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**MISSION FRONTIERS** JULY/AUG 2019

# The Marriage of

**Excellent Strategy and the Supernatural**

When we arrived at their home, his wife ushered us in. “Please sit down,” she said. The room was tiny and dark. We bent down to enter the low doorway and saw him lying on the bed. From the dark corner came groans of pain.

“What is wrong?” we asked.

His wife replied. “The doctor says he has a kidney stone. It’s been several days now. He is suffering so greatly!”

We shared with them both that Jesus is a God who heals. Laying our hands gently on him, we asked the Lord to help him pass the stone. We commanded his body to be made whole. After sharing a few words of hope, we left to visit another person in the community.

A few days later we returned to their tiny home. The man who’d been in such pain was sitting outside fixing a bamboo mat. “You look much better,” we said. He smiled broadly.

“The day you prayed for me in Jesus’ name, I was healed! Just an hour or so later, I passed the stone. Your God is very powerful!” he declared.

This man soon became a Jesus-follower, together with his wife. A weekly fellowship was started in the tiny courtyard in front of their home. Neighbors came to hear what God had done. Many began to listen in on the Bible story group that began. The kingdom was advancing!

**Supernatural Miracles Don’t Always Lead to**

## Movements

Jerry Trousdale wrote about the danger of secularism in the March/April 2019 issue of *Mission Frontiers*. One of the reasons the church in the West has not seen many Disciple Making Movements is because of anti-supernaturalism. The call to combat secularism and embrace a greater openness to the supernatural is needed indeed.

In Asia and Africa, this isn’t as much of an issue as in the West. People in the non-western world are far more open to signs and wonders. It is much easier to integrate healing the sick and casting out demons into the life of a typical disciple. In quite a few countries, 80 or 90 percent of people come to faith through a healing miracle.

Even in those countries, however, the reality is this. Though we see dramatic miracles and even conversions through miracles, we don’t *always* see movements result. Often, these healings happen in crusades with little follow up. Even if they take place through a personal connection, without a strategy for multiplying disciples and disciple-making groups, dramatic miracles only result in limited growth.

## It’s Both

Demonstrations of God’s power combined with a clear multiplication strategy for discipleship releases movements. One without the other will not get you there. In Jesus’ life, we see the beautiful blending of these two things: signs and wonders with intentional disciplemaking. It was not one or the other, but both/and.

**Are We Following Jesus’ Model?**

1 J esus regularly demonstrated the kingdom of God through signs and wonders.

As we read the gospels, we “watch” Jesus perform many, many miracles. There are thirty-seven clearly recorded in Scripture.[[1]](#endnote-1) Demonstrating love and power was His every-day lifestyle. It was normal for Jesus to show people who God was through practical and supernatural acts of kindness (miracles).

*Why do we hesitate to live the same way?* Fear of failure is one inhibitor. We may have had past experiences where God didn’t do what we hoped for. These painful memories stand in our way. Or perhaps we fear turning people off by giving them hope for something we can’t make happen apart from God’s intervention. If God doesn’t do that thing, we feel responsible for their disappointment.

Let’s ask ourselves about the worst-case scenario here. *What if we did pray and nothing happened?*

When we demonstrate love and faith, we can believe God will act. But even if there isn’t a dramatic, instant miracle, when we pray for needy people, they encounter God. They sense His presence. These things open their hearts toward Him. And what if God *did* intervene and a miracle happened? Not only is their problem solved, but they are now fertile soil, ready for the seed of the gospel.

Chris Galanos in his book *Megachurch to Multiplication*, encourages those he trains to ask people this question, “*If God could do a miracle for you today, what would you want Him to do?*” Then, when they share, the disciplemakers pray for those needs.

We must not hesitate to involve God in what we are doing. We should anticipate Him demonstrating His love to people in supernatural ways! He is still the same God we read about in the Bible. As we step out in faith, God will show up and meet the needs of those we are praying for.

