

Has the Day of Miracles Ceased?

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Our supreme focus should be on the spiritual miracles that are available to all of God's children.

A year ago, on assignment in the state of California, I went with a stake president to visit with Clark and Holly Fales and their family in their home. I was told they recently had experienced a miracle. Upon our arrival, Clark struggled to stand and greet us as he was wearing a back brace, a neck brace, and braces on his arms.

Just over two months prior, Clark, his son Ty, and about 30 other young men and leaders set out on a stake high-adventure activity, hiking to the 14,180-foot (4,322 m) summit of Mount Shasta, one of the highest peaks in California. On the second day of the arduous hike, most of the climbers reached the summit—a thrilling accomplishment made possible because of months of preparation.

One of the first people to the top that day was Clark. After a brief rest near the edge of the summit, he stood and began to walk. As he did, he tripped and fell backward over the edge of a cliff, suffering a free fall of about 40 feet (12 m) and then an out-of-control tumble down the icy slope for another 300 feet (91 m). Remarkably, Clark survived, but he was severely injured and unable to move.

The miracles Clark experienced during this traumatic event were just beginning. Some of the first to reach him “happened” to be a group of hikers that included mountain rescue guides and emergency medical professionals. They immediately treated Clark for shock and provided gear to keep him warm. This group also “happened” to be testing a new communication device and sent an emergency request for help from an area where cell phones could not get a signal. A small helicopter was immediately dispatched to Mount Shasta from an hour away. After two dangerous but unsuccessful attempts to land at an altitude that pushed the limits of the aircraft, and struggling with treacherous wind conditions, the pilot began a third and final try. As the helicopter approached from a different angle, the winds “happened” to change and the aircraft landed just long enough for the group to quickly and painfully squeeze Clark into the small compartment behind the pilot's seat.

When Clark was evaluated at a trauma center, tests revealed that he had sustained multiple fractures in his neck, back, ribs, and wrists; a punctured lung; and a multitude of cuts and abrasions. A renowned neurotrauma surgeon “happened” to be on duty

that day; he is at this hospital only a few times a year. This doctor later stated that he had never seen anyone sustain so much damage to the spinal cord and carotid arteries and live. Clark was not only expected to live but to return to full function. Describing himself as agnostic, the surgeon said Clark's case went against all his scientific learning about neurological injuries and could only be described as a miracle.

As Clark and Holly finished relating this intense account, I found it difficult to speak. It was not simply because of the obvious miracles, but because of a greater one. I had a profound impression—a spiritual witness—that Holly and each of the five beautiful children who sat in the living room around their parents have such faith that they could have accepted whatever the outcome might have been that day and they still would have spiritually prospered. Clark and Holly and their two oldest children, Ty and Porter, are with us today in the Conference Center.

In pondering the experience of the Fales family, I have thought much about the circumstances of so many others. What about the innumerable faith-filled, priesthood-blessing-receiving, unendingly-prayed-for, covenant-keeping, full-of-hope Latter-day Saints whose miracle never comes? At least in the way they understand a miracle. At least in the way that others appear to receive miracles.

What about those who suffer from profound afflictions—physically, mentally, emotionally—for years or for decades or for their entire mortal life? What about those who die so very young?

Just two months ago, two temple-recommend-holding married couples, with three full-time missionary children and five other children between them, took off in a small airplane for a short flight. I am confident they prayed for safety before the flight and prayed fervently when their aircraft encountered serious mechanical problems before crashing. None survived. What about them?

Do good people and their loved ones have reason to ask the question posed by Mormon: "Has the day of miracles ceased?"¹

My limited knowledge cannot explain why sometimes there is divine intervention and other times there is not. But perhaps we lack an understanding of what constitutes a miracle.

Often we describe a miracle as being healed without a full explanation by medical science or as avoiding catastrophic danger by heeding a clear prompting. However, defining a *miracle* as "a beneficial event brought about through divine power that mortals do not understand"² gives an expanded perspective into matters more eternal in nature. This definition also allows us to contemplate the vital role of faith in the receipt of a miracle.

Moroni taught, "Neither at any time hath any wrought miracles until after their faith."³ Ammon proclaimed, "God has provided a means that man, through faith, might work

mighty miracles."⁴ The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith, "For I am God, ... and I will show miracles ... unto all those who believe on my name."⁵

King Nebuchadnezzar demanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego worship the golden image he set up as a god, threatening, "If ye worship not, ye shall be cast ... into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." Then he taunted them with "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"⁶

These three devout disciples said: "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. ... But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods."⁷

They possessed full confidence that God could save them, "but if not," they had complete faith in His plan.

Similarly, Elder David A. Bednar once asked a young man who had requested a priesthood blessing, "If it is the will of our Heavenly Father that you are transferred by death in your youth to the spirit world to continue your ministry, do you have the faith to submit to His will and not be healed?"⁸ Do we have the faith "not [to] be healed" from our earthly afflictions so we might be healed eternally?

A critical question to ponder is "Where do we place our faith?" Is our faith focused on simply wanting to be relieved of pain and suffering, or is it firmly centered on God the Father and His holy plan and in Jesus the Christ and His Atonement? Faith in the Father and the Son allows us to understand and accept Their will as we prepare for eternity.

Today I testify of miracles. Being a child of God is a miracle.⁹ Receiving a body in His image and likeness is a miracle.¹⁰ The gift of a Savior is a miracle.¹¹ The Atonement of Jesus Christ is a miracle.¹² The potential for eternal life is a miracle.¹³

While it is good to pray for and work for physical protection and healing during our mortal existence, our supreme focus should be on the spiritual miracles that are available to all of God's children. No matter our ethnicity, no matter our nationality, no matter what we have done if we repent, no matter what may have been done to us—all of us have equal access to these miracles. We are living a miracle, and further miracles lie ahead. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.