

Why Doesn't God Talk Louder?

Atheists claim that if God is real, He would make Himself known better. They say He should write in the sky or speak from a megaphone or something. I asked my agnostic friend Chris what would convince him of God's existence. He said if God would produce a hamburger in front of him, he would believe. My friend was a little rotund at the time. I suggested that if God did that, he would probably come up with an alternative explanation for the hamburger's appearance. He agreed. Why doesn't God come riding on the clouds and announce His existence? Someday He intends to do just that. Revelation 1:7 quotes Daniel 7:13 and states, "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him." What the atheists desire will come to fruition, but then it will be too late for them. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says the cloud riding expedition to earth will be a noisy one with shouts, archangel's voices, and trumpets. Why does it seem like God is so quiet now? How does God speak at the present time? These are legitimate questions the agnostic is asking. Let's take a brief survey of how God has spoken in the past, then see some theological reasons why God is distant at the moment, and finally look at how God does speak today.

How God has spoken in the past

Before Adam and Eve sinned, the Bible says they walked with God in the cool of the day. What did this look like? God doesn't have a body; He is incorporeal, invisible (Col 1:15). Theologians call this the omnipresence of God; God is everywhere all at once and beyond. He is not bound to physical nature, because He created the entire physical realm out of nothing, *ex nihilo* as the Latins say it. Veggie Tales speaks of the universe when Larry the cucumber said, "God just went sphttt, and there it was." Walking with God is not exactly like taking a walk with your spouse, but it is just as intimate. God talked to Adam, taught him, and loved him with the deep love that only God could love with, infinite love – because God is love (1 Jn 4:8). But then Adam and Eve sinned. This brought the curse on the universe and on Adam and Eve and their entire progeny. Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden where God's presence was experienced and His voice heard. Things completely changed from then on, because God is holy (Lev 19:2). It is one of the greatest mysteries as to why Adam and Eve sinned. They had it made! Why would they choose to walk away from it all? Just because we might not have an explanation for something doesn't make it untrue, but apparently free will, which is necessary for real love, made it possible. Once they sinned, communication changed.

In the Bible we hear of instances where God talks to people, even after the fall (the fall is when Adam and Eve sinned). But what was it like? Genesis 4:26 states, "A son was born to Seth [Adam's third son] also, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD." Some began to call on the LORD, talk to God, after the fall. Genesis 5:24 says, "Enoch [a few generations later] walked with God; then he was not there because God took him." This passage seems to indicate intimacy and obedience at a level not seen yet, because "God took him." Hebrews 11:5 speaks of this incident as if Enoch never died; he pleased God immensely. But that was not the case for most of humanity. By Genesis 6 we encounter God's wrath with the flood due to the widespread wickedness of most of humanity. However, Noah found favor with God and walked with God (Gen 6:8-9). We still don't have any

indication of what this communication looked like outside of it being very special and intimate. The world didn't get any better after the flood. Humanity grew in numbers and in defiance of God, proving that the world didn't simply need a clean, fresh start. In Genesis 12 we see God's plan to work through an individual and his descendants as a people to reach all of humanity. Abraham was called a friend of God (Jm 2:23). In Genesis 12:3 God approached Abraham with an unconditional promise: "I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on the earth will be blessed through you." We still don't know exactly how God spoke to Abraham or the others before him. In Genesis 15 it says God spoke to Abraham, but verse 12 says he was in a deep sleep. There are several instances later of those hearing from God, but Moses becomes the mouthpiece for God and the initial solution as to how God would fulfill His promise to bless all the peoples on the earth.

How did God speak to Moses? At first, the Bible seems to contradict itself. Numbers 12:6-8 clarifies a special relationship with Moses unlike any other prophet:

Listen to what I say: If there is a prophet among you from the LORD, I make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my household. I speak with him directly, openly, and not in riddles; he sees the form of God.

