INTRODUCTION:
We just saw dictionary definitions for three words. If we put them together, we come up with this:

A Radical encounter with God is:
To unexpectedly come upon the supreme reality and perfect ruler of the universe, resulting in a fundamental and revolutionary change in that person.

That is what the Bible says will happen. God has, and does make the first move. And when a person’s heart, mind, and soul come upon God, it is revolutionary, it is life changing. But, what does that look like? What takes place?

There’s one way to find out: We could take a look at real life examples. If we could look into them, then we’d know what to expect. We’d know what might happen to us. In fact, what is happening to us; even what has happened to us.

Over several Sundays, that will be our quest. We’ll look at twelve individuals who Scripture tells us, had radical encounters with God. Each one is a different story and a different lesson. Each one tells us a part of our own promise from God.

The logical place to start is the beginning. So we’re going to start with Adam. There are five great miracles that allowed Adam to exist. And here’s the thing: Since Adam is the father of humanity, those five miracles that were for him, are also for us. They are why we exist.

Even if you think God has done nothing for you, there are at least five incomprehensible acts of power He performed so you could live. If nothing else, we owe Him thanks for these. … So what are these five miracles? Let’s start with this one:

1. THE MIRACLE OF SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

Philosophers would call this “Ex nihilo” or “out of nothing.” “Big Bang” cosmologists would say, 13.7 million years ago the entire universe was compressed into a single nucleus. Then somehow, for some reason, in one $10^{-43}$ of a second this celestial seed exploded into creation. The initial explosion was over a trillion degrees, so hot that even atoms couldn’t form. At this point, there really wasn’t matter, just fiery chaos they call a “super force.” Electromagnetism and gravity, even time and space only existed as a cosmic mush in this chaos.

Eventually things cooled down enough to form atoms and objects. … Try to imagine the power necessary to create such an event!
Most Christians are **not** “Big Bang” proponents; however the theory has something Christians should take into account. We tend to see God calmly speaking creation into existence as if it was all quiet and orderly; even a bit simple and sterile.

But the truth is; **it wasn’t like that, it was horrendous and powerful and terrifying in its majesty.** How do we know this? Because that’s the way the universe is now, that is what God is now, and He never changes.

Even if we don’t buy in to all the theories, science knows this and they spend billions in research just to scratch the surface. ... Scripture says:

1 In the **beginning** God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and **void**; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the **waters**. 3 ~Gen 1:1-3 (NKJV)

If we look at the original words, we find they actually have a lot in common with the cosmological view.

There was a **void**; הָעָלֶה Vavohu

**It means absolute nothingness.** Even in the vacuum of space, there are hydrogen currents and photons whizzing around. We can’t imagine absolute nothingness. We’ve never experienced it. The word also means “undistinguishable ruin.” That is a pretty good description of the Quantum theory of that “super force.”

The stage had been set; the cosmic **curtain was rising on a day that would allow Adam** to exist. As mind-bending as this act had been, there’s still more. The western philosopher might call this miracle “ex nihilo” but the Jewish philosopher calls it **yesh m’aiyan**. And this concept goes beyond just creating something from nothing.

Jewish philosophy can get pretty deep, so this may take a little extra concentration. This is how they would explain it: When a person “makes something out of nothing” even the greatest masterpiece, all they’ve really done is take substance that already existed and rearranged it. They can walk away from their creation and it will still exist. But when God created, it was out of **absolute** nothingness. **Physical reality did not exist outside of Him, and therefore cannot continue to exist outside of Him.** He is powering it. He is holding it all together.

Think about this for a second: The powerful act of Creation **isn’t finished**; it is still **going on right now**, second by second. ... Does Scripture support this idea?

- **For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.** 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ~Col 1:16-17 (NKJV)
The universe is an unfathomable miracle. And the miracle is still happening! And it is happening so that you, like Adam, can exist. **God is doing with you in mind!**

2. **THE MIRACLE OF LIFE**

If the *creation of basic matter* is mind-bending; here is where *the real magic starts.* Somehow, in a universe which naturally moves from a state of *order to disorder,* atoms were ordered into *molecules* which reached even higher order in *organic compounds,* into even higher order as *cells,* into yet even higher order as *living organisms,* and ultimately, into *humanity.* –Life develops; against the full current of the physical universe.

