

I consider David Drury to be a friend, coworker, and able Bible scholar. I've turned to him for counsel many times. In *Transforming Presence*, David helps us feel what it was like to actually be with Jesus and how it can change everything. Now many readers can discover what I already have: David Drury is a gift to the kingdom of God.

—MAX LUCADO, pastor and best-selling author

David Drury is creative, thoughtful, and wise. In a world of people seeking God, here is wisdom for finding the path.

—JOHN ORTBERG, senior pastor at Menlo Park Church, author of *All The Places to Go* and *The Life You've Always Wanted*

You will *not* sit down and read this in one sitting! The transforming presence of Jesus himself will stop you. You will reflect, rejoice, review, and renew. Jesus comes alive in twenty-first-century life on every page. I have found that David Drury not only writes about Jesus, but humbly seeks to live like Jesus every day.

—JO ANNE LYON, general superintendent, The Wesleyan Church

I've grown to appreciate my friend David Drury and his passion for Jesus. In *Transforming Presence*, David reminds us that being like Jesus means knowing the Jesus of Scripture—to be transformed in and by his presence!

—ED STETZER, executive director, LifeWay Research

Creative, imaginative, and compassionate—David Drury takes us to meet Jesus when we need him most in the pages of *Transforming Presence*.

—LEITH ANDERSON, president, National Association of Evangelicals

Have you ever felt overworked, exhausted, or trapped? We too often search aimlessly for encounters that enhance our networks and feed our ambitions but have proved lacking. Our dear friend David Drury has, with refreshing insight, reminded us of what is most deeply satisfying: the transforming presence of Jesus. David invites us to encounter Jesus anew. *Transforming Presence* renewed our hearts with the hope that encountering Jesus again and again makes all things new.

—GABRIEL AND JEANETTE SALGUERO, cofounders of National Latino Evangelical Coalition, copastors of The Lamb's Church, NY

In this book, David Drury puts his finger on the most significant ingredient leading to life change, and the very element most of us miss as Christ-followers. Our problem usually isn't a lack of content. It's lack of presence. *His* presence. *Transforming Presence* takes us on a journey so that we, like the followers of the early church, can actually experience Jesus. It's our greatest need—not more information but transformation. I highly recommend this book.

—TIM ELMORE, president, GrowingLeaders.com

I don't know anyone I admire more than David Drury. When he speaks, I listen. When he writes, I read. Without a doubt, this book will bless you.

—JOHNNIE MOORE, president, The KAIROS Company;  
senior contributing editor, *The Christian Post*

In *Transforming Presence*, David Drury pours out the kind of discerned wisdom that can only come from years of learning, unlearning, and relearning the ways of Jesus in the world of human struggle. If you're feeling exhausted, unsatisfied, trapped, powerless, stuck, overwhelmed, afraid, guilty, marginalized, or grieved, then prepare for breakthrough—this book is for you.

—J. D. WALT, sower-in-chief, Seedbed Publishing

Life is fun until reality shows up. Life is a wonderful gift, but it can be difficult at times. David Drury delivers honest stories with biblical foundations that will guide you in the good times and encourage you when you encounter life's speed bumps, curve balls, and unexpected challenges.

—DAN REILAND, executive pastor, 12Stone Church, Lawrenceville, GA

David leads us through the winding alleyways of faith and religion, beyond the conundrums and contradictions, and the frenetic pace of life. He invites us to encounter God and to live a life that invites others to do the same. I commend to you to take this journey. It will change you!

—STEPHAN BAUMAN, president and CEO of World Relief

Children look for, sometimes even cry for, someone rather than something. For me, hearing, "Daddy's home!" is pretty awesome. It's refreshing and life-giving to be the object of a child's admiration. In Scripture, *childlike* was a word that Jesus used often and with high regard because we also need Someone not something to make our lives better. David Drury points us back to those life-giving cries of our own souls in his new book *Transforming Presence*. And I imagine Jesus thinks it's pretty awesome to answer our calls today.

—TODD BURPO, author of *Heaven Is for Real*

David Drury masterfully takes us into the encounters of real people in history who met Christ and his transforming power. These stories give us massive hope for our real lives, emotions, and challenges today. Seeing what Jesus did in the past helps us know what he can still do in our present situations—so this book is a manual for your hope in God, no matter what you are going through.

