leaving the building when they noticed a crowd in the street next door. They went over to check it out and were shocked to see Rahminen lying in their midst, dead. A heart attack, someone said.

In East Germany in 1989, groups of ten or twelve Christians were meeting in homes on Monday nights to pray for peace--some 50,000 people by October. After that, they quietly moved into churches and the street. News reports said their numbers swelled to 300,000, and on November 9, the Berlin Wall fell.

Fasting

Want to increase the power of your prayers? Have a huge need or problem that you're desperate about? By all means, try fasting.

Jesus didn't say, "If you fast ..." He said, "When you fast ..." Fasting was commonplace then and it's becoming commonplace now as part of the powerful new Christian lifestyle.

Besides making you feel terrific by giving your body a much-needed chance to clean itself out deeply, fasting clears your mind and puts you in closer touch with God.

But it's not just a devotional exercise. It's a tool that strengthens you for greater things than you've ever done before. Jesus didn't fast for 40 days in the desert to make Himself weak, but to prepare for the heavy tasks of ministry. And when His disciples complained that they couldn't cast out one especially recalcitrant demon, Jesus said, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).

More active followers

Very short story: An elderly man in India got saved, then started 42 churches--in his first year.

The moral of the story:

1. It's never too late to start planting churches.
2. You can move real fast if you don't have to build buildings.
3. You can move even faster if you don't have to hire pastors to do all the work. (Let the people do the work. What a concept!)
4. You don't need a master of divinity degree, special ordination, or even a year of Bible study to start telling people about the new life available in Christ. It's simple. A famous German theologian was once asked if he could summarize his theology briefly. He replied with the classic children's song:
Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
5. It's easy to start an open, family-like church that meets in a house.

What we are seeing today is the greatest megashift in the history of the church, a transfer of momentum from the steady hands of the leaders to the fleet feet of the followers. Which is to say, we amateurs are finally starting to take the ball and run with it.

The empowerment of non-professional Christians is behind most of the miracles we see today. Paid leaders are realizing that their job is not to do all the missionary work but to equip others to do it.

Small groups rule. The Lord is putting at the core of His new church small groups that are interactive, informal, exciting, and geared to rapid multiplication.

This is the beginning of the end for Spectator Christianity. It's going out of style to be a pew potato, doing little for the Kingdom except sitting in a row on Sundays, looking at the back of someone's head, wondering if your team will win the afternoon game on TV.

For centuries the main way to express your Christian identity has been by "going to church." There a lone, overworked pastor exhorted you to be holy, love your neighbor, be salt and light, and do great stuff for God.

Then you got a benediction and a hearty handshake at the door, after which you were supposed to go home and improvise your own lifestyle of state-of-the-art sainthood. And a week later, there you were in the pew again, looking at the back of someone's head.

Both laymen and pastors are starting to figure out what's wrong with that routine: It's like having the hockey team listen to the coach's pep talk for an

hour and calling that "the game."

But now the bleachers are starting to empty as millions of action-oriented Christians start to pour out onto the playing field and discover the joy and challenge of every-member ministry.

The church's "fighting force" is thus being multiplied, as God redeploys large, passive audiences into small, powerful teams where every person has an important function, plus a chance to reach out and help more and more people.

Instead of one pastor doing the heavy lifting while 100 laymen watch (and often criticize), there are now 100 "team Christians" sharing the work of the ministry, while various people with pastoral gifts coach from the sidelines.

Rabbit teams

Kamla Bai was a Christian whose two children had been slowly dying of two different diseases. Then in 1997 she had a dream. She saw a small group of westerners coming to visit her city in Madhya Pradesh state of central India. An overweight man came up to her and said that God was going to make her a prophetess, and as a sign that this was of God, he would pray for her children and God would heal them.

The next morning she awoke to find both children perfectly well.

Ironically, neither she nor her pastor, Dinesh Patel, believed in prophecy. In fact, Patel was sure she had gone off the deep end.

But two months later, a mission team from Kingdom Ministries in Switzerland came through the area, and Kamla immediately recognized one of them, Eric Reber, as the man in her dream. As he spoke that evening, the Lord did indeed give her the gift of prophecy.

Ever since then, she has been a key person in a "rabbit team" (my own "pet" term) that goes from town to town, starting churches that are geared to multiplying quickly, like rabbits.

