

LIVING  
**AMAZED**

HOW DIVINE ENCOUNTERS CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

JAMES  
ROBISON



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This book is dedicated to our precious daughter

**ROBIN ROBISON TURNER,**

who lived for Jesus with all of her heart  
and went to live with Him after a seven-year battle  
with cancer on December 28, 2012.  
She revealed clearly to everyone what  
Jesus meant by “abundant life.”

From the time she was diagnosed with throat cancer,  
she signed every email to her mother and me: “I WIN.”  
Indeed, she has because her Savior has never lost a battle.

Betty and I recognize that Robin didn’t get to finish her life  
the way we all envisioned, but she did faithfully run the race,  
finish the course—and she did win!  
Robin is free of pain, whole, and in perfect peace forever.

What a daughter, wife, mother, sister, and faithful witness  
she was during her forty-year journey  
on this earth. She was truly a bright light in a dark world.  
There is no doubt she lived amazed.

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# 1

## Miracle in Marble Falls

When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority.

Matthew 7:28–29

EVERYWHERE JESUS WENT during His time on earth, people were amazed by what He did and what He said.<sup>1</sup> They were amazed by His wisdom and teaching. They were amazed by His authority over nature, illness, and demons. And they were amazed by His miraculous healing power. Sometimes, people were amazed simply by His presence.<sup>2</sup>

Even more astonishing, Jesus told His disciples that “anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.”<sup>3</sup> And after Pentecost, wonder and amazement spread across the world as followers of Jesus, living in the power of the Holy Spirit, began to do marvelous works, just as He had predicted.<sup>4</sup>

But why would God use imperfect people to accomplish His perfect will? The best explanation I’ve found is the one offered

by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:7: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.”<sup>5</sup> Whether or not we can fully explain it, that’s the way God designed it. Throughout the Bible and down through the ages, He has used flawed, weak, and wayward people to pour out His power and accomplish His purpose on the earth.

I believe that God has a purpose and a plan for *everyone*. The body of Christ contains no small, unimportant, or insignificant members.

Everyone can succeed at *serving the Lord*.

Everyone can succeed at *loving others*.

Everyone can succeed at *walking by faith, not by sight*.

The Holy Spirit can empower every believer to see the world through the eyes of Jesus and identify with the heart of God. If we show the world the loving heart of God, we will find ourselves living amazed—and God will continue to amaze us. All it takes is a little faith, hope, and trust to see the powerful hand of God at work in the world.

**If we show the world the loving heart of God, we will find ourselves living amazed—and God will continue to amaze us.**

*Living Amazed* is all about how God will use any available instrument, any yielded life that is open to Him. If we submit ourselves to Him, there is no limit to what He can accomplish

through us. God can reach people in ways that are truly beyond our imagination but completely within the realm of possibility when we allow Him to do His work through us. In fact, living amazed can begin with something as simple and ordinary as a conversation in a convenience store parking lot.

When Betty and I had been married about six or seven years, we leased a hunting property with some friends about sixty miles

northwest of Austin, Texas. We planned to use it as a retreat from the pace and pressures of my preaching ministry, which at the time had me on the road more than 275 days a year.

That summer, we drove up to see the property and do some maintenance work. We took along our daughter Rhonda, who was four or five years old, and my former foster parents, the Rev. and Mrs. Hale, who were excited about getting out into a part of the state where they could see some wildlife.

After a full day of work in the hot Texas sun, we still had a four-hour drive ahead of us to get back home to the Fort Worth area, and by then evening had fallen. As we drove through a little town called Marble Falls, I said to Betty, "I gotta have some chocolate milk."

"Chocolate milk?" she said. "It's too hot out here, and I don't even think that's good for you. Let's just stop at a hamburger place and get you something to drink."

I was still sweaty from the work, I hadn't shaved in a couple of days, and I was dressed in coveralls and boots, but I had a craving for chocolate milk. That wasn't something you could get at a fast food place in those days, so we pulled in to a local quick-stop market along the way.