—MATT BROWN, evangelist, author of *Awakening*, founder of Think Eternity

# Transforming Presence

*How Being with Jesus Changes Everything*

David Drury

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For downloadable resources, visit  
[wphresources.com/transformingpresence](http://wphresources.com/transformingpresence).  
A group study DVD is also available.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



It was not until my seventh book manuscript that I typed the word *acknowledgements* accurately, but just now I typed it wrong again so there goes the streak. For that reason and many more I must acknowledge that I need help. The acknowledgements in a book are about gratitude and thanks, but another meaning of the word is the “acceptance of the truth or existence of facts.” So some of this is more than gratitude; it’s just *fact*. The *truth* is, I couldn’t have if these wouldn’t have—

If Dave Ward, Amanda Drury, and Russ Gunsalus wouldn’t have dreamed with me early on, I couldn’t have been so creative.

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# INTRODUCTION



**D**o you read the Bible in an attempt to be more like Jesus by looking at things from his perspective? If so, that's a good objective. Some say it's the whole point of reading the Bible. The only problem is that it's sometimes hard to relate to Jesus' point of view. He is the Son of God after all, and reading the Bible this way just makes you work ever harder to be like Jesus. When you fail, you become discouraged. That's when Scripture reading becomes a shame-inducing task, yet another part of life that makes you feel worse about yourself. That is certainly *not* the point of reading the Bible.

There is another way to read the Bible—or at least another way to read the Gospels. Instead of reading Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

through the eyes of Jesus, try reading them through the eyes of the people who encountered the transforming presence of Jesus. Put yourself in their shoes as we walk through the first half of the book of John. I am praying your reading of the Bible will change in at least three ways because of this.

### THEY FELT WHAT YOU FEEL

First, you'll find that the people mentioned in Scripture had feelings similar to yours. Their situations were real and hard, perhaps even harder than your own. They can inspire you to overcome the challenges you face. Each chapter in this book is given a title that describes the situation of a person encountering Jesus. These words capture the feelings and circumstances of each person. There are words like *overwhelmed*, *grieved*, and *stuck*. A few more are *exhausted*, *guilty*, and *trapped*. Others are *powerless*, *afraid*, *unsatisfied*, and *marginalized*. Do any of these words describe you now? Have they described you in the past? Will they in the future?

In these pages, I will often ask, "Have you been with Jesus?" Each time that question comes up, think of the ways you've felt like the people in these stories in the past, right now, or when you may in the future. In those situations, did you intentionally look to discover the transforming presence of Jesus already with you? As you read the Bible, try putting yourself in the shoes of those who have been with Jesus, and if the shoe fits, then the Bible will come alive for you with newfound intensity, and your attitude and understanding will begin to change.

## AN ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS CHANGES EVERYTHING

Second, by putting yourself in the shoes of the people who met Jesus, you'll see how a single encounter with the transforming presence of Jesus changed the trajectory of their lives. They each felt that their circumstances had painted them into a corner. The key for them was not merely to better understand their circumstances. They didn't need to process what they had gone through, blame someone else, or empower themselves. No, what they needed most was to be with Jesus Christ.

He really was present. And his presence is transforming. We forget that. God became human to be with us. Unbelievers struggle to come to grips with the concept that a man was God. But believers often have the opposite problem. They struggle to realize that the God they believe in became fully man. As John put it: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). One of my favorite thinkers once said, "The Word became flesh, then we spend most of our time turning him back into words again." Please understand that what matters is not the words I've written here. What matters is that the Word himself—Jesus, the transforming presence—can change everything for you.

When he comes along, the possibilities shift. The future is restored. Everything changes. I hope you want this and will find it in your own transforming encounter with Jesus.

## MORE LIKE JESUS

Third, reading the Gospels through the eyes of those who encountered Jesus is a surer path to becoming like Jesus. You'll never become

more like Jesus by trying harder. You do that by being with Jesus. If you rely on anything other than the transforming presence of Jesus to make you more like him, it won't work. Each of those who encountered Jesus' presence as recorded in the book of John had already tried hard at life. Most of them were quite religious. Some had committed their entire lives to seeking God. But an encounter with Jesus right where they were led them to become like him.

### JESUS SHOWS UP

Let's launch into the first half of the book of John together. There you'll see ten situations in which someone struggled in life, but everything changed when they experienced Jesus' transforming presence.