When her little team enters a village, they ask God to show them the house of a "man of peace." (That's a person of either sex who is hospitable, fairly prosperous, modestly influential, and open to the Gospel. In Luke 10, Jesus ordered His disciples to build their work in each town on such people rather than going door to door.) In every village, as they pray, the Holy Spirit points out to Kamla a certain house--and reveals unknowable things about the occupants, such as special needs. Then they just knock on the door. Most of the people are so touched that they quickly accept Jesus as their Lord and become the hub of a new house church.

She and her band of "rapid rabbits" plant about fifty churches a year. Of

course, these home churches are smaller than traditional congregations (in India, about 6 to 20 instead of 75 or so). But consider the advantages of smallness. Imagine locking two elephants--or two rabbits--in a closet for three years. Ignoring all the practical problems and calculating the mere mathematics of gestation period, litter size, etc., you would have three elephants--or 476 million rabbits.

Secrets of success. Why are rabbit teams multiplying so fast? Because God is on the move--and because we've learned a few things:

1. We're no longer just after converts, but disciples.
2. We often work in teams to reach families and groups of disciples to form an instant church. This greatly speeds things up and reduces the friction that can result when only one person in a family turns to Christ.
3. We're not just planting scattered churches here and there; we're trying to saturate whole areas and regions.
4. We don't just plant a church and say, "Well, that's done." We're planting church-planting *movements*. Every new church is an independent ring of activity and growth.
5. Our thinking has changed. We start our planning with the end goal: "What's it going to take to finish the job, to reach our whole city, region, or country?" Then we do whatever it takes to plan *movements* aimed at saturating a whole city or nation.

Yes, the church has hundreds of thousands of fine "mercy ministries" worldwide that reach out to help the disadvantaged, the fallen, and the ill. I support a number of them. But today we're not just nibbling at the edges of society. We're going for its heart.

Evangelism through the media

The media picture right now is bright as gold. Some highlights:

* Radio. Right now, 4,857,000,000 people, 81% of the world, can tune in to hear the Gospel in their native language. Perhaps 90% can understand the broadcasts. Live radio is warm, and it works. There are now thousands of "radio churches" across North Africa and the Middle East.

* Film. The last time I checked, the "Jesus" film had been dubbed in 712 languages and seen by 4.6 billion people. That's three-fourths of the world. So far, 176 million have given their lives to the Jesus they've met in the movie.

* Television. In 1996, Billy Graham put on a worldwide simulcast that was seen by approximately two billion viewers. Dr. Graham is reluctant to toot his own horn, but my sources state that the 450 million follow-up packets they printed for new converts were mostly snatched up within a few

hours.

God Himself

Sometimes God just goes ahead and does things on His own. Consider what He is doing in Islamic areas, for example. He has appeared directly in visions and dreams to millions of Muslims in the last decade. In roughly 70% of cases, they see Jesus and He declares to them some variant of John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Me."

South African church growth specialist Karel Sanders reported in 1998 that 42% of the new Muslim converts are coming to Christ because of these "visions, dreams, angelic appearances, and hearing God's voice." Combined with Gospel radio, this phenomenon is producing a tidal wave of interest in Jesus Christ.

But the Lord's direct interventions in history go far beyond Muslim areas. For instance:

* In 1996, in the village of Dadar-Gaon in the Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh (central India), God brought a 16-year-old girl named Bhagavathi back to life after another 16-year-old girl prayed for her for about 12 hours.

News of this reached a 38-year-old Hindu who had been severely crippled his entire life. He had never even stood up. But when he heard about the girl, God gave him faith. He convinced a young boy to guide him to Dadar-Gaon. He kept saying to himself, *If only I can reach that village where God is, I will be healed.*

The man inched along the road with increasing difficulty, arriving near dusk. The boy pointed uphill at some lights 500 yards away. The exhausted man lifted his head. Then he stood up--and ran all the way to the village! Today he is an elder in his church, and an evangelist for Gospel for Asia.

* John Paul Jackson reports a startling occurrence in Switzerland in 1990:

I was on a 21-day ministry trip through Europe, but after speaking in Geneva, I doubled over in pain from what doctors later told me was pancreatitis.

Lying on my bed in excruciating pain that night, I told God that if He didn't heal me, I would cancel the rest of my trip and check into a hospital.

