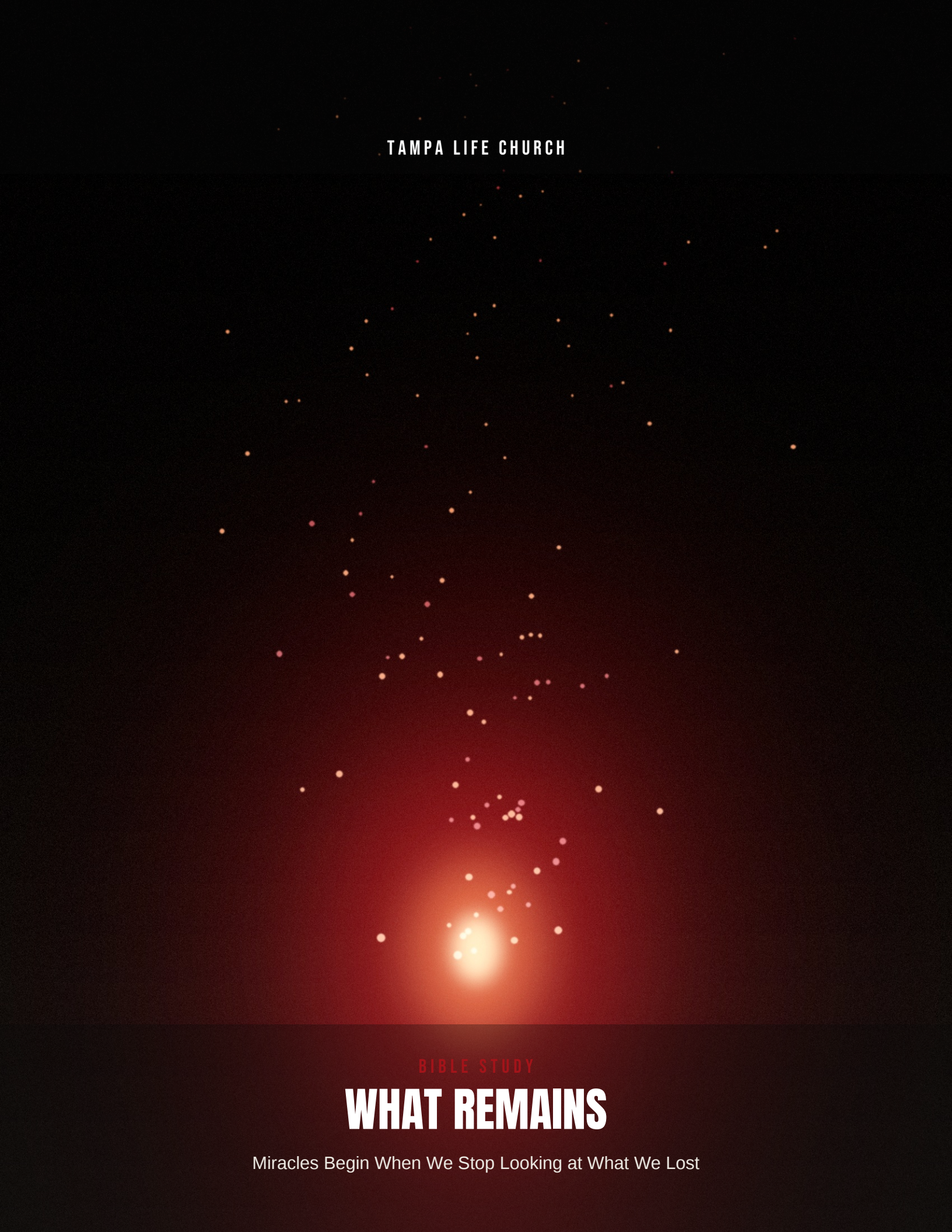




TAMPA LIFE CHURCH

BIBLE STUDY

WHAT REMAINS

Miracles Begin When We Stop Looking at What We Lost

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Some Sundays follow a carefully prepared outline. Others follow the unmistakable leading of the Holy Spirit.

This Bible study was born from one of those sacred moments.

The congregation gathered expecting to continue a sermon series. Instead, the Holy Spirit gently redirected the entire service. Before a message was ever preached, the sanctuary became a place of intercession. Families were carrying heavy burdens. One faithful servant of God was in emergency surgery. Another family was preparing for the early birth of their child. A beloved pastor who had faithfully served the church for decades had entered eternity only hours before. Rather than rushing into the sermon, the church stopped to pray, worship, grieve together, and seek the presence of God.

For those who may be unfamiliar with a Pentecostal church, this kind of service can seem unusual. Some may wonder why people pray together so passionately, why hands are lifted in worship, or why believers gather around those who are hurting. These expressions are not simply emotional responses or religious traditions. They are rooted in the conviction that Jesus Christ is alive, that the Holy Spirit is still working among His people, and that God continues to heal, comfort, restore, and transform lives today.

We do not gather merely to learn about God.

We gather expecting to encounter Him.

Throughout the service, people ministered to one another. The congregation prayed for the sick. They comforted grieving families. They worshiped with thanksgiving despite sorrow. Instead of allowing grief to dominate the atmosphere, faith began to rise. The church became exactly what Christ intended His body to be: a place where burdens are shared, hope is restored, and the presence of God is welcomed.

Then something extraordinary happened.

After nearly an hour of worship, prayer, and ministry, Pastor Robert Tisdale finally opened the sermon notes he had prepared several weeks earlier. The very first sentence waiting on the page read:

“Miracles start when you stop obsessing over what you lost and start using what you have left.”

No one could have orchestrated such a moment.

Before that sentence was ever spoken, God had already spent the entire morning illustrating it. Every prayer, every embrace, every act of worship, every word of encouragement, and every expression of generosity pointed toward one central truth:

God rarely begins His miracles by restoring what has been lost. More often, He begins by revealing what still remains.

That truth forms the foundation of this entire study.