Often Jesus is right there in front of us, but we are unaware of it because we are not looking for him. Jesus might be *with you*, but you aren't *with him*; you haven't noticed him. That was true for each of the ten we will meet. In fact, nearly every person in the Gospels did not recognize the presence of the Son of God right away. Yet once they did recognize him, everything changed. Recognize Jesus as being with you, and his transforming presence will change everything.

You may think you already recognize his presence, figuring that's a part of your belief system: "Jesus is everywhere—I feel his presence." You may think you notice not only when he shows up, but also when he's provided for you.

Are you sure you haven't failed to recognize his presence from time to time? Even *most* of the time? And if you really are with Jesus, why hasn't everything changed? These are legitimate questions for you whether you've just begun to follow Christ or have been doing so for decades. Remember that even some who followed Jesus for

years failed to recognize his transforming presence. In fact, that's where John began his book about Jesus: "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him" (John 1:10–11).

Let's start in John 2, at a party where Jesus showed up but his transforming presence went unnoticed.

1

# EXHAUSTED

JOHN 2:1-11



Jesus loves parties. The gospel of John makes that clear about our Lord from the start. The loudest gathering with the most music was where you'd most likely find him. Yes, he escaped to quiet places to pray while everyone else slept; but when the party hats came out, the band started to play, and the drinks flowed freely, you might be surprised to find that Jesus was there in the middle of it all.

This is good to know of our Savior, because our religious establishments can be somewhat stiff, and we might think Jesus would feel out of place at a party, perhaps longing to escape to a seminary library. But Jesus was entirely comfortable participating in parties, and most of the books at a seminary library are about him anyway. What's more, Jesus didn't choose the associations others might like. He knew that being *with* people is the only way to influence them. He didn't behave like everyone he associated with, but he was *with them* in spite of their behavior. His frequent attendance at parties with unsavory characters earned him the moniker "friend of sinners." He was as much at home at a block party as the monastery. Jesus shows up to listen to sermons and participate in prayer meetings, but he is also the kind of Savior that shows up to birthday celebrations, bachelor parties, and bar mitzvahs.

Don't assume parties aren't spiritual occasions. Jesus' first public miracle was at a wedding party—the miracle wouldn't have happened had the bride and groom not invited him. What if you invited Jesus to your big game, friendly cookout, or a sweet sixteen party? How could this change the direction of the festivities? If you do choose to invite him, keep your eye to the crowd. If you notice his presence, ask him to participate as only he can. Who knows—he might even work a subtle miracle without the guests ever knowing. The presence of Jesus changes everything when you are exhausted; he has resources you know nothing about.

## A MOTHER NOTICES

Before any member of my family heads out the door in the morning, they have to pass an informal security check with my wife, Kathy. She looks each of us over like a customs agent and observes things we must correct before leaving. “Lauren, you need to brush the back of your hair—not just the sides, and you need socks on.” The inspection continues. “Karina, you need to wear tennis shoes because it’s gym day, remember?” The family Transportation Security Agent turns to the oldest child. “Max, you need to switch into shorts because it’s going to be over eighty degrees today.” The husband is last to face scrutiny. “Dave, you must have cut yourself shaving, you have a paper dot on your face. Oh, and I’m not sure that shirt fits anymore.” After a few changes, we come back for a final check before our brave family heads out into the world, prepared.

Mothers notice what others miss.

Mary, the mother of our Lord, did. She was invited to a party after a wedding; it may even have been one of her friends or relatives who gave their child in marriage. Mary was attentive to how things were going in the party, noticing the decorations that were attractively “just so.” Earlier she had noted the garb of the betrothed in the wedding itself, smiling at the intricate designs on the young woman’s dress. The reception was going well too—the entertainment was perfect, the food was plentiful, the wine. Wait a second . . . the wine!

Mary saw the servants looking fretful in the hallway. “These people sure have been drinking a lot of wine today.” Mary continued to observe the crowd. “Why is that maître d’ waving an older servant to the back?” Suddenly the servants stop returning to refill cups. “That table over there has been calling for refills for several minutes with no service.” This mother noticed what others missed.

Mary excused herself quietly and headed for the kitchen. There she startled a circle of servants, who looked up at her with a tinge of worry in their eyes.

“What’s going on here?”