Around 2:30 AM, I sensed someone standing beside my bed. To my right was an elderly man with weathered skin and thick, knotted fingers. First I thought I was hallucinating, then I thought it was an angel. As the old

man reached out his hand toward me, he said, "I have come to pray for you." Placing his hand on top of mine, which rested on my stomach, he began to pray. I felt heat leave his hands and enter into mine. Heat unrolled like a scroll--down my legs and up my feet and up my abdomen and out my head. As it unrolled, the searing pain left my body. Then we looked at each other, and he disappeared before my eyes.

I jumped out of bed and began dancing around the room, thanking God for healing me and sending His angel. That's when He said it wasn't an angel. A vision occurred to me of a man with outstretched hands and tears running down his face, telling God, "I just want to be used by You, but I'm an old man in a small village. People think I'm crazy. Can You use me?"

And God said to me, "I took him from an obscure village in Mexico, used him, and sent him back."

The New Saints: Today's Overcomers

In 1994, George Verwer, the founder of Operation Mobilisation, declared, "Most people in the church are wimps." That's true enough, and yet, the times are changing.

There I was in Rajpur, standing in a crowd of 150 Indians, holding a paper plate of chapattis and curried chicken, when my host introduced another church planter who had come to attend my seminar, Gas Ram Barwe.

Gas is a regular guy: 34, 5'5", and a bit on the quiet side. He has a wife, Chandrika, and a son, Ram Jeet.

When I prompted him for a short version of his life story, he recounted that when he was six, his father went crazy because of his chronic poverty. So with no more family income, his mother had to pull him out of school after two months of his first year. Thus, Gas never learned to read.

But then at 22, he got saved--and really, *really* wanted to learn to read the Bible. Couldn't afford lessons, though.

So one day he sat down with a Hindi Bible, opened it, pointed to a word, and said, "OK, Lord, what does this mean?" And God spoke to him, telling what it said.

He scanned for another interesting-looking word, asked God, and again, God told him what it meant.

Incredibly, he continued on word by word, and in two weeks, he was reading fluently.

He has suffered heavy persecution, including being fed poison--which God miraculously saved him from. (His poisoners became Christians.) He

has become bold in communicating the Gospel. At last report, he has planted 212 churches.

A few moments after my conversation with Gas, I spoke quietly with another attendee, and commented, "Wow, that guy over there actually learned how to read without going to school!"

Her answer: "Oh, yeah. Gas is one of those people that God has taught directly, without ..."

"Hold it," I said. "One of those?"

"Yes, there are a number of people around here God has taught to read."

I was raised to believe that miracles faded away long ago, so every time I come across a high-octane disciple like Gas, my barely adequate brain has to reset itself to zero and start all over again.

The new saints seem to have a motto designed to keep me permanently off balance: NO LIMITS. When the situation demands it, they know how to operate in the power of God, to do the impossible. It sort of crumbles your static little universe when you meet people who not only do miracles, but do types of miracles that aren't even mentioned in the Bible. We are fulfilling Jesus' words about His miracles, "Greater works than these shall ye do..."

William Lerrick: A man without limits

He is Indonesian, one of the leaders of the '60s revival in his country. As his ministry flourished, he began to make trips to speak abroad. By 1973 that grew to include Germany, where he spoke through interpreters.

March 27, 1977, was the most memorable occasion of his life. On that evening, Lerrick went to speak to a roomful of 100 Germans at the Heidelberg YMCA. But when he rose to speak, he saw no interpreter. His hosts had assumed he spoke German.

What a dilemma. In the old days, they would have drafted another speaker or just gone home. But this is the era of God's empowerment. Lerrick bowed his head and prayed, *Lord Jesus, what do You have in mind? Help me, Lord!*

After a minute that seemed an eternity, the Lord brought to his mind some words he had never heard before. He admitted slowly in German: "Forgive me. I've never learned how to speak German. I understand some words in your language, but it's very hard to pronounce." (Languages come hard for Lerrick.)

He bowed his head again and said, *Lord, how can I go on? Help me!* Suddenly, Philippians 4:13 (the only verse he knew in German) popped into his head. So he spoke it out--and kept on going.--For 15 minutes straight,

with full tonal inflection.

