

## 1 **The Real Story**

- Coincidences that go beyond explanation.

## 2 **Scripture**

- When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. (Matthew 14:13)
- When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. (Matthew 14:14)

## 3 **Scripture**

- As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late." (Matthew 14:15a)
- "Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." (Matthew 14:15b)

## 4 **Scripture**

- Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." (Matthew 14:16)
- "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. (Matthew 14:17)
- "Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. (Matthew 14:18)

## 5 **Scripture**

- Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. (Matthew 14:19)
- Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. (Matthew 14:19)

## 6 **Scripture**

- They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. (Matthew 14:20)
- The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children. (Matthew 14:21)
- IT WAS A MIRACLE!!!

## 7 **Introduction**

- I don't know if you have seen this but back in October there was a headline that caught people's attention.
- It was even on the FOXNEWS website.
- It read, "Arkansas woman texted Father's number every day after he died, she finally got a response four years later."

## 8 **Introduction**

- For four years, Chastity Patterson, then 23, of Newport, Arkansas, had been mourning the death of Jason Ligons, who, while not her biological father, had been so much like a father to her that she called him Dad.
- After he died, Chastity continued to text his phone every day to update him about her life.
- While she didn't expect a response, the daily texting was a way of dealing with her grief.

## 9 Introduction

- In her message on October 25, the night before the fourth anniversary of Ligons' death, she told about how she'd beaten cancer and was no longer sick.
- She also wrote about falling in love and having her heart broken, joking that Ligons "would have killed" the guy.
- But then, after her text, something out of the ordinary happened, she received a response.

## 10 Introduction

- It was not Ligons, but a man, identified only as Brad, who had been receiving her daily messages these past four years.
- "I am not your father," Brad texted, "but I have received all your messages for the past four years. ...
  - I lost my daughter in a car wreck (in) August 2014 and your messages have kept me alive," Brad said.
  - "When you texted me, I took it as an indirect message from God."
- Brad went on to say that he had read her messages for all that time but hadn't texted her back for fear of breaking her heart.

## 11 Introduction

- Chastity posted the exchange to Facebook, saying,
  - "Today was my sign that everything is okay and I can let him [Ligons] rest!"
- Her post was then shared more than 288,000 times and picked up by several media outlets.
- After Chastity's story went viral, she posted that she had shared the story to show friends and family . . .
  - "that there is a God, and
  - it might take four years, but he always shows up right on time."

## 12 Introduction

- While Chastity's story was reported by several media outlets.
- Only a few of the major national news organizations reported the story at all.
- Suggesting that by some standards,
  - it didn't rise to the level of "news," and
  - that there was really no "miracle" involved.
- All of this brings us to our lesson for tonight, what constitutes a miracle and when does a coincidence go beyond explanation and point to the activity of God?

## 13 Mike Lindell

- We all know him as the MyPillow man.
- He has written a book entitled, What are the Odds: from crack addict to CEO.

- In 2007, Mike finally yielded to God's will for his life and the result has been simply miraculous.
- His fledgling pillow business went from near bankruptcy to where Mike is now worth \$330 million and is respected by the President of the United States.

#### 14 Mike Lindell

- However, for most of Mike's life he tried everything he could to mask an "inner void" in life due to his parent's divorce.
- In school Mike tried to show everyone how brave he was by doing dumb stuff.
- One day, while riding the School Bus, Mike jumped out of the window.
- Miraculously, he landed in a snow bank and luckily wasn't hurt.

#### 15 Mike Lindell

- As a teenager, Mike worked at the local Drive-in Theater in Flying Cloud, Minnesota.
- One night while driving home from after work, he fell asleep.
- The pickup truck he was driving hit a tree and Mike was thrown out of the front window and ended up in someone's front yard.
- While Mike, walked away without a scratch—he nevertheless, thought it very strange that he wasn't hurt or even killed.

#### 16 Mike Lindell

- There was another time Mike owned a motorcycle.
- One day while riding to his first Sky Diving lesson, Mike totaled the bike.
- However, not wanting to miss Sky Diving, Mike went up in the plane and jumped.
- However, the parachute didn't fully open and Mike had a hard landing.
- In other words, Mike had a motorcycle and a Sky diving accident on the same day.
- See a pattern, here?

#### 17 Mike Lindell

- However, Mike's dumbest decisions were yet to come.
- Mike got involved in drinking and then purchased and operated a bar in Victoria, Minnesota.
- The pressures of running the bar caught up with Mike and he started to use cocaine.
- Any money that Mike would earn he would travel to Vegas to do drugs and try to hit it big to pay off his debts.
- Mike's wife was also a user of cocaine, but from the outside they looked like the average American couple and family.

#### 18 Mike Lindell

- One year in the 1990s, Mike along with a friend go to Tunica, Mississippi to try their luck at the casinos there.
- By this time, Mike is on Crack Cocaine and the first thing he does is to drive to nearby Memphis to buy drugs.

- There he meets a young black man who directs him to where he can find a dealer.

#### 19 Mike Lindell

- Mike and this black man, who also is on crack, eventually develop a close relationship.
- This man whose name is Tony owned several fried chicken restaurants in Kentucky.
- His fiancée had told him that if he ever took crack again she would leave him.
- So Tony left Kentucky for Memphis to hide his habit from her.
- However, Mike was able to talk Tony to quit crack and paid for Tony to go back home, which he did.