## Community Development vs. Supernatural Miracles

Some who are uncomfortable with the miraculous instead look for practical human ways to meet needs. I am all for doing community development projects to serve the communities we want to reach. But we must admit that demonstrations of power are much more the biblical norm than setting up a medical clinic. I say, “Why not do both?” As we do what is possible for us (giving medical care for example), we also ask God to release miracles of healing.

When we worked in India we saw many people healed through a combination of prayer and medicine. Nothing wrong with that at all! The important thing is for people to see the love and power of Jesus clearly demonstrated through these efforts.

Mark 16:17 says, “These signs will accompany those who believe…” (NIV.) It doesn’t say might or perhaps. It says they *will*! Seeing miracles (big or small) happen through us is part of what it means to live our lives as Jesus followers.

When was the last time you prayed in faith that someone would be healed? What miracles are you asking Him for?

2 J esus multiplied disciples. He chose, trained, and released his mentees quickly.

In the gospels, we read of Jesus’ brief ministry on earth. It is surprising, when you think about it, that He only played an active ministry role for three years. That seems a very short amount of time to see a ministry firmly established!

From the beginning of His ministry, Jesus knew He would leave. His long-term plan included intentional multiplication. He chose the twelve then invested in training them. Jesus interacted with the multitudes, but much of His time was spent in training His twelve disciples. He prepared them to carry on His work because He knew He would soon leave.

In Luke 9, Jesus gave an assignment to the 12. He told them to go to villages and tell everyone about the kingdom of God. They had been watching Him do miracles and minister. Now, it was their turn. When they returned, they were to report back to Him for feedback and further training.

Jesus taught His disciples in an up close and personal way. His discipleship was responsive, not random. He had clear goals and knew exactly where He was headed in developing these men. Shockingly, before any of us would have said they were ready, He passed the leadership baton to them. He not only stepped back temporarily but physically left so they could carry on the work. God believed in that rag-tag crew of fishermen and taxcollectors enough to give them huge levels of both authority and responsibility.

Movement leaders around the world follow Christ’s example. They intentionally raise up others and then release them to do the work. Strategic and intentional discipleship needs to be part of the plan.

## Beyond Raising the Dead

Dan\*and his wife are church planters in India. By God’s grace, they have launched a movement in their area. When I first met Dan, I was quite impressed. It was quickly apparent that he was a man of great faith.

As we talked further, he shared an incredible story. While pioneering in a new city, they prayed for a lady who had just died from a heart attack. Miraculously, she came back to life! Through this astounding event, many hearts were opened to the gospel message. Dan was welcomed into homes and invited to share the gospel in many places as a result. The work grew, but it was still stuck at only first-generation growth. This was true in spite of the great receptivity they experienced.

Seeing this, I was able to help Dan get further training in DMM principles. He developed a discipleship plan for multiplication. He learned how to train trainers and disciple-makers rather than doing all the work himself. Instead of praying for all the sick people himself, he trained every disciple to pray for those who were ill. As his trainees did this, they too saw miracles happen.

He also trained them how to start new groups of disciples. They learned what steps to take with new believers so they would quickly become powerful disciple-makers too.

Before having a plan, his discipleship was random. After he put a system in place for simple discipleship lessons and trained everyone to use them, things began to grow rapidly. Multi-generational growth began. (Read more of Dan’s story and an interview with him on dmmsfrontiermissions.com.)

For Dan, raising someone from the dead was a great miracle. It definitely was a catalyst. But without a discipleship plan, the growth would have been limited to the movement leader’s availability. The movement would not have multiplied as it has.

## Integrate the Two

Which comes more naturally for you? Praying for the sick and seeing miracles – including casting out demons? Or honing your “End Vision” statement, crafting discipleship materials, and other similar tasks?

Be willing to grow in both areas, even if it doesn’t feel *natural.* Ask God to help you develop in both faith and strategic planning. You can staff your weakness and recruit others into your team who are strong in areas you are not. Balancing and integrating these two is important in releasing and sustaining Disciple Making Movements (DMMs). Aim for an integrated approach. You will be amazed at what God does!

\**pseudonym*

1. https://www.thoughtco.com/miracles-of-jesus-700158 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)