REFLECT

Think about a recent "interruption" in your own life, a delay, disappointment, or unexpected turn. Where might God have already been preparing something you could not yet see?

BEFORE WE BEGIN

WHY WE BELIEVE GOD STILL PERFORMS MIRACLES

If you are reading this study and have never attended a Pentecostal church, you may have questions about what took place during that service. Why did the congregation spend so much time praying? Why did people gather around those who were hurting? Why was there such confidence that God could intervene?

The answer is simple:

Because we believe the God of the Bible has not changed.

Our faith is not built upon emotional experiences or human traditions. It is built upon the unchanging character of God revealed in Scripture.

The Bible presents a God who is actively involved in the lives of His people. From Genesis to Revelation, He hears prayers, heals diseases, delivers captives, restores broken hearts, provides for impossible needs, forgives sinners, and performs miracles that reveal His glory. These miracles were never intended to entertain people or elevate individuals. They revealed the compassion, authority, and power of God.

When Jesus Christ came into the world, He perfectly revealed the Father's heart. Everywhere He went, He ministered to people who were broken. He healed the blind, cleansed lepers, restored the paralyzed, comforted grieving families, cast out unclean spirits, calmed violent storms, multiplied food for the hungry, and even raised the dead.

These miracles were not isolated events belonging only to history.

They demonstrated what the Kingdom of God looks like whenever God's presence is welcomed.

Some sincere Christians believe that miraculous gifts ceased after the apostolic age. We respectfully hold a different conviction because we find no passage in Scripture declaring that God's power has ended. Instead, we repeatedly find God's people being encouraged to pray, believe, and trust Him.

James wrote:

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him... And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up..."

JAMES 5:14-15 (KJV)

The writer of Hebrews reminds us:

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

HEBREWS 13:8 (KJV)

Because Jesus has not changed, we believe His compassion has not changed. His authority has not changed. His mercy has not changed. His power has not changed.

This does not mean every prayer is answered exactly the way we desire. Scripture teaches us that God is sovereign. Sometimes He heals instantly. Sometimes He heals gradually through time, medicine, or restoration. Sometimes He chooses to sustain His children with extraordinary grace while accomplishing a purpose beyond our understanding.

Faith is not believing that God will always do what we want.

Faith is trusting that God will always do what is right.

This distinction is essential.

When Pentecostal believers pray for healing, we are not attempting to command God. We are obeying His invitation to bring every need before Him. We pray because Jesus instructed His followers to pray. We pray because the early church prayed. We pray because we have witnessed God's faithfulness over and over again. Most importantly, we pray because we know that whether God changes the circumstance or strengthens us within it, His presence is enough.

That Sunday morning, the congregation prayed for families facing emergency surgery, cancer, premature birth, grief, emotional pain, and physical suffering. They believed God could intervene because they believed He was present. Their confidence was never in the people praying. Their confidence was in Jesus Christ alone.

As you continue through this Bible study, remember this important truth:

Our greatest miracle is not that God always removes our suffering.

Our greatest miracle is that He promises never to leave us in it alone.

And wherever Jesus is present...

hope remains.

purpose remains.

healing remains.

miracles remain.

 REFLECT

Do you believe God still performs miracles today? Write honestly about where your faith feels strong and where it feels uncertain.

CHAPTER

GOD OFTEN SPEAKS BEFORE WE UNDERSTAND WHY

01

One of the greatest comforts a believer can discover is that God is never surprised. Long before we recognize a problem, He has already prepared His answer. Before our prayers are spoken, He has already heard them. Before our tears begin to fall, He has already stored them in His bottle (Psalm 56:8). What appears to us as an unexpected crisis has never caught Heaven off guard.

This truth was beautifully illustrated during the service that inspired this lesson. As Pastor Robert Tisdale prepared to continue his sermon series, the direction of the morning changed completely. News of loss, sickness, and urgent prayer needs transformed the atmosphere. The congregation spent nearly an hour praying, worshiping, comforting one another, and seeking God before the sermon ever began. Only afterward did Pastor Tisdale open the message he had prepared weeks earlier and discover that the very first sentence perfectly summarized everything the Holy Spirit had already been speaking throughout the service: "Miracles start when you stop obsessing over what you lost and start using what you have left." What appeared to be an interruption was actually a confirmation. God had written the answer before the church ever experienced the moment.

This is the beautiful pattern of Scripture. God rarely explains Himself before asking His people to trust Him. More often, He quietly prepares the provision long before anyone realizes it will be needed. His sovereignty is constantly working behind the scenes, arranging circumstances that only become clear when we look back through the lens of faith.

Abraham experienced this on Mount Moriah. God commanded him to offer Isaac, the son through whom all of God's promises would come. Human reasoning could not reconcile God's promise with God's command. Every step up the mountain must have raised painful questions. Yet while Abraham climbed one side of the mountain carrying wood for the sacrifice, God had already provided a ram climbing the other side. Abraham did not see God's provision until the very moment he needed it, but the provision had been there all along. The miracle did not begin when the ram appeared. It began when God prepared the ram before Abraham ever reached the altar (Genesis 22:13-14).

Joseph's life tells the same story. At seventeen years old he received dreams from God, but almost immediately his life seemed to fall apart. His brothers betrayed him, slavery stripped away his freedom, false accusations stole his reputation, and prison consumed years of his life. From Joseph's perspective, every promise appeared to be moving farther away. Yet while Joseph sat forgotten in prison, God was quietly arranging political events inside Pharaoh's palace. The famine was coming. Egypt would need a wise administrator. The cupbearer would eventually remember Joseph. Every piece was already moving into place while Joseph could see none of it. What Joseph called delay, God called preparation.

Moses also discovered that God's preparation often comes disguised as ordinary life. After fleeing Egypt, he spent forty years tending sheep in the wilderness. To many, those decades looked wasted. Moses himself may have believed that his greatest opportunities were behind him. Yet every lonely day in the desert was preparing him for the very place where God would later ask him to lead Israel. The wilderness became his classroom. The sheep became his training congregation. Even the staff he carried every day would later become one of the most recognizable instruments of God's miraculous power. God was preparing His servant long before He called him publicly.