As I got out of the car, I noticed about thirty or forty high school-age kids hanging around in small groups in the parking lot. Some had their heads down, and I sensed they were troubled about something.

Inside the store, I passed a couple of girls who were wiping tears from their eyes, and as I made my way back toward the dairy case, I saw two more girls in the aisle who also appeared to be crying. I sensed the Holy Spirit saying to me, *James, you need to talk to these kids.*

When I got to the checkout, I said to the woman behind the counter, "I've seen some folks who are crying. What's going on here?"

“These kids are really, really sad,” she said. “One of the most popular students at the high school, one of the football players, was in a car accident and broke his neck. The kids were all up here throughout the day praying that he would get well and be healed, but they just got word that he died.”

Again, I sensed the Holy Spirit say, *Go talk to those boys and girls. They need to hear how much Jesus loves them.* The message was as clear to me as if it had been audible.

Here’s a good example of how the enemy gets in and tries to distract us. No sooner had I heard the Lord speak than a second voice—my own voice—began to enumerate all the reasons why talking to those kids was not a good idea.

**When the enemy goes to work on us, it’s not like Cupid shooting arrows of love. He fires suggestions, doubts, and distractions. But when God speaks, He speaks the truth.**

*You need to look out for your family, James. You still have a four-hour drive ahead of you. Betty’s tired, Rhonda’s tired, the Hales are tired. You’re wearing coveralls, and you haven’t showered or shaved. And besides, those kids are scattered all over the place out there. How would you even get them together to talk to them?*

When the enemy goes to work on us, it’s not like Cupid shooting arrows of love. He fires suggestions, doubts, and distractions. But when God speaks, He speaks the truth.

*James, those kids need to hear how much I love them.*

I paid for my chocolate milk and walked toward the exit. As soon as I touched the door handle, I saw all the kids in the parking lot suddenly come together in a circle right out front.

*Okay, Lord, that’s just too obvious.*

In my dirty coveralls, unshaven, and looking like a bum, I stepped into the middle of the circle, looked around at all the

grieving faces, and said, “Excuse me, I was just passing through town, and the lady inside told me you lost a friend. I’m so sorry to hear that. But I feel impressed to tell you that if your friend was a Christian, he’s in heaven right now, and he’s looking down at you and saying, ‘Whatever you do, don’t miss this! Don’t miss heaven.’ And he wants you to know that Jesus is the way to heaven.

“Now, if your friend was not a Christian, he’s saying, ‘I don’t want you to come to where I am right now.’ And if you yourself are a Christian, he’s saying, ‘Why didn’t you tell me about Jesus? Why didn’t you tell me so I didn’t end up here?’

“If you didn’t tell him about Jesus, you have to honestly ask yourself *why*. And if you know Jesus, you need to understand that your friends here could leave at any moment, like this boy did, and you need to be a witness.

“Those of you who don’t know Christ, your friend wants to make sure that *you* don’t miss heaven.”

I concluded by saying, “Whatever you might think about what I just said, remember this: on the day your friend died, a stranger who was just driving through town stopped long enough to point you to Jesus and recommend Jesus to you.”

Then I walked back to the van, got in, and we resumed our drive home.

That sounds like the end of the story, right? I hadn’t told the kids my name, where I was from, or what I did. Nothing.

Several weeks later, we were doing an area-wide crusade in Austin. That was the crusade where eleven members of the 1969 national champion Texas Longhorn football team came to Christ, including quarterback James Street and receiver Randy Peschel, who would later connect on an amazing fourth-down pass to set up the winning touchdown against Arkansas that sealed the national championship.

After the service one night, several high school kids came up to me and said, “Sir, you’re him. You don’t look like him, but you’re him. You’re the one.”

“I’m the one who what?”

“The one who stopped in the parking lot and told us about Jesus. Sir, that changed our lives.”

One of the girls started crying and said, “My dad was an alcoholic, and I went home and led him to the Lord. He was killed just a short time later, but he went to heaven because you stopped at that store.”

“That’s amazing!” I said.

But the story doesn’t end there.