The older waiter blurted out the truth: “They drank too much. The family only paid for a few hours’ worth, and the guests have stayed far beyond. Many more were invited than we were told. We just poured our last pitchers.”

The observant mother considered her friend’s family. She knew they were not wealthy; but a wedding is a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence. “Not being able to entertain guests at this reception would be a massive embarrassment. Everyone will know of the bride’s parents’ financial situation. They will be humiliated.”

“Wait here,” Mary commanded.

Not being of wealth herself, her options were limited. She didn’t have the means to pick up the extra tab. “But he could do something. I have no doubt he will have compassion on them.” She walked briskly to a table where her Son sat listening to stories with the friends that seemed to follow him around everywhere these days.

The one called Andrew was delivering the punch line to a joke. His big brother laughed so hard he nearly choked on his bread. James and John slapped Andrew on the back and hooted. “As I recall, those are the fishermen who are called ‘the Sons of Thunder.’ How ridiculous.”

She stopped at the foot of the table, locking eyes with her Son at the head, who had been watching her approach. She had been thinking over what she would say. “But those eyes. It’s always those eyes.”

She caught herself slipping back to long-held secret memories of gifts from foreign dignitaries and visits from angelic beings, of strange dreams and stranger visions, of the smell of straw mixed with the sight of blood.

She knew every curl of his hair, each freckle on his shoulders. She remembered how hot he liked his tea and how he used to kick one foot out from the blanket to stay cool at night. “He did that at the age of three. He still does it now at thirty. But I never could really tell what this one was thinking.” Whenever she caught his gaze, it would freeze her, as it did now. “But I always knew what he would do. Unlike the other kids, I could always count on him to do the right thing.”

It was odd at first, seeing him tempted by a special treat for dinner on the table when he didn’t know she was looking. He would go and look at it and even smell it, but not take. Later, when he was a teenager, she could see when things made him angry, but he would let it pass and a calm would come over him. This was true unless he encountered an injustice. He would not let injustice pass; his anger would remain and he would do whatever it took to make things right.

He never spoke back to her, not once. By the time he became a man, it was downright supernatural. “In every way, he was like every other boy. Except this: he was perfect.” He was perfect, never doing anything wrong; he was normal, but perfectly normal.

The silence brought her back to the party, still staring at those eyes. Yet it was different now, like staring into the night sky, not into the eyes of the One she used to nurse by the fire. She noticed Jesus’ friends frozen silent as well, staring at her, waiting for her to snap out of it.

Self-conscious, she blushed. “Come speak with me, Son.” Jesus followed her to a corner, where she bent her head to intimate a secret: “They have no more wine” (John 2:3). She went from speaking to the floor to looking up at her boy. “No, he’s a man now. Taller even than Joseph was, his . . . father.”

Jesus broke her gaze and looked out at the crowd. Taking a bite of the bread he had carried from the table, he studied the situation. He

swallowed and kept looking. Without glancing back to her, he said, “Why do you involve me?” (v. 4).

Mary looked up at her Son for a long moment. When he finally returned her gaze, she raised an eyebrow and bobbed her head as if to say, “You know why.”

He suppressed a chuckle by taking another bite of the bread. Looking off to the clouds in the distance, and with a cheek still full of bread, he said, “My hour has not yet come” (v. 4). Jesus brushed crumbs off hands, his robe, and then his beard. Patting his mother on the shoulder, he walked back to his table. Peter was telling a well-rehearsed fishing story.

Mary walked back to the kitchens, where the servants waited expectantly. She pulled them toward the door and pointed across the room to her Son. “The tall one over there in the white and green wool. ‘Do whatever he tells you’” (v. 5). And thus the stage was set for the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus.

## GOD’S CALENDAR

Why did John begin the account of Jesus’ ministry with a wedding? More to the point, why did Jesus choose to launch his ministry at a wedding? John merely recorded that the redemptive plan of God was ushered in at this event.

It is encouraging to know that Jesus had a plan for his ministry. He had an “hour” already in mind (v. 4). He had a timetable. God seems to have strategically timed the redemptive arc of history.

Yet it can be frustrating to think that we are left guessing at what God’s plan is, regardless of our situation. That causes us to wonder why we should pray at all, to ask him for anything, if he has everything planned in detail anyway.