In this passage, two things stick out: First, it says God's communication with Moses is unique. All other prophets hear God's voice in dreams and visions. The great prophet Isaiah, who had a close encounter of the infinite kind with God in Isaiah 6, described his reception of revelation as a vision (Isa 1:1). Only Moses heard God "mouth to mouth," which is the literal Hebrew of Numbers 12:8 and saw the form of God. This is such a unique encounter that Deuteronomy 34:10 concludes, "No prophet has arisen again in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face." Exodus 33:11 declares, "The LORD would speak with Moses face to face, just as a man speaks with his friend." Second, the passage above declares that Moses saw the form of God; that's the part that seems like a contradiction. How could Moses see God's form if God doesn't have a body? How could Moses see God when John 1:18 says, "No one has ever seen God"? Exodus gives us a clue. Right after Exodus 33:11 where it says God spoke to Moses face to face, Moses asks to see God's glory. God's answer is in verse 20: "You cannot see my face, for humans cannot see me and live." Some might suggest that Moses contradicted himself, but it is highly unlikely that he would do that within nine verses. In verses 21-23 God allows Moses to see His backside. What is this talking about? First, it must be stated that no human being can see the full, unmediated glory of God. We don't have the capacity to see His full glory, especially because of our sinful nature. But God can reveal Himself in glorious ways when He so chooses to. John 1:18 said, "no one has ever seen God," but then it continues, "The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side – he has revealed him." The doctrine of the Trinity is the explanation of the apparent contradiction. No one has seen God the Father, because He is Spirit, not flesh. But God the Son is able to take on human form, what theologians call a theophany. Ultimately, the Son permanently became human, taking on a second nature of humanity, without ceasing to be God at the incarnation and virgin birth. When God appears in a physical form, He cloaks His full glory so to speak. If we saw the full glory of God in our sinful state, we would incinerate. Our sin has distanced us from God, because God is holy (e.g. Ezra

9:15). But God has not given up on us, because God is love. God isn't clearer in His speech because of His love and His holiness.

Two theological reasons why God is distant

First, let's look at the "God's love" answer. Tom Gilson addresses it well; allow me to quote him at length:

"You say there are all these evidences for God, but I look at them, and every one of them can be interpreted another way. *Why doesn't God just prove Himself?*"

Someone asked that at a conference I was at last week. The speaker at the time, Sean McDowell (a frequent contributor here), answered by showing how many people disbelieved in Jesus, even when they had proof before their eyes. You'd think raising someone from the dead would be evidence enough. But when Jesus did that with Lazarus, they didn't all fall down and worship Him. Some of them tried to drive Him from town, and to kill Lazarus.

Why is that? I think it's because proof isn't all we need. Proof is on the outside. We need something else on the inside.

Consider Lawrence Krauss, one of the nation's leading physicists and most cantankerous atheists. I'll use him as my example here, since he's told us what would count as proof for him. He would believe God was real, he says, if something happened "completely inconsistent with the operation of the universe as we know it, something impossible. ... For instance, if the stars rearranged themselves to spell a different bible verse each night. Or if the tree in my front yard started growing KJV bibles instead of crabapples."

God isn't going to do that. I know that, you know that, and Dr. Krauss has shielded himself quite well from having to worry about God proving Himself, because he knows God won't do it, too.

But suppose God did do it. (We can learn something even by considering the impossible.) Then what?

From what I've read of Krauss's writings, he would admit he'd been wrong, and that God exists after all. Then from denying God, he would move immediately to resenting Him.

God's Goodness Isn't Just a Matter of 'Proof'

Bibles growing on crabapple trees wouldn't make anyone love God or trust Him, which is what God really wants. He doesn't just want people to believe that He is, but that He does good for those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6). He wants us to love Him. Part of loving God is loving what is really, truly good.

To do that, Krauss would have to see more than the fact that God exists. He would have to see His goodness. And then he would have to appreciate that goodness for what it is — which doesn't come automatically.

Real goodness isn't so easy to face. Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. He lived out God's goodness in unmatched fashion, as the one perfectly other-centered person who has ever lived. He alone was "the man for others," in Bonhoeffer's words.

Which poses a problem: If He can do it, why can't we? There's exactly one answer: Because He was truly good, and we aren't. That's a painful pill to swallow.

I can handle it, but only because I know His love extends to me, and it comes with the mercy and grace of forgiveness. But that takes the humility of accepting my real need for His grace.

God can only force so much on us. Yes, he could force the knowledge of His existence upon us just as the sun forces awareness of itself on us during the daytime, or as much as we're compelled to believe that 2 plus 2 equals 4.

God Cannot Force Love or Trust

God could make Dr. Krauss know His existence with the same complete certainty; He could "force assent" on him, as the philosophers say it, making it impossible for him not to believe.

But He cannot force anyone to love Him. *Knowledge* can be pressed upon a person; *love* cannot. A student doesn't become false or inauthentic when she is forced by the facts to believe that 2 plus 2 equals 4. But God can't force Krauss, or anyone else, for that matter, to love Him. Love must be freely offered, or it's fake and ugly.

It goes the same way with trust, too: No one — no sane person, anyway — has ever said, "You've got to trust me. Trust me from the heart. Trust me as one who has your best interests always in mind. *Otherwise I'm going to shoot you.*" Real trust can't be forced any more than real love can.

