

WE MAKE THE ROAD BY WALKING

**A year long quest for Spiritual formation,
reorientation and activation written by Brian
McLaren.**

Our Bible study is progressing through parts of the
above book.

We will be exploring God's Word progressively over
the next six months. Our first 7 lessons invite us to
**Join the Adventure – the adventure of the life,
Jesus.**

Women's Bible Study is held every Friday morning
from 10.30 to 11.30am in our Chapel – to ensure
safe distancing. We share a takeaway cuppa
afterwards.

**For further information please contact Rev. Judi
Turnham on
0423 375 714.**

Lesson 2

Significant and Wonderful

When reading the Gospels, you will often encounter a miracle. Some of us find it easy and exciting to believe in miracles. Others of us find them difficult to comprehend.

If you believe in miracles – the gospels are a treasure of inspiration. They stir hope in those who have none.

Matthew 9 Jesus raised a little girl from the dead – but since that time millions of faithfully, praying parents have grieved lost children without miraculous happy endings.

Matthew 14 Jesus multiplied the fish and bread to feed the hungry – but since that day how many millions of faithful, praying people have slowly starved and no miracle came.

Doesn't the possibility of miracles only make our suffering worse when God could grant them but doesn't. Some even blame the victim for not having enough faith.

If you don't believe in them, then you avoid these problems. But you can then be left with a reduced world, a disenchanting, mechanistic world where the impossible is always and forever impossible.

You may judge the miracle stories in the gospels as silly legends, childish make-believe, false advertising or deceitful propaganda.

But if you banish them you may banish meaning and hope in your life. If you lock out miracles, you can easily lock yourself in – into a closed mechanistic system, a small box where God's existence doesn't seem to make much difference.

There is a third alternative open to skeptics and believers in miracles. Instead of yes or no miracles happen ask this:

What happens to us when we imagine miracles happening?

Perhaps the story of a miracle is intended to do more than inform us about an event that supposedly happened in the past, an event that if you were to believe it, might prove something else.

Perhaps a miracle story is meant to shake up our normal assumptions, inspire our imagination about the present and the future, and make it possible for us to see something we couldn't see before.

Perhaps the miracle isn't one that happened to them back then, but one that could happen in us right now as we reflect upon the story. These stories can stretch our imagination and empower us to play a role in co-creating new possibilities for the world of tomorrow. Doesn't that sound rather – miraculous.

Read: John 2:1–12

In John's Gospel we read of the first miracle about the wedding in Cana of Galilee. John says this was the first **SIGN** by which Jesus revealed His glory.

Signs – they signify, they mean something, they are linked with wonders which astonish us with awe.

Question: in what ways are our lives, our faith and our culture like a wedding banquet that is running out of wine?

What are we running out of? What would it mean for those empty containers to be filled with wine?

And why so much wine? Can you imagine what 180 gallons of wine would mean in a small Galilean village? What might that superabundance signify?

What might it mean for Jesus to repurpose containers used to separate the clean from the unclean? And what might it mean for God to save the best for last?

Read: Mark 1:21–28

This miracle is very different. It happened in Capernaum Jesus' home base in the synagogue on the Sabbath day.

Today we would probably diagnose the man as suffering a mental health issue. But even with our difference in diagnosing and understanding human behaviour we can imagine how we would respond to seeing Jesus return this man to mental well-being.

From this story we may ask questions about our own lives. What unhealthy spirits are troubling us; what fears, false beliefs and emotional unbalances reside within us?

In what ways might our society lose its health, its balance, its sanity to something unclean or unhealthy?

Question: what would it mean for faith in the power of God to liberate us from unhealthy and unbalanced disorders?

Do you believe you can be set free and be restored to health?

Do you have faith that such a miracle could happen today, to us?

We accept that miracle stories intentionally stand on the line between believable and dismissable.

In so doing, they throw us off balance so that we see, think, imagine and feel in a new way.

People at that time, after witnessing the miracles of Jesus, felt their emptiness being filled to overflowing. They felt their anxiety and paranoia fade and in their place faith and courage grew. That is why these stories had to be told then and also today. You may or may not believe in literal miracles, but faith still works wonders.

Engage:

What one thought or idea from today's lesson impacted you?

If comfortable, share a story of a time that you felt you experienced a miracle or when you prayed for a miracle that didn't come?

Mediate:

Please sit comfortably and close your eyes. I want you to imagine an empty ceremonial stone container being filled with water and being transformed to wine.

Can you hear the sound of water filling to the brim?

Imagine seeing the water change in colour and taste the change in flavour as it becomes wine.

Hear the sound of people celebrating in the background.

Sit with the word Empty, full and transformed.

See what prayer takes shape in your heart.

Share if you wish.