Perhaps nowhere is this principle more beautifully revealed than in the life of Jesus Christ. Scripture declares that Christ was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). Before Adam sinned, God had already prepared redemption. Before humanity fell, the cross was already in the heart of God. Before mankind recognized its need for a Savior, Heaven had already planned salvation. This is the nature of our God. He is never reacting to history. He is directing it.

This truth changes the way we view our own lives. Too often we interpret unanswered questions as evidence that God is absent. We assume silence means inactivity. We mistake delay for abandonment. Yet the Bible repeatedly teaches the opposite. God’s silence does not mean He has stopped working. Frequently, it means He is working in places we cannot yet see. While we focus on today’s uncertainty, He is already arranging tomorrow’s provision.

This perspective also transforms the way we understand miracles. We often imagine miracles beginning the moment God intervenes visibly. Scripture teaches otherwise. Most miracles begin long before anyone recognizes them. Noah’s miracle began before the rain. David’s miracle began while he was still tending sheep. Esther’s miracle began before she became queen. The resurrection itself began before the stone was ever rolled away. God’s visible intervention is often only the final chapter of a story He has been writing all along.

As we continue through this study, remember this foundational truth: our confidence does not rest in our ability to understand God’s plan. It rests in God’s ability to fulfill His plan. Even when life feels uncertain, Heaven is never improvising. Our Father is already at work, preparing grace before the trial, strength before the battle, and hope before the heartbreak.

This is why believers can worship before they receive the answer. We pray before circumstances change. We praise before the miracle arrives. We trust before we understand. We know that if God has gone before us: as Scripture repeatedly promises: then whatever awaits us tomorrow has already passed through His loving hands. That confidence does not eliminate suffering, but it gives us peace in the middle of it. It reminds us that while we may not yet understand what God is doing, we can be certain that He is already doing something.

 REFLECT

What situation in your life right now feels like it is happening too late? Ask God to show you evidence that He has already been preparing your answer.

CHAPTER

**GRIEF WANTS YOUR EYES ON WHAT IS GONE, BUT GOD POINTS
TO WHAT REMAINS**

02

Grief is one of the most powerful emotions a human being can experience. It has the ability to consume our thoughts, cloud our vision, and quietly reshape the way we see both ourselves and God. While we often associate grief with the death of a loved one, Scripture paints a much broader picture. We grieve broken relationships, shattered dreams, lost opportunities, declining health, financial hardship, betrayal, disappointment, and seasons of life that will never return. In one way or another, every person carries the weight of something they wish had turned out differently.

The enemy understands the power of grief. While God desires to heal our hearts, Satan desires to imprison them. One of his greatest strategies is to convince us that our future is forever defined by what we have lost. If he can keep our attention fixed on yesterday, we will struggle to recognize what God is doing today. We become experts at counting what is missing while overlooking the countless evidences of God's faithfulness that still surround us.

This is why Pastor Robert Tisdale's statement is so profound:

"Miracles start when you stop obsessing over what you lost and start using what you have left."

Notice what he did not say. He did not suggest pretending the loss never happened. He did not encourage people to ignore their pain or suppress their emotions. Biblical faith is never built upon denial. Throughout Scripture, God's people wept openly. Abraham mourned Sarah. David mourned Jonathan. Jeremiah became known as the weeping prophet. Even Jesus stood outside the tomb of Lazarus and wept, though He knew resurrection was only moments away (John 11:35). Grief itself is not evidence of weak faith. In many cases, it is evidence that we have deeply loved.

The problem begins when grief changes from something we walk through into the place where we choose to live. God never intended sorrow to become our permanent residence. The psalmist declared, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5). Notice that weeping is given a season, not a destination. Morning eventually comes because God's mercy is continually moving His children toward hope.

One of the enemy's most subtle lies is convincing us that because something precious has been lost, nothing meaningful can ever happen again. Yet nearly every major biblical story demonstrates the opposite. God's greatest works often begin after what appears to be devastating loss.

Naomi lost her husband. She buried both of her sons. She returned to Bethlehem so overwhelmed by sorrow that she asked people to stop calling her Naomi, which means "pleasant," and instead call her Mara, meaning "bitter" (Ruth 1:20). From her perspective, her story was over. She believed God had emptied her life. Yet while Naomi focused on what had been taken away, God was quietly writing one of the greatest redemption stories in the Old Testament. Ruth would meet Boaz, a family would be restored, and generations later the Messiah Himself would come through that lineage. Naomi could only see her empty hands. God could already see the cradle that would one day hold Obed.

The disciples experienced this same struggle after the crucifixion. Everything they had built their lives around appeared to collapse in a single weekend. The One they believed to be the Messiah had been

arrested, beaten, crucified, and buried. Fear replaced confidence. Hope gave way to confusion. They locked themselves behind closed doors, convinced that the story had ended. Yet while they mourned what had been lost, Jesus was preparing the greatest victory in human history. The resurrection did not erase the pain of Friday, but it completely transformed its meaning.

How often do we resemble those disciples? We stand before sealed tombs believing God has finished writing our story, while Heaven is simply waiting for Sunday morning.

Perhaps one of the greatest lessons we must learn is that God never asks us to begin with what we no longer possess. He always begins with what remains. When Moses stood before the burning bush, God did not ask him what Pharaoh had taken from him. He asked, "What is that in thine hand?" (Exodus 4:2). Moses saw an ordinary shepherd's staff. God saw the instrument that would divide the Red Sea, bring water from a rock, and become a symbol of His authority. The miracle did not begin with something Moses lacked. It began with something he already possessed but had underestimated.