Even With Certainty We'd Still Face a Choice

So if God proved to Dr. Krauss that He exists, the famed physicist would still have to decide whether he wants God to exist. He'd have to decide whether he will bow to God's rule over all creation; whether he will recognize God's goodness; whether he will recognize his own need for grace in light of falling short of the truth.

God has given us plenty of evidence He's real — as long as we don't insulate ourselves from that knowledge, as Krauss did with his silly stars and crabapples. That's important, but by itself it's not enough. Getting the right answer to the question, "Does God exist?" isn't the point. God won't reduce Himself to being a mere true/false quiz answer. He wants us to know Him for who He is, and to love and trust Him for it.

That's a discovery we make through personal encounter — including our encounters with all the real evidence God has given. We can know God, but not if we're asking Him to show up as Bible verses sprouting on our trees. Do you want to know Him for real? Look for Him as He really is. By **TOM GILSON** Published on July 17, 2018

But what about God's holiness? This is the second theological reason for God's distance. Though the atheist might wish to see God appear before him, he would be sorry if God did. God is completely holy in his majestic perfection and cannot tolerate rebellion and sin. A sinner might not like this, but that is because all of us have been anesthetized by our sin. We don't think it is all that bad — but God knows it is infinitely evil, because it is an affront to His infinite perfection. In our day and age, we tend to emphasize the love of God to the neglect of His holiness. But a god who is only love is a half-god, and no true God at all. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come." In the Old Testament, God killed the two sons of Aaron because they offered "unauthorized fire before the LORD" (Lev 10:1-3). God explained, "I will demonstrate my holiness to those who are near me, and I will reveal my glory before all the people." Postmodern, feeling oriented people cannot swallow these kinds of passages, but that reveals more about us than it does about God. 2 Samuel 6 describes David bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem when Uzzah touched the ark to keep it from falling on the ground. Verse 7 states, "Then the LORD's anger burned against Uzzah, and God struck him dead on the spot for his irreverence, and he died there next to the ark of God." Once again, the squeamish agnostic is appalled at this killing, because he doesn't know how offensive sin is to God. Most unbelievers balk at hell, because they don't think it seems fair, but that is simply because they think they are better capable of deciding justice than the King of kings who is without sin. We can talk about the fairness of hell later, but it does reveal that God is holy. Our separateness from God is because of our sin. Being separate from God keeps us from hearing God clearly. He gives enough evidence to those who sincerely want to hear, but not enough to force the unwilling, unrepentant to capitulate. Stephen Kneal stated, "God has given enough evidence of his existence that everyone who would believe under any circumstances in him will believe in him under the circumstances he has given us."

How God speaks today

No one sees the full glory of God. A few select people had seriously close encounters with God to various degrees in the Old Testament. But Jesus is a gamechanger. Jesus, who is God, appeared on this planet to save us from our sin. By now we should all be wondering why He would even consider saving us. The proud atheist thinks he or she is worth God's approval, but the humble realist recognizes that none of us deserve to hear God. The two criminals on the crosses next to Jesus represent the two types of people in the world. The proud one rebuked Jesus, but the humble one retorted, "Don't you even fear God, since you are undergoing the same punishment? We are punished justly, because we're getting back what we deserve for the things we did, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Lk 23:40-42). How did this criminal know? Somehow the Creator of the universe spoke to him, and he listened. He made it to heaven, whereas the other one didn't. It is quite interesting that many who saw Jesus perform miracles and cast out demons, rejected Him. Revelation alone is not what we need. We must humbly submit to the voice when He speaks, however He chooses to speak. The proud atheist demands that God speak in such a way that they think is clear, not realizing that their sin precludes them from making any demands. But God does speak. He speaks through creation, He speaks in our conscience, He speaks through His word, He speaks to our heart with impressions that can come from dreams, visions, prophecies or a still, small voice, and He speaks through modern miracles. God speaks. Let's look at these different avenues of speech.

God speaks through creation. Psalm 19:1-4 declares:

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge.
There is no speech; there are no words; their voice is not heard. Their message has gone out to the whole earth, and their words to the ends of the world.

