

The true test of our faith is not in our actions, but in our reactions. It's relatively easy to act like Jesus; it's much harder to react like Jesus. And forgiveness is the litmus test. Through Kevin's courage and God's grace, a horrific accident was transformed into a divine appointment for every person on the police force and medical staff who have put their faith in Jesus Christ because of Kevin's crazy forgiveness and, more significantly, the crazy forgiveness of the sinless Son of God. A random accident? Or a divine appointment? It depends on your reaction.

In first-century Israel, royal officials and itinerant Jewish rabbis ran in very different social circles. In fact, they avoided each other like the plague. But desperate times call for desperate measures, especially when your son is at the point of death. We will move heaven and Earth if that's what it takes! Or humble ourselves before the Maker of heaven and Earth! The royal official in John 4, who probably reported to Herod himself, defied cultural protocol when he sought an audience with the One rumored to turn water into wine. He subjected himself to someone over whom he had political power. He even calls Jesus, "Sir"! I'm quite certain Jesus would not have responded to a plea bargain based on political power, but he did move heaven and earth to respond to a humble plea for help.

The catalyst for this miracle is a divine appointment between unlikely candidates. When you meet the *right* person at the *right* time and you have no explanation for how it happened, God might be setting you up. If you want to be on the *effect* side of the miracle equation, a humble plea for help is a good place to start. If you want to be on the *cause* side, treat people the way Jesus did.

When the royal official came begging for his son's life, Jesus didn't ask for his tax return first. He didn't ask him to withdraw Roman occupation or change Roman law. He did the man a favor without asking for one in return. But here's the thing: the royal official had to find Jesus and ask him. Sometimes, it seems, you have to go get your miracle.

I've made the twenty-mile drive from Capernaum to Cana, and it's not bad by bus. But when was the last time you had to walk twenty miles? I live 1.3 miles from the church office, yet I'm ashamed to admit that I drive to work each day. You may not be as lazy as I am, but twenty miles is still quite a hike. And Capernaum is 700 feet below sea level, so it was an uphill climb all the way to Cana.

I'm assuming the royal official didn't miss many meals, given his social status. So he'd probably packed on a few pounds. I'm also assuming that because this was a crisis situation, he was hustling. Throw in a five percent incline one way, and my calorie counter comes up with 7,500 calories round trip. For the sake of comparison, running a marathon at an average burn of 100 calories per mile would net 2,620 calories.

My point? Some miracles take sweat equity. Your effort doesn't make them happen, but your lack of effort can keep them from happening. In the words of Dallas Willard, "Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action." You cannot *earn* a miracle, but *effort* is a part of the equation. You may have to hike twenty miles uphill, but your extra effort may be the catalyst for a miracle.

Most of us follow Jesus to the point of inconvenience, but no further. We're more than willing to follow Jesus as long as it doesn't derail our plans. But it was the willingness to be inconvenienced that defined the Good Samaritan, and that's how he became someone else's miracle. Most miracles don't happen on Main Street. They happen off the beaten path, about twenty miles out of town.

If there's a lesson to be learned from the royal official it's this: if you want to experience a miracle, sometimes you have to go way, way, way out of your way. That's what the woman with the issue of blood did: she fought the crowds to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. That's what the woman with the alabaster jar of perfume did: she crashed a party at a Pharisee's home. That's what the four friends of an invalid did: they airlifted their friend through a hole in the roof. Sometimes God just wants to see if you're serious! Are you willing to walk to Cana?

By virtue of his position, the royal official had access to the who's who of the Roman Empire. And that makes his quest to seek help from the carpenter from Nazareth even more remarkable. Remember, in the political sphere, Jesus was subject to the authority of this royal official. But in the spiritual realm, the roles are reversed. The authority of the King of Kings trumps the authority of any earthly king. And that's our trump card, too. Miracles are way beyond our human ability, but they are well within our authority as the children of God.

You have more access than you realize because you have more authority as a child of the King than you could ever imagine. Here's my advice: don't worry about meeting the right person. Meet with God. God will make sure you meet the right person at the right time.

Prior to serving as Chaplain for the United States Senate, the Rev. Dr. Richard Halverson served as pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Maryland. He did what pastors do: preach and counsel and marry and bury. But he believed his most important function was pronouncing his carefully crafted benediction at the end of service:

“You go nowhere by accident. Wherever you go, God is sending you. Wherever you are, God has put you there; God has a purpose in your being there. Christ who indwells you has something he wants to do through you where you are. Believe this and go in God’s grace and love and power.”

You go nowhere by accident. You may not be where you want to be right now, but God can use you right here. In fact, God may have you right where God wants you. Whether you are on a mission trip halfway around the world or a trip to the local grocery store, God is setting up divine appointments for you along the way. The challenge, of course, is that they are harder to recognize closer to home. Don’t be in such a hurry to get where you’re going that you miss the miracles along the way or the miracles that may be out of your way!

Prayer: Lord, you know the desperation in every heart. And you understand the longings we feel and our need for intimacy with You. I pray for those who need your intervention today. You are faithful; and Your Word is powerful. Open the eyes of those who need you, and open the hearts of those who are seeking wholeness, freedom, healing, forgiveness, and love today. Thank you that you love to do the impossible in ways that will always bring You glory. Draw us close to You, Jesus! We purpose to give You praise in every situation. Thank You for the miracles You bring daily. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

*Heavily excerpted from Mark Batterson’s The Grave Robber, Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 2014.*

## Go Get Your Miracle

**Sunday, February 21, 2016**

**The Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN 56537**

### ***John 4:46-54***

Kevin Ramsby is a survivor. Kevin pastors Revival Tabernacle in downtown Detroit where he’s devoted his life to working with gangbangers and drug addicts. One would think that a lifetime of such service would warrant special protective protection from God. But Kevin’s dream turned into a nightmare at 3 AM on August 4, 2009, when he was stabbed thirty-nine times during an armed robbery of his home. Four feet of scars cover Kevin’s body: he underwent numerous surgeries after the attack, including emergency surgery to repair ruptured intestines. But Kevin’s sense of humor survived uninjured: he now jokes that his bellybutton is two inches to the left of where it used to be.

When tragedy strikes, the question that comes to mind is universal: “Where in the world was God?” Kevin wasn’t sure until the doctors and investigators shared their reports with him in the aftermath. Half a dozen knife wounds were millimeters away from killing Kevin or paralyzing him for life. That’s miracles one through six. But the police report is even more mysterious and miraculous than the medical report. Investigators found the pool of blood where Kevin lay helplessly at the top of the stairs, as well as bloody prints on the walls of his home. But there was one thing conspicuously missing: there were no bloody footprints between Kevin’s home and the neighbor’s house where he went for help. Not a single droplet of blood was found. How Kevin got to his neighbor’s house is both a mystery and a miracle. Only God knows.

At the sentencing of his attacker, Wesley McLemore, Kevin refused to give a victim’s statement. He gave a life statement. He did more than proclaim his forgiveness for Wesley. Kevin befriended the man who tried to kill him. Wesley’s family and friends disowned him, but not Kevin. Kevin is Wesley’s sole contact outside of prison. In Kevin’s words, “God has forgiven me so much, how can I not forgive?” It’s that simple. It’s that difficult.