The same principle appears throughout the ministry of Jesus. Before feeding the multitude, Jesus asked, "How many loaves have ye?" (Mark 6:38). Before healing the blind man, Jesus asked what he desired. Before calling Lazarus from the grave, Jesus instructed the people to roll away the stone. Again and again, God invited human participation before displaying divine power. He did not need what they had; He wanted them to trust Him with it.

This challenges us to ask an honest question: What are we still holding that God desires to use? Perhaps it is not much by human standards. It may simply be a willing heart, a testimony, a prayer, a word of encouragement, a financial gift, or an act of kindness toward someone carrying their own burden. Yet throughout Scripture, God has always delighted in multiplying surrendered things. Five loaves became a banquet. A jar of oil paid impossible debts. A shepherd's sling defeated a giant. A widow's two mites became an eternal lesson in generosity.

Our tendency is to evaluate what remains according to its size. God evaluates it according to our willingness to place it in His hands.

This truth begins changing the way we pray. Instead of asking only, "Lord, why did this happen?" we begin asking, "Lord, what can You still do with what remains?" That question shifts our focus from despair to expectancy. It does not minimize our pain; it magnifies God's possibilities.

As believers, we do not deny loss. We simply refuse to let loss have the final word. Our confidence rests in the God who specializes in bringing beauty from ashes, joy from mourning, strength from weakness, and resurrection from places that appear hopeless. If He could bring life from an empty tomb, He can certainly bring purpose from whatever remains in our lives today.

The miracle often begins at the moment we stop counting what has disappeared and begin placing what remains into the hands of Jesus. There, ordinary things become extraordinary, broken hearts begin to heal, and hope quietly rises again.

REFLECT

What have you lost that you keep returning to in your thoughts? Now ask: what has God left in your hands that you have been overlooking?

CHAPTER

HEALING BEGINS WHEN WE GIVE THROUGH OUR GRIEF

03

One of the most profound moments of the service did not come from Pastor Robert Tisdale's prepared notes. Instead, it came during a deeply personal testimony. As he reflected on the passing of Bishop James Wolfe, the illness of Brother Vernon Butler, the grieving families present, and the overwhelming atmosphere that filled the sanctuary, Pastor Tisdale shared something the Lord had impressed upon his heart during worship. It was not a lengthy revelation, nor a complicated theological statement. It was remarkably simple:

“Give your way through grief.”

Those five words capture a principle that can be traced from Genesis to Revelation. They remind us that while grief is a natural part of life, God never intended it to become the place where His children remain. He invites us to walk through grief, not to build a home within it. The path He often provides is unexpected. Rather than asking us to withdraw, He calls us to continue giving. Continue loving. Continue serving. Continue praying. Continue worshiping. Continue investing in the lives of others.

This may seem contrary to human nature. When people are hurting, their instinct is often to retreat. Pain naturally turns our attention inward. We replay painful conversations, revisit difficult memories, and ask questions that seem to have no answers. We become so focused on our own wounds that it becomes difficult to see the needs of those around us. While seasons of quietness and mourning are both healthy and biblical, isolation was never God's design for healing. The enemy delights when grief becomes self-contained because isolation often produces discouragement, fear, and hopelessness.

The Kingdom of God works differently. Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly demonstrates that healing often begins when His people allow His love to continue flowing through them, even while they themselves are hurting. This does not mean we ignore our pain or pretend everything is fine. Rather, it means we refuse to let pain stop us from reflecting the character of Christ.

One of the clearest examples of this truth is found in the life of Job. Few people have ever suffered as deeply as Job. Within a short period of time he lost his children, his possessions, his health, and much of his reputation. His friends misunderstood him, and for many chapters of the book he wrestled honestly with questions that every suffering believer eventually asks. Yet the turning point of the story is fascinating.

The Scriptures declare,

“And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends...”

JOB 42:10 (KJV)

Notice what the verse does not say. It does not say God restored Job when he finally understood everything that had happened. It does not say restoration began after all of his questions were answered. It simply says that as Job began praying for others, God began restoring him.

That does not mean Job earned his miracle by praying. Salvation, healing, and restoration are always acts of God's grace. However, it does reveal something beautiful about the human heart. When grief no longer has complete control of our attention, we begin seeing people again. We begin loving again. We begin praying again. We begin participating in God's work again. In many ways, that is one of the first evidences that healing has already begun.

One of the first signs of healing is not that the pain disappears. It is that love begins flowing through you again.

Perhaps no one demonstrated this principle more perfectly than Jesus Himself. While hanging on the cross, enduring the greatest suffering the world has ever known, His attention remained fixed on others. He prayed for those who crucified Him, asking the Father to forgive them. He paused to care for His mother by entrusting her to John's care. He offered hope to the repentant thief hanging beside Him. Even in His greatest moment of suffering, Jesus continued giving.

This reveals something remarkable about the heart of God. Love is never dependent upon favorable circumstances. Divine love continues to flow even when life is unimaginably difficult. The cross teaches us that suffering and generosity are not opposites. In God's Kingdom, they often walk together.

The same spirit was evident throughout the service that inspired this lesson. Instead of allowing grief to consume the congregation, the church became a place of ministry. Families gathered around those who were hurting. Believers prayed for the sick. Words of encouragement were spoken. An offering was received: not because there were no needs within the church, but because Pastor Robert Tisdale sensed the Lord leading the congregation to bless others even while they themselves were grieving. Missionaries were supported. Faithful servants were honored. Compassion continued flowing.

This is a beautiful picture of the Church.

The Church is never at its best when everyone is problem-free.

The Church is at its best when broken people allow God to love other broken people through them.

That is exactly what Paul had in mind when he wrote,

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

GALATIANS 6:2 (KJV)

Bearing burdens requires more than sympathy. It requires presence. Sometimes the greatest ministry we can offer is simply being there. A phone call. A visit. A meal. A prayer. A word of encouragement. A generous gift. None of these actions erase another person's pain, but each one becomes a tangible

reminder that they are not walking through the valley alone.

As we reflect on our own lives, perhaps the question is not simply, “Lord, when will You heal me?” Perhaps another question is equally important:

“Lord, who can I encourage while You are healing me?”