This speech is not just for the scientist or astronomer. It certainly entails the incredible scientific evidence that the universe had a beginning and was made by an intelligent designer, but it is speech for the common person as well. God somehow speaks to us through His creation without words. God impresses on our hearts that He exists. He does this in such a way that Romans 1:18-20 declares all of humanity is without excuse. When Bertrand Russell claimed if asked by God why he didn't believe in Him, and he said, "not enough evidence," God will show him the evidence, and he will respond, "guilty as charged." My book *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* reveals some of the philosophical evidence for God's existence, but even the illiterate can recognize that God speaks clearly. The question is, "Are we listening?" Typically, the humble, poor, and insignificant in the eyes of the world are the ones who listen (1 Cor 1:26-31), because "He gives greater grace. Therefore he says: God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). God gives enough evidence, enough speech, to the one who will listen, but not enough to the one who will trample the revelation. It is interesting that Jesus visited the woman at the well in John 4, even though she was married five times and was living with a guy at the time. Jesus forgave her and loved her. The woman caught in adultery in John 8 was forgiven and loved on by Jesus, though He did tell her to stop sinning. These two outcasts were

welcomed by Jesus, because they humbly accepted Him. But Jesus left the Pharisees alone. In Matthew 23 he stated three times they were going to hell, but there isn't any indication that He went after them. He did perform miracles in front of them, but He knew they wouldn't accept Him, because of their pride. Are we like the Pharisee or the humble sinner? Our attitude apparently determines our ability to hear. God has spoken through His creation.

God speaks to our conscience. Romans 2:15 tells us, "They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences confirm this." God gives a basic understanding of His moral law to everyone on the planet. We sear our consciences as we get older, but we are still held accountable. C.S. Lewis' work *Mere Christianity* gives an excellent presentation of this proof of God's existence. Even atheists have a basic moral code that they borrowed from Christianity all the while castigating the source. God has spoken through the conscience.

God speaks through His word, the Bible, the loudest and clearest. According to 2 Peter 1:20-21, God spoke through His prophets in such a way that didn't disparage their personalities and culture, but it resulted in a word that was transcultural. Even the prophets themselves longed to look into these things. But why did God take so long to reveal the full word? 1 Corinthians 2:8 reveals that God kept His ultimate plan incognito so as not to tip off the devil. He wrote it in such a way that after the coming of Jesus, His death and resurrection, we could look back at the revelation and realize God predicted the whole thing all along. The brilliance of God is declared in the writing of the Bible, except to the sceptic that gets caught up in wondering why Moses didn't write like a 21st century philosopher. For the incredible evidence for the supernatural nature of the Bible, please read my book *The Uniqueness of the Bible*. But the non-philosopher need not worry; they can still hear the voice of God in the pages of Scripture, because it wasn't only written for the educated academician. Many a commoner has heard the voice of Yahweh in the writings of the prophets. They could declare with the psalmist, "Your instruction is my delight" (Psalm 119:77), and "Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105), while the agnostic walks away in silence. God speaks through His word.

God speaks to our heart with impressions that can come from dreams, visions, prophecies or a still, small voice. An impression is not the same as vocal words, but it is still the voice of God. God's speech is always gracious, undeserved and always satisfying to the soul of the humble; "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs" (Mt 5:3). God miraculously speaks through dreams, visions, and prophecies. He still does this today. For those who doubt, just read Acts 2:16-21 which clearly states that dreams and visions will last until Jesus comes back and will be prevalent to God's people. God likes to talk to His kids. Jesus said in John 10:27, "My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me." God also speaks to us through the still, small voice; at least that is the King James translation. God spoke to the prophet Elijah, when he was in distress. It wasn't through the mighty wind, the earthquake, or the fire. 1 Kings 19:12 says "there was a voice, a soft whisper." Loud enough for the willing to hear, but not loud enough to force the recalcitrant to listen. I can't tell you all the times I have heard this sweet sound, sweeter than honey and more beautiful than the song of a yellow warbler. Some might call this subjective. Of course its subjective; it's extremely personal. God loves every single human on this planet and desires a personal relationship with him or her, if that person will humbly repent of their sin, place their faith in Christ and His finished work on the cross, and follow Jesus, listening to Him. There is the objective word of God in the Bible.

There is the clear word of God in the creation and conscience, and there is the objective speech in modern miracles as we will see, but the personal voice of the Father is precious; please don't slight it by calling it subjective as if that were a dirty word. Impressions need to be tested, and they are not as clear as we sometimes would like, but they are wonderful and powerful. Though we don't know exactly how God spoke to the ancients mentioned at the beginning of this paper, we can guess that it was to their heart rather than an audible voice. Some today think the five physical senses are more real than the feelings of the heart, but as far as importance is concerned, it would seem the heart is more important than the head. The head is a means to the heart, but God can go directly to the heart if He so chooses. God's heart speech is the most precious. Even in the objective word in the Bible, when it penetrates our hard hearts and warms us up to God's love for us, it produces what God intended when He wrote it. When I read that Jesus died for me and that He rose from the dead to prove it, I cheer at the mention of the resurrection, but I weep with responsive love when reminded of His tortuous death for me, when I deserved the opposite. His death and resurrection speaks volumes, loud and clear, to our hearts as well as our minds, at least to the undeserving. There are proud, modern day Pharisees, who think they don't need a savior; they typically don't hear God's voice. But God is speaking even to them, because He loves them and doesn't want anyone to perish. God went to the extent of paying His own demanded penalty for sin – the wrath of God – while hanging on the cross, those six hours, that one Friday. The caricatures painted by the modern memesters of a mean god exacting payment from those He purposely doesn't talk to, don't reflect the true God at all. God doesn't force His gift on anyone, but He offers it to all.