This story shows us how it really works. There *was* a plan. There *was* an hour. The Father and the Son had been mulling it over for some time. Maybe it would begin with healing a lame man on the Sabbath; that would make a point. Or a blind man in the Jerusalem temple; boy, that would turn some heads. He could kick things off with a long sermon and lay out his whole vision for the future in one take. Or he could start on a high note and raise someone from the dead; that would sort of speak for itself and be a good way to start, revealing the end in the beginning.

But here's the amazing thing Jesus did at this wedding: he truncated his timetable. The Son of Man rolled out the strategic plan ahead of schedule.

Why? Because a young couple was in need, that's why. That's it.

The presence of Jesus changed things for this couple; he has resources they knew nothing about.

Somehow the One who spun the sun, earth, and moon into their circles and established our days and nights changed his plan on the fly. The One who measured out the seasons our calendars are measured by, yes, the great Calendar-Maker himself, adjusted his calendar—for us! The One who created everything was willing to reschedule his debut for a couple of locals getting hitched in the backwater town of Cana.

Here's the point this passage is making: the Word was willing to go with the flow in unveiling his redemptive plan because of a few empty wineglasses and a potentially embarrassed bride. Jesus was willing to push up the date of his opening night because someone was in need. The Light himself adjusts in light of your circumstances.

## WHATEVER HE SAYS

Peter's face was red with the anticipation of the climax of his story: "So Andrew gets a look at the fish and says, 'Let's keep the size of this one to ourselves for once.'"

Jesus listened without laughing along as he normally would; he'd heard the punch line many times anyway. As the group whooped it up, Jesus walked to the kitchen, where the servants were still waiting, empty pitchers in hand.

With no other options and wanting to avoid the clatter of empty cups at the reception, the servants followed Jesus' instructions to the last detail, their obedience complete and specific. They filled all the massive ceremonial washing pots with water, right up to the brim. This would have totaled 120 to 180 gallons of water, weighing about fifteen hundred pounds. That's roughly the load capacity of a Ford F-150 pickup. After completing the task, sweaty from the work, they turned to the man for the next step. "Serve," he said, waving his arm toward the pots, then turning on his heel and returning to his table.

The servants were stunned. They exchanged puzzled looks. Already groaning at the stares they would get when they tried to serve water instead of wine, they realized this was going to be a long night. Then an older servant remembered the woman's instructions: "Whatever he says."

He dipped a pitcher into the pot and pulled it up full. He looked inside. It was dark. Odd. He grabbed a cup and poured. The water flowed out red. He drank. His eyes doubled in size with each gulp. He began to laugh as the other servants grabbed cups of their own and drank and laughed in joy. The group of dour servants who had been ready to skip town had become a bunch of giddy children at this unexpected delight.

Just then the master of ceremonies burst into the kitchen, finding each servant holding a cup of wine, laughing and drinking. He shouted, “What are you doing in here in your cups while your guests have empty ones? Get out there, do your jobs, and serve the wine!”

The servants were all too happy to do so. As everyone received their refill and the spirit of the party began to rise, several got up to dance to a new tune played by the musicians. The master of ceremonies was served a new cup. This man must have been a master vintner, for he knew this wine was beyond anything else he’d tasted. He pointed to the parents of the bride at the honored seats, saying, “At most weddings they bring out the cheaper wine when the guests are drunk, but now you bring out the best wine!” Lifting his cup high, he shouted, “Give a cheer for the bride and groom!”

All cheered, except Mary. She was watching the room. She first saw the father and mother of the bride looking at each other, wondering what was happening. They shrugged their shoulders and moved to the middle of the room for a dance.

It is astonishing that Jesus not only provided precisely at the point of their need, but also provided much more *quality* and *quantity* than required. The wine was so much better than needed, as the master of ceremonies pointed out in verse 10. You have to read between the lines on this one. Calculating with the volume of the jars in mind, Jesus created enough wine out of thin air to flow freely through *five* weddings. The lesson? Jesus provides what is *more* and *better* than you ever did, without you even knowing it.

Mary’s six-year-old niece, Jesus’ cousin, grasped a single finger on his much-larger hand and led him onto the dance floor. He responded by reaching out a formal hand toward her, and when she grabbed it, he picked her up to twirl her around to the music. The girl squealed

in delight, and he joined his laughter with that of others, dancing awkwardly, as wedding guests do.

Mary allowed a smile to cross her face.