Very often, those two journeys happen at the same time.

And somewhere along the road, almost without realizing it, we discover that God has been healing our hearts while we were helping someone else.

REFLECT

Who around you is hurting right now? Write down one specific way you can give your way through your own grief this week by blessing someone else.

CHAPTER

JOSEPH NAMED HIS HEALING BEFORE HE EXPERIENCED HIS RESTORATION

04

When most people think about Joseph, they immediately remember the dramatic moments of his life. They remember the beautiful coat his father gave him, the jealousy of his brothers, the pit, the slave traders, Potiphar's house, the prison, and finally Pharaoh's palace. These moments certainly define the storyline, but they are not the greatest miracle in Joseph's life. The greatest miracle was not that he became the governor of Egypt. The greatest miracle was that God transformed a wounded young man into a mature servant who no longer allowed his past to dictate his future.

Joseph's suffering began at an age when most young people are just beginning to discover who they are. At only seventeen years old, he experienced betrayal from the very people who should have protected him. His own brothers stripped away the robe that represented his father's love, threw him into a pit, and sold him as a slave. In a single day, Joseph lost his family, his home, his freedom, and every sense of security he had ever known. Yet the pain did not end there. After faithfully serving in Potiphar's house, he was falsely accused of a crime he never committed and imprisoned for years. From a human perspective, every chapter of Joseph's story seemed to move farther away from the dreams God had given him as a young man.

How many believers have found themselves asking the same question Joseph must have asked? "Lord, if You gave me this promise, why does my life seem to be moving in the opposite direction?" It is often during these seasons that faith is tested most severely. We naturally assume that God's silence means God's absence. We mistake delay for abandonment and unanswered questions for unanswered prayers. Yet the life of Joseph teaches us that God is often accomplishing His deepest work while His voice appears silent. Although Joseph could not see it, every difficult season was preparing him for an assignment far greater than he could have imagined. The prison was not evidence that God had forgotten him; it was part of the process God was using to prepare him.

There is an important principle here that every follower of Christ must learn. God is usually more concerned with preparing the person than preparing the position. We often ask God to change our circumstances, while He is patiently transforming our character. Before Joseph could govern a nation, he had to learn humility, faithfulness, patience, forgiveness, and complete dependence upon God. Had the promotion come before the preparation, the weight of influence might have destroyed the man God intended to use.

Years later, after Joseph had been elevated to power and had established a new life in Egypt, something seemingly ordinary happened that reveals an extraordinary work of God. Joseph became a father. Like every Hebrew parent, he carefully chose the names of his sons because names carried spiritual significance. In Scripture, names often reflected what God was doing in a person's life. Joseph's two sons became living testimonies of the healing God had accomplished within his own heart.

The first son was named Manasseh. The Bible explains Joseph's reason by saying, "For God... hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house" (Genesis 41:51, KJV). At first glance, those words almost sound impossible. How could Joseph forget the pit? How could he forget slavery? How could anyone erase memories so deeply etched into the soul?

The answer is that Joseph was not speaking about memory; he was speaking about mastery.

Joseph remembered every event. In fact, when his brothers eventually stood before him in Egypt, he recognized them immediately. He remembered their faces. He remembered their voices. He remembered exactly what they had done. The miracle was not that the memories disappeared. The miracle was that those memories no longer controlled him. God had healed the wound so completely that Joseph could remember the event without being imprisoned by it.

This is one of the most misunderstood aspects of biblical healing. Many people pray that God would erase painful memories, but God often performs an even greater miracle. Instead of removing the memory, He removes its power. The event remains part of our testimony, but it no longer governs our emotions, our decisions, or our identity. We can speak about what happened without reopening the wound because the Great Physician has healed what once seemed impossible to heal.

Notice carefully what Joseph says. He does not say, "Time has made me forget." He says, "God has made me forget." Time, by itself, heals very little. People can carry bitterness for decades. Others live with guilt, shame, or resentment for an entire lifetime. Time simply teaches us how to hide pain more effectively. Only the grace of God has the power to transform a wounded heart into a healed one.

Joseph's second son received the name Ephraim, and once again Joseph explained its meaning by saying, "For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction" (Genesis 41:52, KJV). These words may be even more remarkable than the first. Joseph did not say that God removed him from the land of affliction. Egypt was still Egypt. It was still the place where he had been sold as a slave. It was still the place where he had been falsely accused. It was still the place where he had spent years inside a prison. The geography had not changed. What had changed was Joseph himself.

How often do we postpone our joy until our circumstances improve? We quietly convince ourselves that peace will come after life becomes easier, that we will fully trust God once the problem is solved, or that fruitfulness belongs to another season. Joseph teaches us something entirely different. God's blessing is not limited by our surroundings. He is fully able to produce spiritual fruit in the very place where we experienced our deepest pain. The God who caused flowers to bloom in the wilderness is still able to bring life into places we assumed would always remain barren.

This pattern appears throughout Scripture. Ruth discovered redemption during a famine. Daniel found favor while living as an exile in Babylon. Paul wrote letters that continue changing the world while sitting inside a Roman prison. Even our Lord Jesus accomplished the greatest victory in history through what appeared to be the darkest day imaginable. Again and again, God proves that He is not intimidated by places of affliction. In fact, some of His greatest works are accomplished there.

The true climax of Joseph's story did not occur when Pharaoh placed a ring on his finger. It occurred years later when Joseph stood face to face with the brothers who had betrayed him. At that moment, he possessed the authority to imprison them, punish them, or even execute them. Human justice would have understood such a response. Yet Joseph chose a completely different path. He wept. Those tears were

not signs of weakness. They were evidence of healing. A heart still ruled by pain seeks revenge. A heart transformed by God's grace seeks restoration.