God also speaks through modern miracles. If you have never experienced a bona fide miracle, then let me say that you are missing out. Some have wondered why God doesn't do more miracles, but if He did, it would force the unwilling to capitulate or damn them worse than they already are (Mat 11:20-24). God knows when it is best to perform miracles, far better than we do. But He does still do miracles today, a lot. Habakkuk prayed a great prayer in Habakkuk 3:2: "LORD, I have heard the report about you; LORD, I stand in awe of your deeds. Revive your work in these years; make it known in these years. In your wrath remember mercy!" That's a great prayer! Basically, he is saying, "Do it again God!" Of course, unless it is God's will, He is not just going to perform for the person who pulls the right strings (1 Jn 5:14-15). But He does invite us to ask (Mt 7:7-11). The more we ask, with a heart of compassion for the hurting, the more we will see the miraculous hand of God. God uses signs and wonders to draw people to Himself (Mk 16:20; Acts 8:4-8). We live in a broken world, and this world is not our home, so God doesn't answer all of our prayers. He allows pain and evil in this world for a time, but He will stop it and bring justice in the end. But in the end, it will be too late. He is waiting patiently now, so that as many as possible will come to repentance (2 Pe 3:8-9). I am attaching as an appendix a paper I wrote of the miracles I have seen. I hope they convince you to at least seek God again. God has spoken clearly. He is God and we are not, so we don't get to dictate to God how we want Him to speak, but He does speak. Will you listen? To the agnostic, I hope I have answered some of your questions. My heart goes out to you. Life is complex. We don't want to be duped. I believe God loves you and will talk to you, if you are open. Please listen. If you have any other questions, please contact me.

Appendix: Modern Miracles

Are miracles real? In the movie *Breakthrough* we hear of the report of 14-year-old John Smith of Saint Louis who fell through the ice. Two miracles are reported: first, the first responders were searching for the boy using long hooks to catch the body. They start from one end of the hole in the ice and work their way to the other end. One of the responders hears his chief telling him to go back. This was unusual procedure, but he does it and finds the boy. This responder was an atheist before this event. When he got out of the ice, he discovered that his chief never said anything. It would appear that something supernatural took place with a voice that no one else heard except the atheist. The boy had no pulse or breath and was taken to the local hospital. He was pronounced dead and Joyce, his mother, was allowed to go in the room to say goodbye. She prayed for the Holy Spirit to come and save her son, and a pulse was immediately registered. The timing of the prayer and the voice beforehand, both argue strongly that a miracle took place. This miracle was very public and can be verified. I don't know these people, but I believe their story. You can talk to John, Joyce and Tommy (the first responder who got saved after this event) and see for yourself. There are many other stories like this that demand an explanation. If it is a miracle, then a supernatural realm exists. I have also seen many miracles that defy natural law. I want to share the account of the miracles I have seen.

When I was 21, I heard God speak to me in a vision. I was wide awake. I had just recently surrendered to Jesus as my Lord, quit drugs, sex, etc. and began to really follow Jesus after an amazing encounter with the Holy Spirit where I experienced euphoria that I cannot even describe and received the gift of tongues. About six months after my surrender, I heard God say that I was supposed to take my stepdad, Rick, to Montgomery Alabama and pray for his healing, go to Fort Worth Texas and rescue my friend, Ken Faupel, from a cult, and then move to Arizona to go to Bible college to get prepared to go into the ministry. My call into ministry was unusual and very specific. I asked my stepdad, and he said he would go. We drove down to Alabama, took out a phone book and blindly pointed our finger in the yellow pages under churches and called the church my finger landed on. They said they pray for healing, so we went to the church. The pastor and I placed our hands on Rick's head, and the pastor prayed a simple prayer. He looked up to me in shock and asked, "Did you feel that?" I said, "I sure did." I felt electricity go from my hands into Rick's head. The pastor asked Rick if he felt it, and he said he didn't. The pastor gave him the advice that he shouldn't stop taking his pills until God verified to him that he was healed. Rick had grand mal seizures and was on Dilantin. When Rick got home, his dog Puggie began to have seizures, giving Rick an indication that God had taken his seizures off of him and placed them on the dog. Rick stopped taking his pills and has never had a seizure since; that was 38 years ago. Rick took me to Fort Worth Texas, where he dropped me off and went back home to Minnesota. I called Ken, who I hadn't talked to in over a year and had no idea that he was in a cult or even going church. He took me in and said that he was going to a church, but he didn't think it was a cult. I asked him about it and found out that a group from New Mexico had moved to Fort Worth at the command of the pastor. It was very legalistic, demanding all members to wear long sleeves and pants, even in the summer. I told him to call the pastor and invite him over. The pastor came over and I asked him questions on salvation. He clearly believed in works righteousness. As we were talking, Ken said, "Larry,