Young people stared at him with wide eyes and open mouths. He knew what he was saying, yet he didn't know he was speaking German. But when he saw some elderly ladies with tears running down their cheeks, he knew it was German.

Lerrick told me, "From that very moment on, the Lord transformed my mind so that I can read the German Bible and preach from it. I even understand a lot of German, Swiss, and Austrian dialects--and know what area people come from."

Twenty-five years later, he is still lecturing in German.

It's a new day, and the Lord is calling you to a new, empowered life with virtually unlimited options.

The new freedom

Your new empowerment will depend on your willingness to accept your new freedom and run with it. You have to be willing to step out in faith and *use* your freedom, often at some risk, even if it means embarrassment.

In a village about 45 miles outside Hefei, capital of China's Anhui province, house church people reach out to help by going to the hospital and finding patients whom the doctors have given up on.

"You have to take risks for God," says one believer. "We prayed for 20 days for one patient, and he was only healed at the very last."

A friend added, "We were sweating, because the family was telling us to go away because we were angering the gods. They were beginning to threaten violence against us."

In one year they prayed for 20 terminal cases, and all were healed, mostly of cancer. The church grew from zero to 200 members.

Stand in the gap

About 593 BC, God is explaining to Ezekiel why He is soon going to destroy the nation, deporting them to Babylon as captives. He catalogs their callousness and evil, and then says:

"And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. Therefore have I poured out Mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath..." (Ezekiel 22:30–31).

In the whole nation, God couldn't find even one intercessor with the backbone to stand up to Him and say, *No, Lord! Spare Your people!*

The Lord actually adores fighters who will take Him on, wrestling tenaciously like Jacob with the angel of the Lord (Genesis 32:22–30). The new saints understand God's highest desires, and they're willing to fight tooth and nail, with fiery passion, to make sure that will is accomplished.

God wants you to take joint responsibility for what happens in this world. He doesn't want you to just mumble a polite prayer, shrug your shoulders, and say, "Well, it's out of my hands now." Remember Jesus' words in Heaven to Samuel Cho as his father prayed in desperation over the boy's corpse: "I cannot keep you here because your father will not let you go."

How to become an overcomer

1. Delight yourself in the Lord, and learn to enjoy life. Find your joy in Him, as He does in you.

This means you must learn to enjoy your "quiet time" with the Lord every day. You hit trouble when you don't eagerly *want* to be with Him. So center on Him. Use your spirit, not just your mind.

2. Get prayer support. You need to be part of a ring of people who pray together. But beyond that, you need to find those who will commit to praying and reminding God about you.

3. Study the Bible. The average person's mind is a randomly acquired patchwork of contradictory slogans, clichés, catch-phrases, and myths, all of which work together at Pentium-chip speed along logic lines that Rube Goldberg could never have dreamed of. You cannot become a mature Christian disciple unless your mind is transformed, and much of that transformation will come as you study Scripture. Read, mark, and reflect on the Word--and then act on it. You aren't just trying to learn the Bible, but to know God through the Bible--and become like Him.

4. Take steps of faith--every day if you can. When you get up, say, "Lord, give me a chance today to show in some new way that I love You. Help me to do something I've never done before."

5. Get used to the growth cycle. Over and over, the Holy Spirit will clean you up. Just when you start to think your heart is spotless, bam! The Spirit taps you on the shoulder, and there's another sin you kind of forgot about.

Going through this isn't fun, but it's crucial that you do so. If you dig in your heels and refuse to repent of some particular sin, the Lord may eventually give up and let you live with that sin. As a result, your growth and ministry hit a sharply defined limit. This is why over 90% of Christians reach a certain level and stop.

6. Keep your commitments. Those who stand by their pledges at any cost stand close to God. As Psalm 15 puts it, "Lord, who shall abide in Thy

tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? ... He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not."

Set your course and stay true to it.

7. Read to stretch. Let the writings of gifted saints past and present expand your mind, your heart, your gifts, your universe.

8. Friendship and fellowship. Unless you have a horse named Silver and a faithful Indian companion named Tonto, you're going to need some good spiritual friendships and fellowship to get anywhere as a Christian.

9. Be a giant. You'll never generate weapons-grade spiritual power until you begin to grow through your gifts and disciplines.

a. Gifts include being a apostle, teacher, encourager, administrator, miracle worker, healer, helper, or someone who receives insights about specific situations or people directly from the Spirit of God. Use such gifts not only to help others, but to grow yourself.