When Joseph finally revealed his identity, he made one of the most profound statements in all of Scripture: "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Genesis 50:20, KJV). Joseph did not excuse his brothers' sin. He acknowledged that what they had done was evil. But he refused to allow their actions to define the rest of his life. Their betrayal became the backdrop against which God's faithfulness was displayed.

Not that he became governor of Egypt, but that he became free.

And perhaps that is the miracle God desires to perform in each of us. Long before He changes what is happening around us, He wants to transform what is happening within us. Because when the heart is healed by God's grace, we can finally declare with Joseph, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." That confession is not merely the testimony of one man in Egypt: it is the testimony God desires to write in every believer who chooses to trust Him through every season of life.

REFLECT

Is there a painful memory that still has power over your emotions or decisions? Ask God to do what only He can do, heal the memory without erasing the testimony.

CHAPTER

GOD NEVER BEGINS WITH WHAT YOU LOST

05

If there is one pattern that becomes unmistakable throughout Scripture, it is this: God almost never begins His miracles by replacing what has been lost. He begins by asking for what remains. This principle appears so consistently throughout the Bible that it cannot be dismissed as coincidence. It reveals something about the very character of God. While we naturally focus on our deficiencies, God consistently looks at the resources that are still in our hands. Heaven is never intimidated by what is missing because God has never depended upon human abundance to accomplish divine purposes.

This truth challenges the way we naturally think. When life falls apart, our attention immediately shifts toward what is no longer there. We think about the opportunities that disappeared, the relationships that ended, the finances that were lost, the health that declined, or the dreams that seem impossible now. We measure our future by what has been taken away. God, however, measures our future by what we are willing to surrender into His hands. The difference between those two perspectives is often the difference between despair and faith.

Perhaps no story illustrates this more clearly than God's conversation with Moses at the burning bush. Moses had already spent forty years believing his greatest opportunity had passed. The prince of Egypt had become nothing more than a shepherd in the wilderness. His education, influence, and position in Pharaoh's palace were gone. From Moses' perspective, everything valuable belonged to the past. Yet when God called him to deliver Israel, He did not ask about his former position in Egypt. He did not ask about the education he had received or the influence he had once possessed. Instead, God asked one remarkably simple question:

"What is that in thine hand?"

EXODUS 4:2 (KJV)

To Moses, it was only a shepherd's staff, a tool so ordinary that it hardly deserved mention. He carried it every day without giving it much thought. Yet the Lord saw something entirely different. In God's hands, that ordinary staff would confront Pharaoh, divide the Red Sea, bring water from a rock, and become a visible reminder that divine authority often rests upon ordinary obedience. The miracle did not begin when Moses received something new. It began when he surrendered what he already had.

The same pattern appears in the ministry of Elisha. A widow approached the prophet carrying a burden that seemed impossible to solve. Her husband had died, creditors were coming to take her sons as payment, and she possessed almost nothing. Humanly speaking, her story appeared hopeless. Yet Elisha's first response is both surprising and deeply revealing. He asked, "What hast thou in the house?" (2 Kings 4:2, KJV). The widow answered almost apologetically, saying that she had nothing except a small pot of oil. To her, it was insignificant. To God, it was enough.

How often do we answer God the same way? We say, "Lord, I have nothing." Yet if we are honest, there is usually a sentence that follows. "...except this." Except this little ability. Except this small opportunity. Except this testimony. Except this relationship. Except this gift. Except this resource. We dismiss what remains because it seems too small to matter. God never does. He delights in using what we have

overlooked because doing so leaves no doubt about where the glory belongs.

The widow's miracle did not occur because the oil possessed unusual qualities. It occurred because she trusted God's instruction with what she already possessed. As long as there were empty vessels available, the oil continued flowing. The limitation was never God's supply; it was the availability of empty vessels ready to receive what He desired to give. That truth remains just as relevant today. God is not searching for people who believe they have everything. He is searching for hearts that are willing to offer Him whatever remains, trusting that He is able to multiply what seems insignificant.

Jesus demonstrated this same principle when thousands of hungry people gathered to hear Him teach. The disciples immediately saw the impossibility of the situation. They calculated the cost. They considered the distance to nearby villages. Every solution they proposed centered on what they lacked. There was not enough money, not enough food, and not enough time. Jesus, however, asked a completely different question: "How many loaves have ye?" (Mark 6:38, KJV). Once again, Heaven's attention rested not upon the deficiency but upon what remained.

Five loaves and two fish could never satisfy a multitude of thousands. Everyone knew that. Yet the miracle was never dependent upon the size of the offering. It depended entirely upon whose hands the offering entered. The moment that small lunch was placed into the hands of Jesus, its limitations no longer mattered. The same bread that looked insufficient in the hands of a little boy became more than enough when blessed by the Lord.

That truth reaches beyond the miracle of feeding the multitude. It speaks directly to every believer who has ever felt inadequate. We often assume that God uses only exceptionally gifted people with extraordinary resources, remarkable talents, or ideal circumstances. Scripture tells a different story. Again and again, God chooses ordinary people carrying ordinary resources so that His extraordinary power becomes unmistakable. Gideon had only three hundred men. David carried only a sling and five smooth stones. A little servant girl pointed Naaman toward healing. A widow gave two mites. A frightened fisherman preached on the Day of Pentecost. None of these people possessed what the world would call enough, yet every one of them discovered that what is surrendered to God is never measured by its size but by its availability.

Perhaps this explains why God often waits until human strength has reached its limits before revealing His power. As long as we believe our own abilities are sufficient, we are tempted to depend upon ourselves. But when we finally recognize our weakness, we discover what Paul meant when he wrote, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9, KJV). Weakness is not an obstacle to God's power; it is often the stage upon which His power is most clearly displayed.

This is exactly what Pastor Robert Tisdale was communicating when he declared that miracles begin when we stop obsessing over what we lost and begin using what we have left. The statement is not merely inspirational: it is deeply biblical. Every miracle we have considered in this chapter began when someone stopped measuring their limitations and started trusting God's sufficiency. Moses surrendered a staff. A widow offered a small pot of oil. A young boy released his lunch. None of them knew what God was about

to do. They simply placed what remained into His hands.