you are right. This is a cult.” The pastor angrily left, and I helped Ken find a better church. He met his wife at that new church. I hitchhiked to Arizona and went to Grand Canyon College (now University) to study to be a pastor. My stepdad was miraculously healed, my friend was rescued from a cult from a word of knowledge that I couldn’t have ordinarily known, and I began to be trained to be a pastor, all from a vision from God; that was my first miraculous encounter with God.

When I was in my first year of seminary at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, I experienced another miracle. I rode with Becky to church from the seminary in New Orleans to church in Kenner, LA about 30-45 minutes away, depending on traffic. One day it was raining and then the sun came out, blinding us. We both reached for our sunglasses, and then looking up saw a car stopped in the middle of the highway. We were traveling around 55mph. I won’t tell you my first reaction, but Becky immediately called out to God, saying, “God help us!” She then jerked the steering wheel to the right without being able to even check to see if it was clear. The next part was the miracle. We both saw her left front bumper pass through the right rear bumper of the stalled car without hitting it. If it was only me, I could have chalked this up as a flashback from my drug days, but Becky, who was raised a Christian and never did drugs, saw the same thing. We both yelled in unison, “Did you see that?” We got to church and told our college and career group the story of the miracle. Everyone was amazed. We saw a miracle.

When Elizabeth and I were first married, I took her back with me to New Orleans from Orlando, to finish my last year of seminary. She had just found a job, but we had no money for rent. We went to church on a Sunday and the pastor had a word that someone was struggling financially and should come up for prayer. No one did. As we were driving home, Elizabeth asked me, “Don’t you think that word was for us?” I said, “Yes.” She asked, “Then why didn’t you go up?” I said, “Because of my pride.” I agreed to go early for Sunday evening service and confess to the pastor. I told the pastor and then he prayed a simple prayer and asked me to let him know when the prayer was answered. We needed exactly 200 dollars for rent by the next day. Immediately after the prayer, a lady in our church came up to us and said, “Larry, I felt God tell me to give you this. I was going to give it to you this morning, but I got sidetracked.” It was a check for 100 dollars. I’m sure she got sidetracked because of my disobedience. I told the pastor we got half of it. The next morning in the mail I received a check for 100 dollars from a fellow student at seminary who said he felt led by God to give this to me. Neither the lady nor the student could have known our need. We saw a miracle of provision for the exact amount we needed on the day it was needed. Some could call this coincidence, and I would say, “I’ll take those kinds of coincidences.”

Elizabeth and I drove out west after I graduated in a small Isuzu Imark. We were being blown all over the road because of the wind. We stopped at a rest area where Elizabeth used the bathroom. I was waiting outside, and I sensed God tell me to go over and talk to a biker about Jesus. I went over to a guy who looked very dangerous; I usually joke saying he looked like he just killed his mother. I talked to him about his motorcycle. I grew up owning motorcycles. I asked how he was doing in the wind, because our car was being blown all over the road. He said it was very difficult, but he had to make it to L.A. in time. I told him that I believed Jesus

told me to talk to him, so I asked him if he knew what would happen to him if he died that day. He said, "Yes, I would be incarnated." I thought, "Oh." I asked if I could pray for him, and he said yes. I am not sure what came over me, well, I do know it was the Holy Spirit, and I began to pray: "Dear Lord, please help my friend today. Give him a nice ride the rest of his trip and cause the wind to die down in such a miraculous way that he knows it is from you and that reincarnation is a lie and that Jesus is the only way to heaven." I expected to get wacked upside the head, but when I looked up, he said, "Thank you." My wife came out of the bathroom and was wondering what I was doing talking to a biker. We got in the car and within a minute the wind died down completely for the entire rest of the trip. I expect to see my friend in heaven.

When I was pastoring in Orlando, we met a couple who were previously living on the street, Randy and Lee Saturland. They both got saved, but Randy had a difficult time stopping alcohol. He ended up in the hospital and diagnosed with liver cirrhosis. He had experienced septic shock and went into renal failure. The doctor said it had gone too far and there was nothing further they could do. He said he would die within a day or two. We prayed at the hospital. While praying he came awake and said he felt fine. He was released the next day with no complications at all. Some could say that it was misdiagnosed, but the timing of the recovery with prayer rules out a natural explanation. We saw a miracle.

