



“miracles” of healing. People who have conditions that would be obvious if not cured (e.g., skin cancer on the forehead or a quadriplegic) are barred and sent to a side area to fend for themselves. NBC traced the story of an 8-year-old girl with a neuromuscular disease, who wanted healing prayer, but was denied access. How does this kind of thing make you feel? As people of faith, how should we deal with the reputational risk these kinds of hucksters present to the Gospel?

6. **Point Five: Despite the fakes, there are a lot of genuinely credible miracle stories out there.** Jeff shared several from the life of our church family: (a) Ann Bingman was warned by a voice to move her mower shortly before a dump truck crashed through; (b) a lump on Rob Connoley’s back disappeared the day after Deacon Mike laid hands on it and prayed; and (c) the niece of Robbie Patrick was told in advance in a dream that her Grandma was coming to take Robbie to Heaven.
  - a. What do you make of stories like these? Do you believe them? Why or why not?
  - b. When in your life have you experienced – or observed – something miraculous?
7. Read II Corinthians 12:1-10. What does this passage teach us about when, why, and how often we should expect miracles to occur?
8. Jeff shared his personal view that miracles happen occasionally, but that for the most part God wants us to live without miracles. If God intervened too often, Jeff said, “God would become like a helicopter parent forcing so many outcomes that our freedom would be lost, our choices would cease to have meaning, and we could become so dependent on miracles we would lose all motivation to do for ourselves (because God’s gonna fix everything anyway). The net result would be disruption of our developmental potential and all God wants to teach us through life in our earthly reality.” Critique that perspective. What resonates? What doesn’t?
9. St. Ignatius said, “Pray as if everything depends on God; act as if everything depends on you.” William Carey said, “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.” In a sense, both these quotes are hopelessly contradictory. They invite us to live in the tension between the boundaries of space-time reality and God’s boundless power, never quite knowing how much is up to us and how much is up to God. What’s your take on these quotes? Good advice or not? And why?
10. On Sunday we watched a video clip from NBC following up on the story of the little girl – Grace Brewlott – who wanted healing, but was not allowed on stage by the televangelist. Three years later, the girl’s neuromuscular disease still cripples her body, but her soul is full of faith. Her mother said, “Her character has developed and she’s flourishing.” We saw her play Tchaikovsky on the piano with clutched fingers and sing in front of her church. What lessons can we learn from Grace’s example?
11. Given all we’ve discussed, where would you place yourself on the miracle scale laid out on p. 1 of our discussion guide – and why? Has your view evolved because of our conversation? If so, how?

## Daniel 14, New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition

### Daniel and the Priests of Bel

<sup>1</sup> When King Astyages was laid to rest with his ancestors, Cyrus the Persian succeeded to his kingdom. <sup>2</sup> Daniel was a companion of the king, and was the most honored of all his Friends.

<sup>3</sup> Now the Babylonians had an idol called Bel, and every day they provided for it twelve bushels of choice flour and forty sheep and six measures<sup>[a]</sup> of wine. <sup>4</sup> The king revered it and went every day to worship it. But Daniel worshiped his own God. So the king said to him, “Why do you not worship Bel?” <sup>5</sup> He answered, “Because I do not revere idols made with hands, but the living God, who created heaven and earth and has dominion over all living creatures.”

<sup>6</sup> The king said to him, “Do you not think that Bel is a living god? Do you not see how much he eats and drinks every day?” <sup>7</sup> And Daniel laughed, and said, “Do not be deceived, O king, for this thing is only clay inside and bronze outside, and it never ate or drank anything.”

<sup>8</sup> Then the king was angry and called the priests of Bel<sup>[b]</sup> and said to them, “If you do not tell me who is eating these provisions, you shall die. <sup>9</sup> But if you prove that Bel is eating them, Daniel shall die, because he has spoken blasphemy against Bel.” Daniel said to the king, “Let it be done as you have said.”

<sup>10</sup> Now there were seventy priests of Bel, besides their wives and children. So the king went with Daniel into the temple of Bel. <sup>11</sup> The priests of Bel said, “See, we are now going outside; you yourself, O king, set out the food and prepare the wine, and shut the door and seal it with your signet. <sup>12</sup> When you return in the morning, if you do not find that Bel has eaten it all, we will die; otherwise Daniel will, who is telling lies about us.” <sup>13</sup> They were unconcerned, for beneath the table they had made a hidden entrance, through which they used to go in regularly and consume the provisions. <sup>14</sup> After they had gone out, the king set out the food for Bel. Then Daniel ordered his servants to bring ashes, and they scattered them throughout the whole temple in the presence of the king alone. Then they went out, shut the door and sealed it with the king’s signet, and departed. <sup>15</sup> During the night the priests came as usual, with their wives and children, and they ate and drank everything.

<sup>16</sup> Early in the morning the king rose and came, and Daniel with him. <sup>17</sup> The king said, “Are the seals unbroken, Daniel?” He answered, “They are unbroken, O king.” <sup>18</sup> As soon as the doors were opened, the king looked at the table, and shouted in a loud voice, “You are great, O Bel, and in you there is no deceit at all!”

<sup>19</sup> But Daniel laughed and restrained the king from going in. “Look at the floor,” he said, “and notice whose footprints these are.” <sup>20</sup> The king said, “I see the footprints of men and women and children.” <sup>21</sup> Then the king was enraged, and he arrested the priests and their wives and children. They showed him the secret doors through which they used to enter to consume what was on the table. <sup>22</sup> Therefore the king put them to death, and gave Bel over to Daniel, who destroyed it and its temple.