Perhaps the greatest question we can ask ourselves is not, “What have I lost?” but rather, “What has God already placed in my hands?” The answer may seem ordinary today, but throughout Scripture, God has consistently built extraordinary miracles from ordinary acts of faith. He has never needed abundance to accomplish His purposes. He has only asked for surrender.

That truth should fill every believer with hope. No matter what life has taken away, if Christ remains, then possibility remains. If faith remains, then purpose remains. If the Holy Spirit remains, then power remains. And if God still has something in our hands, no matter how small it appears, He is more than able to use it for His glory. The miracle may not begin with what we wish we still possessed. More often than not, it begins with the simple decision to place what remains into the hands of the One who has never failed.

REFLECT

What is in your hand right now, a gift, a relationship, a resource, a small act of obedience, that you have dismissed as too small for God to use?

CHAPTER

SOMETIMES GOD'S GREATEST MIRACLE IS HIS PEOPLE

06

One of the most beautiful aspects of the service that inspired this study is that it was never centered around a single individual. There was no carefully orchestrated program, no rush to reach the next part of the service, and no attempt to preserve a schedule. Instead, there was a holy sensitivity to the leading of the Spirit. Long before Pastor Robert Tisdale ever opened his Bible notes, God was already moving throughout the congregation. People prayed with one another. Families were comforted. Tears flowed freely. Some worshiped while others interceded. Believers gathered around those carrying heavy burdens, laying hands on the sick and encouraging the weary. The sanctuary became a living expression of what the New Testament Church was always intended to be: not an audience watching ministry happen, but the Body of Christ actively ministering to one another.

This is precisely the picture we find throughout the book of Acts. When we read about the early Church, we discover that miracles were never isolated displays of God's power intended merely to amaze a crowd. Every miracle strengthened the faith of God's people, drew unbelievers to Christ, and reinforced the unity of the Church. The supernatural was never disconnected from the community of believers. Instead, God's power flowed through ordinary men and women who had surrendered themselves to the work of the Holy Spirit.

This understanding challenges the way many people think about ministry today. It is easy to imagine that ministry belongs primarily to pastors, evangelists, missionaries, or those who stand behind a pulpit. Scripture paints a much different picture. The Apostle Paul describes the Church as a living body made up of many members, each uniquely designed and empowered by God. Every believer has been given a purpose, every believer has been entrusted with spiritual gifts, and every believer has a role to play in strengthening the body of Christ. The eye cannot replace the hand, nor can the hand function independently from the foot. Every member matters because every member belongs to Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

This truth becomes especially beautiful during seasons of suffering. Paul writes, "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it..." (1 Corinthians 12:26, KJV). In other words, pain is never meant to be carried alone. When one believer hurts, the entire body is invited to respond with compassion, prayer, encouragement, and practical support. This is one of God's greatest gifts to His people. He never intended us to fight our battles in isolation. He surrounded us with a spiritual family so that when our own strength begins to fail, someone else's faith can help carry us forward.

Perhaps this is why isolation is one of the enemy's most effective weapons. Pain naturally tempts us to withdraw. We quietly convince ourselves that no one understands our struggle, that we should keep our burdens to ourselves, or that we will return to fellowship once life becomes easier. Yet every one of those thoughts moves us away from God's design. A branch separated from the vine cannot flourish. A sheep separated from the flock becomes vulnerable. Likewise, believers who isolate themselves often deprive themselves of one of God's primary instruments of healing: the encouragement and strength of the Body of Christ.

Throughout Scripture we repeatedly see God using ordinary believers to accomplish extraordinary ministry. Barnabas, whose name means "son of consolation" or "son of encouragement," became one of

the most influential leaders in the early Church not because he sought recognition, but because he continually strengthened others. When the newly converted Saul was viewed with suspicion, Barnabas believed in him. When John Mark failed and others were ready to dismiss him, Barnabas saw potential where others saw disappointment. Time after time, God used his ministry of encouragement to shape leaders who would eventually impact the world. Barnabas reminds us that encouragement is not a secondary ministry within the Church; it is one of the ways Christ Himself ministers through His people.

Another beautiful example is found near the close of the Apostle Paul's life. Writing from a cold Roman prison, abandoned by many who had once labored beside him, Paul paused to honor one man by name. Speaking of Onesiphorus, he wrote, "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain" (2 Timothy 1:16, KJV). Those words are deeply moving. Paul did not commend Onesiphorus because he preached remarkable sermons or performed extraordinary miracles. He honored him because he refused to abandon a suffering brother. While others kept their distance from a condemned prisoner, Onesiphorus searched diligently until he found Paul and stood beside him. Sometimes the greatest ministry we can offer another person is simply our faithful presence.

This reminds us that not every miracle looks dramatic. Some miracles happen quietly. A phone call arrives at exactly the right moment. A prayer strengthens a weary heart. A meal appears at the door of a grieving family. A word of encouragement prevents someone from giving up. A brother or sister in Christ sits beside us in silence when words are no longer enough. These moments rarely receive public attention, yet Heaven sees every one of them. They are holy because they reveal the compassion of Christ working through His people.

That is exactly what unfolded during this service. Before there was a sermon, there was ministry. Before there was a message, there was compassion. Before anyone heard a biblical principle explained, they watched believers live it. Healing prayers filled the sanctuary. Worship rose from hearts carrying both faith and sorrow. The congregation continued giving generously to bless others, even while many were carrying burdens of their own. The Holy Spirit was already teaching the lesson: not through a prepared outline, but through the life of the Church itself.

Then, near the close of the service, Pastor Robert Tisdale opened the notes he had prepared several weeks earlier. Rather than preaching the entire message he had planned, he simply read the opening sentence:

"Miracles start when you stop obsessing over what you lost and start using what you have left."

In that moment, something remarkable became evident. The Holy Spirit had already preached the message.