While in Orlando, I had a vision at church of a needle. Sharon Zidek said she thought it meant that God wanted to heal someone. Sharon volunteered to receive prayer. She was scheduled for surgery the next day on Monday for her thumb. I believe it was a torn ligament. She couldn't move her thumb. When she was prayed for, she felt something and then began to move her thumb. She was completely healed with no pain and full use of her thumb. She said, "Look, I can move my thumb" and proceeded to move it all around. Monday morning, she went to work, where she was the manager of the Kentucky Fried Chicken. Her employees asked her why she came to work when she was supposed to have surgery. They didn't like the fact that they were going to have to work more while she recovered. She said, "Look, I got healed in church" and showed them her thumb. They all came to church the next Sunday and got saved. They are still living for Jesus to this day. We all saw a miracle.

Nancy was from Scotland, married to Tony Losey. In our Life Group, she sensed that God wanted to heal her husband so he wouldn't have to have surgery. He was scheduled for an angioplasty procedure because of his heart. We prayed, even though he wasn't there. The doctors checked him and found his arteries were fine and canceled the angioplasty. Tony was healed.

One time in Life Group at Orlando, we had a visitor. A lady from Boston had called previously and wanted to visit a Life Group (we called them Kinship Groups back then) while she was in town. She came to ours. God gave me a vision of a giant dinosaur egg. Nancy said she thought it meant that the lady was going to have a baby. The lady began to cry and confessed that she and her husband were trying to get pregnant but couldn't. We prayed. About two months later, she called the church office and told me that she was pregnant. I have seen a few other people

who couldn't get pregnant get pregnant after prayer. Coincident or miracle? The timing would lean toward the truth that we saw a miracle. I am not sure why it was a *dinosaur* egg.

We moved to Colorado to pastor at the Colorado Springs Vineyard. A man named Ross, that was his last name, but that was what he liked to be called, came to our church. He had diabetes and prostate cancer that he was taking chemotherapy for. One Sunday, I felt that God wanted a group to gather around Ross and pray for him. I was not involved in the prayer. A month later he came to the office. He said that he felt something that day, but he wanted to make sure he was healed. He stopped taking insulin and his PSA levels had gone down to normal, indicating that his treatment worked. He was healed of cancer and diabetes. Some could say that the treatment healed him of the cancer, and they could be right, though the timing was pretty good. But Ross had type one diabetes, which is incurable. He was cured by prayer. Another man in our church in Colorado named Fred was also healed of type one diabetes. We also had an elder at church, Dan, who had diabetes, but he wasn't healed. Dan was the most dedicated to God out of the three, but he wasn't healed. Why God heals some and not others is a mystery, but it was clear that we saw a miracle in both Ross and Fred.

Jack Frank was another elder at our church in Colorado. He and his wife were members of the seven-footer club; they were very tall. Jack was diagnosed with Familial Adenomatous Polyposis Syndrome, where he had hundreds of polyps in his colon. The doctor recommended that he have his colon removed, because the polyps would eventually become cancerous even if initially removed. It was a hard pill to swallow. Jack got a second opinion that gave the same diagnosis and treatment. Neither doctor removed the polyps, because they were going to remove the colon. Jack wanted to get a third opinion from the best at the Mayo Clinic. He told the other elders about it. I suggested that we pray and that I could go with him, because my family lived in Rochester. Jack, his wife Ginger and I drove to Rochester. When he got there, the doctor examined him and said there were no polyps in his colon, just a couple nubs he said. Jack said, "You saw the reports from the other two doctors; that they didn't remove the polyps. I am a Christian and I received prayer before I got here. I believe I was healed." The doctor said, "I am also a Christian. I guess we know where the polyps went." Jack did not have to lose his colon. We saw a miracle.

In Colorado, a group of us gathered to pray and seek God. Matt Dragon's brother Zach came with his foot wrapped up, because he had hurt it; he thought he might have broken it. We prayed for him, and then he felt something in his ankle. He leaped up and began dancing, shouting that he had been healed. He was not a believer until that day.

We moved to New York to teach at Elim Bible Institute. We never saw any miracles in New York, but we were led to New York in part by a dream from my son Isaac. We went to Colorado prior to that in part by a dream from my son Daniel. I believe God can lead by dreams and visions, which are miraculous. After five years in New York, we moved to Minnesota.