### HAVE YOU BEEN WITH JESUS?

There's more to the wedding story if you read between the lines. Notice that nowhere does it say the bride and groom were worried about the wine. They were seated at the table of honor, enjoying themselves. They were the focus of celebration, but they had no clue that they were about to be humiliated. They didn't know that her father had nearly become the butt of a joke told at every wedding for a generation. And they didn't know that they had just been with the Son of God or that he had provided for them when they needed it most. They went on with their merry business, thanking people for gifts and dancing the night away. They never asked for help. They didn't even know how desperately they needed it.

Neither do you.

You think your resources will last forever. You are unaware that you are exhausting them. You don't realize how much you depend on God until the last pitcher is poured. Even then you don't think of it until you ask for another and none comes. You live as if your resources are unlimited, while only those in the background, only those who are most observant, can see that you are running on empty. Perhaps you're right there with the wedding couple, and you're about to run out even though you don't know it yet.

I had a nagging suspicion that things weren't as they should be in my life, but I didn't know for sure until a certain holiday, the first day of 2002. New Year's Eve should be full of friendship and parties and expectancy for a new year to come. New Year's Day should be full of

rest, football, barbeques, and getting amped up for a year's worth of opportunity.

But that year our family did none of that. We were escaping a year we would rather forget and entering a year that held no prospect of change. My work was all consuming, and all too frustrating.

Instead of organizing a party, we reorganized a closet. My wife had a stack of bins on the floor, their contents strewn about the living room. We sorted items as we discussed our lives. The more we discussed things, the worse we felt. Have you ever had one of those conversations, where the longer it goes the worse life seems? There were no options on the table. We struggled in our relationship. We had few friends, and none of them knew how we were feeling. This fact made us feel even worse. I didn't feel that I was being a good father to our toddler son. Added to my frustrating work life, I felt like a complete and utter failure in all aspects of life.

I was always tired. More than tired, in fact. When you are tired, you can take a nap to recover, go to bed early, or sleep in. You can take a vacation. The weariness I felt was deeper than lack of sleep. I'd come back from a day off even more frustrated than before. A vacation day was just an empty day to stew on how bad things were.

I didn't understand it till later, but I had exhausted my resources. I had tried everything, tried to tap into any solution to restart my life and work and family, and nothing had worked. Every source of fuel I might try was an empty tank.

I sat amid the stacks of storage containers, stewing, venting, and exhausted. I'm not sure you would have seen it in me, but I was about to blow.

I yelled in anger—not at my wife but at my life. Yet she was the one present. Thankfully our toddler was napping upstairs. I strode

across the room and hit the stack of empty containers with my hand, smashing them against the wall. Several of them, made of brittle plastic, shattered. I continued to vent, stomping into the garage to rage and growl, finally sitting down on the steps and crying in frustration.

My wife opened up the door just a crack, then came out and put a hand on my shoulder.

Have you been there? Have you been so frustrated with your life that you had nowhere to turn? Have you ever felt so exhausted by circumstances that you saw nothing left to do but scream at the ceiling? If you've been here, I bet even the memory is exhausting for you.

What followed that moment of rage was a sign that I was not alone on planet earth. My wife gave me grace (although I did wind up buying a few storage containers). My supervisor at work accepted my resignation that very day with grace. He also helped me find another job in his district so I would land on my feet. The church I went to work for loved on my family and me. That congregation continued to show us kindness even after we moved on to join the staff of a larger church, where we continued to heal and serve fruitfully for many years.

I didn't know I had exhausted my resources, but God did. He was already reordering events, moving the clock forward, and changing his plans to ensure I survived the lowest season of my life. I thought everything was over. But he was just getting started with me.

Exhaustion never schedules an appointment.

You don't see it coming. It doesn't send a text fifteen minutes before arrival. There are no social media notifications for burnout. When it arrives, you finally see that you need others, and that you truly need God.

## JESUS WANTS TO MIRACULOUSLY PROVIDE FOR US

Thankfully, God is always ready to provide—it doesn't matter when. There is no "bad time" for God. You never ring him up only to hear, "Could you call back in fifteen minutes?" For those of us who have become attuned to the sustaining work of God, every day is a chance to have redemptive conversations because we have a Savior who once slipped into the pantry to turn water into wine—just to keep the party going. We know that any moment might be the redemptive moment. Jesus is always ready to lower a rope to those at the end of theirs.