Everyone in the sanctuary had witnessed believers using what remained. They had watched people worship through grief, continue serving while carrying heavy burdens, encourage one another through tears, and give generously despite difficult circumstances. Without realizing it, they had spent the entire

service watching that single sentence come to life. The message was not first proclaimed from behind a pulpit; it had already been demonstrated through surrendered lives.

Perhaps that is one of the greatest lessons this study leaves with us. We often pray for God to perform a miracle while imagining something sudden and extraordinary. Yet many times, God's first miracle is much quieter. It begins when a believer chooses forgiveness instead of bitterness. It begins when someone lifts their hands in worship after receiving heartbreaking news. It begins when a grieving family comforts another grieving family. It begins when a church refuses to become consumed by its own pain and instead continues loving, serving, praying, and giving.

That is exactly what happened that day.

The miracle was not simply that God gave Pastor Robert Tisdale a message weeks before the service.

The miracle was that the Church had already become the message before the first sentence was ever read.

Perhaps that is still one of God's favorite ways to reveal Himself. Before He speaks through a sermon, He often speaks through a surrendered people. When the Body of Christ loves as Jesus loved, serves as Jesus served, bears one another's burdens, and continues using what remains, the world witnesses something no sermon alone can fully communicate.

The Church itself becomes living evidence that Jesus Christ is still alive, still working, and still performing miracles today.

REFLECT

Who has been God's hands and voice to you during a hard season? Write a short prayer of gratitude for them, and ask God how you can be that person for someone else.

CONCLUSION

WHAT REMAINS IS ENOUGH

As we come to the end of this study, we are brought back to the simple yet profound truth that first captured our attention:

“Miracles start when you stop obsessing over what you lost and start using what you have left.”

Throughout these chapters we have discovered that this is much more than an encouraging statement. It is a biblical pattern that stretches across the pages of Scripture. Again and again, God meets men and women at the place of their greatest loss: not to remind them of what is gone, but to reveal what still remains. While human nature instinctively looks backward, God continually calls His people to look forward. While we count what has been taken from us, He points us toward what His grace has preserved.

The stories we have examined all testify to this reality. Joseph lost his family, his freedom, and years of his life, yet God gave him a heart free from bitterness and made him fruitful in the very land of his affliction. Moses believed his greatest years were behind him, but God began a national deliverance with nothing more than a shepherd's staff. A widow believed she had nothing left except a small pot of oil, yet that “little” became the source of her miracle. A young boy surrendered five loaves and two fish, and they became food for thousands. In every account, Heaven never began with what had been lost. Heaven began with what remained.

Perhaps that is because God has never measured our usefulness by the size of our resources. He measures our willingness to place those resources into His hands. The Lord has never been limited by small beginnings, ordinary people, or impossible circumstances. His power has always been revealed through surrendered lives. What appears insignificant to us often becomes extraordinary once it has been entrusted to Him.

This truth also changes the way we view our seasons of grief. Loss is real, and Scripture never minimizes the pain of sorrow. God's people have always wept. They have mourned the death of loved ones, the collapse of dreams, seasons of disappointment, and moments of deep heartbreak. Yet grief was never intended to become their permanent dwelling place. The God who invites us to weep is the same God who promises to comfort us. He gently walks beside us until our mourning is transformed into hope, not because the past is forgotten, but because His presence becomes greater than our pain.

One of the beautiful lessons of this study is that healing is rarely an isolated experience. God often restores us through the ministry of His people. Sometimes His answer comes through a brother who refuses to stop praying. Sometimes it comes through a sister whose words of encouragement arrive at exactly the right moment. Sometimes it comes through a church family that quietly carries burdens we were never meant to carry alone. We often ask God to send a miracle, not realizing that He has already placed us in a family where His grace is continually flowing from one believer to another.

That is exactly what unfolded during the service that inspired this lesson. Before there was a sermon, there was worship. Before there was a message, there was ministry. Before the opening sentence of Pastor Robert Tisdale's notes was ever read, the Holy Spirit had already been preaching that message through the lives of God's people. The congregation worshiped through grief. They prayed for the hurting.

They continued giving. They ministered to one another. They used what remained.

Perhaps that is one of the greatest reminders for every believer today.

The miracle you have been praying for may not begin with the arrival of something new.

It may begin with the surrender of something you already have.

Your testimony may be what someone else desperately needs to hear.

Your prayer may become the strength another believer has been asking God to provide.

Your faithfulness during a difficult season may encourage someone who is quietly considering giving up.

Your generosity may become God's provision for another family.

Your worship in the middle of your own pain may remind someone that God is still worthy of praise.

Never underestimate what God can do with a surrendered life.

There is one final lesson that echoes through every page of Scripture. God has always specialized in bringing life out of places where everyone else expected death. He brought a nation out of an elderly couple who had no children. He brought water from a rock. He brought bread from heaven. He brought victory through a shepherd boy. He brought salvation through a cross. He brought resurrection from an empty tomb.

That is who He is.

He is the God who creates something from what appears to be nothing.

He is the God who restores what seems beyond repair.

He is the God who still writes beautiful endings after painful chapters.

And because He never changes, He is still doing the same today.

So wherever this study finds you: whether you are walking through grief, disappointment, uncertainty, or simply waiting for God to move again: remember this: your story is not over. If you still have faith, God can use it. If you still have a voice, God can use it. If you still have a willing heart, God can use it. If you still have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you, then you possess everything necessary for God to continue writing His purpose through your life.

Do not spend tomorrow mourning what yesterday took away.

Lift your eyes.

Open your hands.

Trust the Lord.

Offer Him what remains.

Because throughout all of Scripture: and throughout the lives of God's people today: the greatest miracles have often begun with those who simply placed what they had left into the hands of a faithful God.

For what remains in God's hands will always be more than enough.

REFLECT

*Write, in one sentence, what still remains in your life after everything you have walked through.
Then write a short prayer placing it into God's hands.*