I have now pastored in Minnesota for twelve years. I have not personally seen as many miracles as in the past, but our church has experienced some healings. My son Daniel was in a coma for

two weeks and the doctors told us to prepare for the worst. We prayed and he woke up the same hour I came to see him (Elizabeth was there for the whole two weeks praying). His first words were, "Am I in Minnesota?" He was in California as a Marine but saw us and was wearing a Vikings shirt. The nurses were all amazed at his recovery. He still suffers from cognitive fatigue and migraines, but he is alive and well, living for Jesus. Kathy Mayhew's mother was recently healed of diabetes; she is in her 90's. Kathy Mayhew was healed of stage three cancer around the same time – because of prayer. Marian Lahr received prayer in church after a word of knowledge and she immediately felt healed in both of her knees. She said that before the healing she was seriously considering retiring but now doesn't have to. Jim Rau received prayer in the prayer room at church and his bone spurs disappeared. Leon Raiter was pronounced basically a vegetable after a heart attack. The doctor said he had little to no brain function and would probably not recover. The family was talking about taking him off life support. A group of us went to pray for him, but his sister tried to keep us out of the room. I boldly said, "God led us to come here and pray for Leon. The Bible says to lay hands on him, so we are going to do that." We prayed and he started to have brain function. Shortly after that, I think the next day, he woke up. He is not completely healed, but he is alive, walking and talking. He is a miracle. Krystal Hilsen was suffering from stomach issues that would come just before Life Group and church, keeping her from fellowship. It went on for about a year. She called the elders to come and pray for her. We went over, gave words of exhortation, cast out demons and prayed for her. It has been a month now and she hasn't had any more stomach problems. God is sovereign in healing. He knows the big picture far better than we do. John Wimber once said that God made a deal with him. If John didn't take the credit for when God healed someone, he didn't have to take the blame for when God didn't heal. Too many miracles that would force the unwilling to yield without love, would be counterproductive. God knows exactly when and how to do miracles for His glory and our good. This world is not our home. We will suffer in many ways. We live in a broken world that won't get fixed until Jesus comes back. Pain and difficulties can be used by God to strengthen us. But God does still heal. Miracles are evidence that God exists, and He cares. Most people don't get dramatically healed when we pray, but the more we pray, the more we will experience God's miracles.

If you have not personally experienced a miracle, personal testimonies can be used as evidence to lead you or someone you want saved to Christ. Personal eyewitness testimony from credible witnesses is used regularly in the court of law to prove innocence or guilt. Eyewitness testimony is a valid source of knowledge. Many Christians have experienced miracles. Ask Christians and share your own testimony. Modern miracles do occur, revealing that God is alive and well.

Appendix: Summary of evidence

There is enough evidence for God to convince the willing but not enough to force the unwilling. God wants faith, and love demands free will. For more evidence, see my book *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*. First, there are three options for the existence of the universe: 1) It is eternal. Science and logic reveal that the universe had a beginning, so this possibility is unlikely. 2) The universe created itself. This is illogical, because it would already have to exist in order to create. 3) Something powerful and intelligent outside of the physical realm created it. This is the most likely. We call Him God. Second, the universe appears to be designed. The most likely explanation for this appearance of design is that it was designed by an Intelligent Designer. Third, science reveals that only life can produce life. But what about the first life? The non-scientific idea that somehow non-living material came together and produced life with all of its amazing DNA, self-replicating ability and survivability is virtually impossible. Believing the scientific idea that Life produced the first life fits better with the evidence. Non-physical life (God) produced physical life and kept it going to where we are today. Fourth, humans have both a material and non-material aspect to who they are. We have a soul that lives on after death. There is a difference between the mind and the brain. We have free will, we have the ability to love, we know there are ethical absolutes, and near-death experiences (NDE), all of which reveal that we have a soul, which is not possible in a purely physical world. Fifth, the Bible has incredible evidence for its supernatural nature. See my book *The Uniqueness of the Bible* for the evidence for the Bible. Some people try to point out errors or things they don't like, but none of it disproves the evidence. Sixth, Jesus' death and resurrection make the most sense of the historical evidence that we have; we can always look for a loophole, but why do we want one? Jesus rose from the dead, verifying everything He said and did. No other religion compares. Seventh, personal testimonies, including my own, of meeting Jesus personally and seeing miracles must be considered. Mass hallucination, deception or conspiracy do not answer the millions of testimonies of personal experience and changed lives. With this kind of evidence and none to the contrary, why would we not believe? God has spoken in the way He believes is sufficient. Listen and your life will be changed. For more information see the resources at www.harvestmn.com. There is a paper there on "The problem of evil and suffering." There is also a paper on "Slavery in the Bible."