



In our ongoing series dealing with criticisms of Christianity, I wanted to next address the issue of miracles. This is one of the things that Christian musician [Marty Sampson said he was struggling with](#) and I'm sure others do as well.

What Is A Miracle?

Before we can begin talking about miracles, we need to define what they are. "Miracle" is one of those words that has become so common in our regular vocabulary that its definition has become a little distorted. We use it to say how unlikely it is that someone could do something ("it would take a miracle for the Cleveland Browns to win the Super Bowl this year") and we use it in an overly dramatic way to describe how unlikely certain events were when they occurred ("it's a miracle I made it to LAX in under 3 hours on the 405"). In all seriousness, though, some people do often call things miracles that can be explained by coincidence, chance, or other rational explanations.

When Marty Sampson says that not many miracles happen, I don't think that's what he is talking about, though. To be fair to Marty, since I'm not able to ask him directly, anything I say here is guesswork as to his meaning. But, what I do say about miracles will be true based on the case that I go with.

Popular naturalist philosopher David Hume felt that miracles were a violation of natural law and therefore impossible. But, I don't think natural laws have to be violated for miracles to occur. For example, let's say I fell out of a 7th-floor window. If I suddenly sprouted wings and flew gracefully to the ground, that would be a miracle and a clear violation of natural law. But, if I landed in the bed of a moving truck full of spongy Nerf footballs and survived, I think that would be no less of a miracle and yet no laws of nature have been violated. Things in this world were orchestrated in such a way that objects and events lined up so perfectly that I was saved.

So what is a miracle exactly? Well, Richard Purtill has developed what I think is a pretty good definition:

A miracle is an event (1) brought about by the power of God that is (2) a temporary (3) exception (4) to the ordinary course of nature (5) for the purpose of showing that God has acted in history.

In this definition, God could have either given me wings temporarily *or* worked through natural means to put the truck in the right place at the right time. He could have encouraged the driver of the truck to leave as such a time on his delivery route that he



would be in the right place at the right time so that I could land safely.

What Is The Question At Hand?

Again, not having access to Marty means I can only guess at what is on his mind. I don't get to ask my "what do you mean by that" question. But, from reading his question, he doesn't seem to *deny* that miracles happen; he just wonders why more don't. This, to me, seems to be a question along the lines of "why doesn't God do more?"

"Not many" doesn't deny that miracles happen. It sounds like he is worried about the count. And that is more of a problem of evil and suffering question. As in "why isn't God doing *more* in this world?" Maybe he's asking "why doesn't God answer more prayers?" This challenge is probably the one most Christians struggle to answer. Honestly, sometimes we have no answer for why a kid gets hit by a car and dies. Why do people that live what we think of as a "good life" suffer through something like cancer?

When I became a believer the following analogy helped bring me a lot of clarity on this issue: God is our Father. I am a father. To two kids. As a parent, there are things that we ask our kids to do that they don't understand. They aren't able to understand. They don't get the whole picture - or have the life experiences - required to make the decision I, as a parent, have made. Take getting a flu vaccination. "No! That hurts," they used to scream. But, even though there is a moment of pain, that vaccine will help protect them from getting sick.

As a Christian, I believe that God is the Creator of all things. He made *everything* come into existence from *nothing*. How can I even *think* to understand things in the way He does? That's pretty arrogant if you ask me.

We aren't promised an easy life. Becoming a Christian doesn't mean all your problems go away. Christians don't get to walk around with a magical force field protecting them from reality. They still get sick, they still lose their loved ones, and they still end up in bad situations.

The difference is, for Christians, we can find reason in the suffering. We know why bad things happen to good people. We know that our time here is only temporary; we're just passing through.

Do Miracles Happen?

Do things that defy reason, logic and the laws of nature happen? Does God cause events



that are the temporary exception to the laws of nature?

In his book, [The Case For Miracles, Lee Strobel](#) gives some interesting statistics that don't often make it to our ears.

- 2 in 5 Americans report having experienced a miracle in their lifetimes. If we do the math this would mean that over 94 million people in America have experienced miracles. Even if we dismissed 99% of those as being a coincidence, chance, or random luck, we would *still* have 1 million miracles happening in the United States alone.
- 55% of physicians say they have experienced events that can only be attested to miracles. These aren't uneducated people here. These are highly educated, highly trained men and women who know the processes of the human body better than anyone else. And 55% of them have run into cases where they claim the only answer was a miraculous one.

According to Strobel's research miracles are not equally dispersed across the globe. Miracles seem more prevalent in areas where the gospel is just beginning to grow. These are places where God needs to get people's attention. The Judeo-Christian God has been part of America's history since the first European settlers came here over 500 years ago. He doesn't need to provide us with as much attention-grabbing evidence as [places like Mozambique](#).

God Is Still In The Miracle Business

Many things that we proclaim as miracles can probably be chalked up to coincidence, chance or luck. But, miracles *do* still happen; even in America. There are still events happening in people's lives that have no other probable explanation except that a divine presence intervened in some way. These events don't have to be times where the laws of the universe are broken, either. Also, if you pray for something to happen and it doesn't - no matter how righteous or good your intentions might be - does not mean miracles aren't happening someplace else. In fact, the *real* miracles are probably more prevalent than we know.

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