#### 20 Mike Lindell

- In fact, over Mike's life, he was able to get other people to stop drugs and drinking while at the same time being addicted himself.
- In 2004, Mike's favorite pillow finally disintegrated and he had to throw it away.
- Finding no suitable replacement, Mike started MyPillow.
- However, at the time Mike was still on crack, cocaine, alcohol, and was a compulsive gambler, who counted cards at casinos to get out of debt and keep MyPillow going.

#### 21 Mike Lindell

- One day, Mike wakes up from bed and has a surreal moment.
- In his mind's eye, he receives an outline on how to get off of crack and writes it all down.
- Later that morning his sister calls and tells him that her Pastor had a prophetic word for him in church and that God would be giving him a major platform.
- However, Mike keeps on using drugs and things at MyPillow go from bad to worse and his wife Karen, leaves him for another man.

#### 22 Mike Lindell

- In early 2008, Mike did an interview with a local TV station about MyPillow.
- That interview was aired on a cold February evening at 6:30 PM.
- Mike didn't watch the interview on TV.
- Instead, he was on a website called, "The Devil's Candy," which was about getting off of crack.
- After that broadcast, Mike started to get calls on his MyPillow phone line.

#### 23 Mike Lindell

- The First Call . . .
  - It was from a woman who saw the TV interview and said that God had prompted her to call him and say,
  - "What you're doing is very important and you can't give up."

- She offered to pray for him and she prayed over Mike for the next hour-and-a-half.

#### 24 Mike Lindell

- The Second Call . . .
  - At 3 a.m., the phone rang again.
  - This time it was a man who said the following:
    - “Well, let me tell you something, pal.
    - I don’t believe in God.
    - But I keep having a dream that I’m supposed to call you and tell you what you’re doing is important to God.
    - I hope these dreams stop now, you a\*\*hole!”

#### 25 Mike Lindell

- According to Mike,
  - When the man hung up and he burst out laughing.
  - Then it hit him that something strange was definitely going on.
  - What are the odds that two people would call out of the blue with an almost identical message?
  - What a coincidence?

#### 26 Mike Lindell

- The Third Call . . .
  - Then at 8 a.m., Mike gets another phone call.
  - There is a woman on the line and Mike says to her, “Let me guess. You don’t want to order a pillow. You want to pray.”
  - The woman makes a noise of surprise and says, “How did you know?”
  - She goes on to say, “You have a ‘platform’, But I don’t know what that means.”

#### 27 Mike Lindell

- The Fourth Call . . .
  - At 11:00 a.m., Mike gets a call but this time it is on his answering machine’s line.
  - The caller records the following message.
    - “Mike, this is a message from God,” the voice said.
    - “Everything you’ve experienced in your life will give you the strength to get through the next month.”

#### 28 Mike Lindell

- To know what happened during the next 30 days and how Tony from Kentucky indirectly came back into Mike’s life again, you’ll have to read the book.

- However, most of you all know that once you get right with God and ask for His favor things change.
- You might not go to owning a pillow company and hanging out with the President of the United States, but you will definitely see God's activity in our lives.

## 29 Conclusion

- This is the whole point of this sermon tonight, which is coming to appreciate God's activity in our lives.
- God is always at work and we shouldn't be surprised to see his handiwork in our daily circumstances.
- In fact, if we take the time to adopt a more curious perspective on this matter, without seeing everything as a coincidence, we may find our faith strengthened and our confidence in God's goodness confirmed.
- Some people have said that when God speaks to us through coincidences, he is "winking at us" to show that he is there even in the little things of life.
- Why? Because he cares and wants us to know that he cares!

## 30 Conclusion

- The only time in the Bible, where the word "coincidence" appears is in Luke 10:31, when Jesus said, "And by a coincidence a certain priest was going down in that way, and having seen him, he passed over on the opposite side."
- In the Greek that word is synkyrian, which literally means "together through sovereignly" or in other words, "what occurs together by God's providential arrangement of circumstances."
- You all have probably heard it said, "A coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous."
- I beg to differ, "A coincidence is God's way of letting you know that he cares for you by actually showing you how much he is involved in our lives after all.

## 31 Conclusion

- He does this to . . .
  - lead us,
  - confirm to us,
  - re-direct us,
  - encourage us, and
  - strengthen us in our faith.
- This is why we need to pay special attention to the circumstances of our lives because in them God very well may be speaking to us through them.

## 32 Conclusion

- So then, let us develop a healthy state of spiritual curiosity.

- The Holy Spirit speaks to us through God's word, godly people, dreams and visions, and our own circumstances.
- Therefore, when something happens to us that is a little bit out of the ordinary, let's ask yourself these three questions.
  - What is God trying to say to me? Or, what does this mean?
  - How am I to test this conclusion?
  - How and when should I apply this revelation?
- Who knows, when we open our eyes, we may see the faithfulness of God who works miracles for his people both big and small.

### 33 **Conclusion**

- As the Scripture says,
  - And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)
  - If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:31–32)
  - We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:37)
  - Therefore, [who or what] are able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:39)