What's more, he provides for us in miraculous ways, as he did at the wedding at Cana. Others help us pack and move, and they might slip us some cash. They may even go the extra mile and babysit our kids. However, God does things that only God can do, and we often fail to notice.

We aren't aware that he met our need any more than we knew we had the need in the first place. That's the scary thing about all this. We think we have it covered. We think, "Things aren't like I want them to be, but if I can just \_\_\_\_\_, it will turn out all right." You rarely fill that blank with anything spiritual, do you? You don't fill the blank with anything related to provision from heaven.

Instead, you write,

"Get a raise."

"Get engaged."

"Find a job."

"Move out of this town."

"Get a 3.75 GPA."

"Buy a new car."

Whatever it might be, it's some action you will do or some thing you will acquire. If you are honest with yourself, you'll admit that you never write "Rely on Christ" in the blank. Your plan is to provide for yourself.

You know better than that, though, don't you? You realize that you can't provide for yourself forever any more than you could spin a top perpetually. You couldn't throw a baseball around the earth and catch it coming round the other side; you know you can't sustain much at all. So what keeps you going?

God.

Thank him for it!

Perhaps you would thank him if you were aware of what he's done in the first place. Make a list. Make a long list of the things God provides for you. Start with the ability to read this book. Add the light you're reading it by (or the backlight on your device). Thank him for the room you're sitting in, the park bench, the beach, or the boat.

Jesus provides for you at all time, so it is right to praise his work at all times, thanking him for his unseen hand in transforming the world so you'll make it through. Like the wedding couple, you might be on the verge of embarrassment, financial ruin, or relational heart-break and never know it. And Jesus is in the kitchen, changing your world's ordinary water questions into answers of the finest vintage you've ever tasted.

Sometimes only the servants know how the miracle came about. They were the only ones who saw it happen at the wedding at Cana. Only they, and Mary, knew what was up. They worked behind the scenes and saw events at their worst, and knew whom to point to when all ended well.

I've been in ministry since I was eighteen years old. As a pastor, I'm like one of the servants at this wedding. I've seen how bad things can get, and how God encounters people right there in the middle of it.

I've seen a medical doctor cry about her wayward children. I've seen an independently wealthy man pray deep prayers of dependence on God. I've seen "do it all" stay-at-home moms at the end of their ropes. I've seen someone with a PhD grow speechless when asked what the third grader for whom he serves as a volunteer mentor means in his life. We ordained servants of the kingdom see this stuff all the time. It's one of the only real perks of the job: seeing God's people encounter the tiny miracles of his grace when their own resources have run out.

Notice the transforming presence of Jesus today. Peer into the kitchens and back hallways to see how he is at work in the wedding of life. Through the rest of these pages, we will see over and over again how Jesus encounters people at a very low place on their map's topography. He shows up and everything changes. An encounter with the transforming presence of Christ can do that. Just one conversation. Just one touch. And it becomes the starting point for a new adventurous journey in life.

Pay close attention to the ways you lack the resources needed to live on your own. Admit that you can't pull it off going solo, and get ready to find a vibrant life in Christ that you never thought possible—a life that is "more than all we ask or imagine" (Eph. 3:20). The presence of Jesus changes everything when you are exhausted; his unlimited resources make this transformation possible.

## PRAYER

You are with me, Jesus. Even when I do not notice what you are up to, I know you are present with me. I confess that, too often, I have assumed I could make things happen on my own, that I had the resources I needed to do what I chose. I am thankful that you have provided for me in unseen ways, and I rely on you constantly. Thank you, Jesus, my provider!

## FOR REFLECTION

1. On what occasions do you suspect that God provided for your needs, though you didn't recognize it at the time? Can you name a time when you exhausted your resources but somehow made it through? What would it look like if you were to embrace a moment of gratefulness for his provision in the past, or be attentive to how he is providing for you right now?

2. At what other times in Scripture did Jesus show up and provide for someone when he or she was unaware of it?

3. Read Ephesians 3:14–21. What might it mean for Jesus to be so fully present with people that he would “dwell in [their] hearts” (v. 17)? Do you know someone who might be well described by the phrase “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (v. 19)? What is your “immeasurably more” (v. 20)?

4. In what specific ways do you need the transforming presence of Jesus to provide the resources you've exhausted this week or this month?