For example, the Bible urges us to earnestly desire the highest gifts, especially the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:31 and 14:1). If you've succumbed to the idea that, "I'm just not the prophet type," you may be fighting Scripture. Very likely, you can grow into prophethood, and that will in turn open up to you vast new avenues of growth.

b. Disciplines are for everyone. They include:

- * fasting (if your health permits)

- * prayer (especially including praise)

- * Bible memorization

- * a regular time with God in worship, prayer, singing, and simply listening ("waiting on the Lord")

These are not grim duties but exciting steps that can catapult you rapidly upward.

10. Focus outward. A psycholinguist once surveyed the writings of patients in a mental hospital. When he asked them to simply write their thoughts on any subject, he found, as I recall, that about one word in six was "I." Sad! And yet many Christians are stuck at a level not far from that. Appallingly self-centered, they are doomed to live out their lives as spiritual dwarves, unable to focus on much except their own problems and frustrated desires. (And wow, can they be boring!)

World-class Christians are quite the opposite. It's a joy to be around them because they focus outward. They're here to serve you and to reach out to you in love. And when they're with other Christians, they take every opportunity to disciple them and help them grow.

How do you gain an outward focus? You start by centering on the Lord. And when you pray, spend more time praying for others than for yourself.

Are you a team player?

Maybe I've given you the impression Christianity is a self-improvement project. It's not. Team Christianity is for team players, not solo performers. God prizes unity.

People may say you're a perfect "10" in maturity. You may perform miracles in your sleep. But if you don't pull together in unity with your brothers and sisters, your value to the Kingdom is sharply limited.

The New Church

When the report came in from India, we were jolted. Those of us who sift through stacks of reports of miracles are used to eyebrow-raising stories, but this was overwhelming, even for us. Some of us implored our Indian contact to check out the details. In fact, we begged him to send out a research team with a trustworthy leader and a camera.

He graciously complied, but it wasn't easy. His team had to travel 400 kilometers into what they call the jungle, right into the midst of hostile anti-Christian territory seething with Naxalites, militant Hindu vigilantes who will stop you, search your gear, confiscate cameras, and beat you to a pulp if they find out why you're there.

But on September 14, 2000, they completed their mission and sent back a final report with photos. Here's the confirmed story:

On the night of September 1, 1999, in the remote tribal village of Sukropath, Madhya Pradesh, a Christian woman of 25 named Sukhwari Bai gave birth to a baby girl. Her husband was Dashru, and the delivery was assisted by three local women: Nanhi, Dashri, and Sumatra.

It was not a happy event. It was a tragedy.

The baby had two heads--a second head was growing out of the top of the first. Also, it had only one real eye. The other three places that ought to have been eyes were just lumps of flesh.

Sukhwari, Dashru, and the midwives were of course horrified. They said the baby looked like the devil incarnate, and they felt they should just leave it in the jungle.

But finally they decided, *No, we're Christians now, so we shouldn't do that. We should pray for this baby.*

At that time there were just 15 or 16 Christians in Sukropath. Four men joined the women in praying. They prayed fervently for healing, unaware of the standard Western belief that God just doesn't do such things.

As they poured their hearts out in intercessory prayer, the girl's face began to change. They prayed all night, and by morning, she was a beautiful infant girl, normal in every way, with one head and two normal eyes.

That morning, two evangelists, Kalam and I. Sybet, came to the house, prayed with them, and named the baby Esther. (In Jewish tradition, Queen Esther was the most beautiful woman in the Hebrew scriptures. She appeared at a crucial moment in Israel's history, and by her bravery she was able to save the nation from annihilation. To encourage her, her uncle spoke the famous words of advice, "Who knows but you were born for such a time as this?")

The facts of this event leave no room for debate. We simply have too many eyewitnesses, plus photos. The facts have been checked, confirmed and endorsed by several noted Indian Christians and surgeons.

Little Esther was indeed born for such a time as this. A thousand years ago--or even a hundred--no one would have responded to her plight. Even twenty years ago, her parents and their friends would not have bothered to pray for her. Today's new believers are perhaps the first generation to take so seriously Christ's words, "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father" (John 14:12).

Will you join them?