

prologue

The question is simple. Does God speak to his children, act supernaturally in their lives, and perform miracles today like he did throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament? Throughout this book, the attempt will be made to answer that specific, yet in many ways, complex question. Does a relational God who chooses to reveal Himself by displaying his power, wonder, and majesty throughout the Bible still do those same things today? Does this Father of the Bible, who chose to be intimate in His children's lives, still communicate in a similar way today? Based upon the experiential evidence that support the affirmative to the previous question, you will be faced to make a choice. You will be forced to choose this day what kind of God you serve: a God who has shown Himself in Scripture and has since become remote or a God who revealed Himself in splendor through mighty ways in the past and is still revealing Himself in those same ways today. Throw aside your presumptions, your prejudices, your experiences, and open your heart to the possibility of God's movement in your life today. You may just begin to enter a new dimension that is beyond the five senses.

I remember it vividly. I was teaching seventh grade at Sunset Beach Christian School on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. I had just graduated from college and moved to the island with my new bride. One evening, I was walking on Sunset Beach with my wife when I heard the cry of a person in the rough waters of the churning sea. Now, if you have ever been to the North Shore of Oahu, then you would undoubtedly be familiar with the huge waves that host beaches such as Pipeline, Waimea Bay, and Kahuku. It is truly some of the best surfing turfs this side of eternity. It was on that seven-mile strip of beach that my wife and I were enjoying a sunset stroll on the soft, white sand. About twenty yards into the surf was a bobbing head screaming for help as wave after wave began to take its toll on the teenager.

(Now, let me take a brief moment to explain a certain male desire that is inherently bred into each young boy. Each one of us has this certain macho charisma that wants to display itself to the world especially when crucial times in life take a frontal assault on our egos. We want to make the most of a moment and become the hero that people would respect and honor.)

It was with this attitude and mindset that I remember taking a short, yet confident step toward the drowning teenager. Then, I stopped. My heart started making that odd creep up the throat as I swallowed hard attempting to dislodge the feeling. I was contemplating my next move when a dark, native Hawaiian came zooming behind me and racing toward the foaming waters of the North Shore. He dove effortlessly into the crashing waves, surfaced near the victim, easily maneuvered through the white foam to grab the teen, and brought him safely toward the shore. I stood there frozen as the rescue took a matter of moments. As the danger subsided, those walking on the beach went back to their strolls down the white, sandy shoreline.

But, I had a thought.

The only person that could save another person's life in that rugged and dangerous surf was someone who was native to that land, someone who knew the terrain, someone who was intimate with every detail of the landscape both on and off the shoreline. That was the only viable candidate. Only someone who was truly confident in his ability, knowledge, and determination could have rescued that teen. If you could only have seen the surf that day, then you would agree that a "getting-quickly-out-of-shape twenty-five year old" from the east coast would not only have been unsuccessful in his attempt to rescue the teenager, but he would have become victim number two. Only someone native to that land was capable of such a rescue.

Many of us have become victim to similar circumstances in life as we helplessly bobble above the drowning tide of life's untimely misfortunes and desperate struggles. Death, financial strain, troubled children, sudden disease, nasty neighbors, and mundane work routines are all experiences that throw us in the midst of a crashing wave in which rescue – true rescue – is desperately needed. The only way for that rescue to occur is for someone who is native to our heart to make that rescue. Only someone who is capable and confident of taking those misfortunes and struggles and turning them into greatness is formidable enough to handle the task. The Native to your heart and mine is the Spirit of God. The One who made your physical heart is the only one who has the capability of reaching the spiritual heart and breaking through the doldrums of life.

But, there is a catch. The catch is not a check written to the Barnabas Project. It is not a six-month course on the Spirit of God.

Rather, it is a frame of mind. The catch is something that only you can do and only you can change in order to see a powerful, new freshness evolve within your life. In order to experience the entrance of this Person into your life, you will need to have a shift in your thinking. As you may sometimes walk blindly through an overwhelming sense of lifeless Christianity, some of you are begging for a real change in your spiritual existence. You need to ***change your expectations about what God can do.*** Initially, it seems simple, but it may take a huge effort. In order for you to see God moving, it will require you to change your preconceived ideas about what God is capable of doing in your life. I once was where some of you find yourself today. I was unsure of life, seeking a deeper relationship with God without a map. Yet, this desire for a more meaningful relationship with God was not one that required more study, another degree, or some fundamental theology shift. This desire for a real, ongoing, life-changing experience began with a monumental shift in my thinking.

Changing expectations is a mental and spiritual shift. It does not require a physical change, a social makeover, or an emotional overhaul. It requires you to mentally and spiritually free yourself from deciding and determining what it is that God is capable of doing. All of us have put straps on God. We have put Him in a box and previously determined the range and scope of God. We have placed mental boundaries in our spiritual walk that have deflated the tires of God's movement in and through our lives. And, no doubt, some of us have tightened the chain so much that God's ability to move in our lives has placed our spiritual car of life up on blocks, and it is not even moving.

Changing expectations goes beyond just changing your idea of what God can do. It invades and seeps into our very way of living spiritually. We need to expect different things when we pray. We need to expect different things than we experience in normal, everyday life. We need to expect different things than we see, hear or touch. But, let me be clear. I am not advocating or suggesting a "name it, claim it" philosophy of living life. That philosophy, one that supposes you simply need to "claim" God's promises for them to come true, eventually zaps the true power of God. Simply claiming something, without any prayer as to what God's will is, will leave us frustrated and bewildered. There must be an on-going conversation or dialogue between people and God through the gift of prayer. The Bible teaches that we can ask God for whatever we

wish, but there is a condition to that promise. John 15:7 says, *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”* The condition to answered prayer is remaining in Him. When our fellowship is united, we are seeking God’s will. Yes, God wants what is best for you and me, but He wants us to pray *His* desires, rather than our own wishes.

Changing expectations also means understanding the sovereignty of God throughout life and desiring to see Him work in it. Too many of us, myself included, have tended to experience God in an intellectual way, but never allowed Him to introduce Himself through a real life experience. Have you ever read about that disciple who walked on water? It can happen today. Have you ever heard about that man blind from birth receiving sight? It can happen today. Is God capable of showing you what career path you should choose? It can happen today. Does God want me to have a definite knowledge of my specific life experience? I believe it can happen today. The catalyst for that to happen is your desire to change your expectations about what God can do. I cannot emphasize that enough. If you do not decide to open your mind, then you will shortchange what God wants to do in your life. You will miss the awe-inspiring accounts of regular people like you and me changing expectations about what God can do and seeing God in an incredible and life-changing way.

Join me in altering your life forever. I took that step once and decided to change my expectations about what God can do. Since I took that step, there has been an incredible change in my life and, in addition, I continue to experience the awesomeness of God not just in the Book, but also in my book of life.