Later that fall, Betty and I went up to the retreat property again. We were sitting out back enjoying the scenery one afternoon when a man in a suit and tie came walking up through the brush. He must have climbed over a barbed wire fence to get in to the property, because the gate out at the road was locked. But there he was.

He introduced himself as Max Copeland and said, “I know this may sound crazy to you, but I’m the pastor of First Baptist Church, Marble Falls, and a few months ago we lost one of our football players. The day he died, every kid in my church who could get ahold of me called to say they weren’t coming back to church anymore, because they had been praying for God to save their friend’s life, and he had died. I mean, their faith was totally devastated.

“But the following Sunday, they were all there in the pews, and they told me about a man who had stopped at the convenience store and shared Jesus with them.

“James, I want you to know that I baptized twenty young people who accepted Christ in that parking lot after you left. Other kids who had pulled away from God are now all on fire for Him. We are experiencing a revival in our town because of this.”

“That is truly amazing,” I said.

“I wonder if you’d be willing to come back and preach to us sometime,” the pastor said.

I told him we were planning to come back and do some hunting soon.

“We have a big barn out in the country where folks could gather. Would you be willing to preach in a barn?”

“I’ll preach anywhere.”

After agreeing that Betty and I would come, I asked him, “How did these kids know who I was? I never told them.”

“I put up a poster about a revival in Austin, in case some of our people wanted to go. The kids saw it and came into my office and said, ‘You see that man in the picture on the poster? He’s the one who stopped and talked to us in the parking lot.’”

Some of those young people were the ones who had spoken to me at the revival.

When Betty and I went back to Marble Falls in December, we drove outside of town about fifteen miles, along some country roads, until we found the barn. When we arrived, there were cars everywhere and a thousand people inside the barn. The population of Marble Falls at the time was only about fifteen hundred, but a thousand of them had come to hear me preach.

When I gave the invitation that night, ninety-nine people came forward to receive Christ. I remember the exact number because Betty and I were laughing in the car afterward that I almost asked *her* to come forward so we could get an even hundred.

Brother Max invited us back again the next summer, and we did a three-night crusade at the high school football stadium, where another 176 people made the decision to accept Christ. Out of that parking lot conversation with thirty or forty high school kids, 275 people had now come to Christ.

But the story doesn’t end there.

A few years later, at a crusade in Orlando, Florida, a woman approached me after one of the meetings and told me that her daughter had been at that convenience store parking lot in Marble Falls. She had not been a Christian at the time, but with everything that happened afterward, she had come to Christ and had become a beautiful witness for Him. Recently, though, she had been killed in an automobile accident. Although the mother was grieving her loss, she wanted to thank me because she knew that her daughter was in heaven, and she knew that the turning point had been that night outside the market.

When I stopped at the convenience store for chocolate milk that evening, I had no idea what I would find there. And the kids to whom I had spoken had no idea who I was. They didn't know I was a preacher. I was just some guy who looked like a bum and had a heart for the Lord. And when the Holy Spirit spoke to me and told me what I needed to say to those grieving kids, I had all the usual excuses lined up and ready to go.

*It's late. I'm tired. My family's tired. I'm busy. I need to get home. And even if I could get those kids together long enough to talk with them, why would they listen to me anyway?*

But here's the point of all this: What I did that night could have been done by *anyone with a heart yielded to God*. All it took was being available, being willing, and being obedient to the call. And the result was living amazed.

Early in 2015, I called the church in Marble Falls to see if Brother Max was still around. Indeed, he was, as pastor emeritus. It had been almost fifty years, but he still remembered me. He said he would never forget the day he climbed over a barbed wire fence to come find me, because a brief encounter at a convenience store parking lot had turned his entire town inside out. That's what living amazed is all about.

Just a few months after I last spoke to him, Max Copeland went to be with the Lord at the age of eighty-five, after sixty-nine

years of ministry, including fifty-seven years in Marble Falls. What distinguished his ministry in the minds of all who knew him was his genuine, steadfast love for other people. That's something we all can emulate.

**What the Bible Says about  
LIVING AMAZED**

After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed.

Matthew 9:33

Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

Acts 4:13