*What level of order is necessary for life to exist?* Consider, just the blueprint, the genes of a living thing. So far, The *Human Genome Project* has discovered **20,000 protein coding genes** in the human body. Each of those proteins is incredibly complex in itself. Mess up just a few of those proteins, and life doesn't happen. **How does such order come into the universe?**

*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.* ~Gen 2:7 (NKJV)

If we unlock the meaning of the original words, it starts to make sense. *Man* שָׁם ha'adam
-Means among other things, “of a common sort.” We all have this miracle story *in common.*

*Breathe* נִשְׁמָת nesh·mat (neshama)
It means animal, but it also means inspiration, soul, and spirit. God puffed those qualities into the raw matter of the universe and created life; He created us.

*Breath* נִשְׁמָה nish·mat (from naphash)
The “breath of life.” **What was in that breath?** It means animal, but it also means inspiration, soul, and spirit. God puffed those qualities into the raw matter of the universe and created life; He created us.

*Being* or *Soul* נְפָשָׁה le-ne-fesh (from naphash)
Meaning: A breathing creature, it has the qualities of appetite, desire, greed, lust, has heart, pleasure, soul, mind, morality, can know death and self.

In short, it is us. From the void, to matter, to life; **we are- miracle** on top of miracle.
3. THE MIRACLE OF IMAGE
So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Gen 1:27 (NKJV)

The original language is talking about something far more profound than physical looks:

Image or Likeness כֵּדֶם-מוֹטֵנָה kid-mu-te-nu or temunah,
Meaning; embodiment, or manifestation

The original design for men and women was to be the embodiment of God. -To be a physical manifestation, in other words, “God with skin on.” Imagine what it would look like if humanity lived up to its original design! Which brings us to …

4. THE MIRACLE OF PURPOSE
Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” Gen 1:26 (NKJV)

The basic purpose we were given was one of responsibility and privilege over nature. Humanity still holds that crown. We are the top of the food chain. We are the major manipulators of the environment on this planet. We cause other species to be preserved or to go extinct.

But the purpose is not to power-trip over the rest of creation; it is to take responsibility for it, to extend loving kindness to each other and all creation. When we live this way, there is security in the privilege.

But we know the story; we didn’t. The image became twisted. The result was pain, destructive tendencies, even loss of awareness that there even is a Creator; all these curses came into existence. And if anything, the darkness is growing worse.

A decade or so ago, the practice of “cutting” was almost unheard of in general circles, and anorexia was something of a new phenomenon. The cultural belief over the past few centuries has moved from a belief in God, to a belief in our intellectualism, to a belief in science, to a belief in materialism, to this day’s belief in nothing. Why do we tend to practice things that destroy us? How did we end up in such a lethal mindset?

-Because, the wages of sin is death. Rom 6:23 - And our sin is; we severed the cord between us and the Creator of the first four great miracles. That leaves us with the fifth miracle, the most important and profound of all.
5. THE MIRACLE OF RESCUE

We all know Adam’s story to some degree. In essence, it is this: Man overextended his reach. He went for an experience and a knowledge that was best left alone. That experience and knowledge was this: What would happen if we operated outside the Creator’s design? …And we can’t simply blame it on Adam, because it’s something we all try.

But in that story in Genesis, an interesting thing happens. God is giving a serious talking-to, to Satan, the man, and the woman. And in that talk God foretells of the darkness that is about to befall existence; and it does. But He also hints at the great hope that will ultimately restore creation to something even better. What’s strange is that hint is not given to the man or the woman but to the serpent, Satan!

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel." ~Gen 3:15 (NKJV)

The renowned commentary of Barnes puts it like this:
That has been commonly understood to be meant, that though the Messiah should finally crush and destroy the power of Satan, yet he should himself suffer through the power of the devil.

The children of humanity were standing there, wide-eyed, as God looked Satan in the face, pointed to the Cross and said, “Let me tell you something. This is going to be made right; and this is what it’s going to cost you, and this is what it’s going to cost me.”

CONCLUSION

I don’t think we realize something: A lot of the confusion and lack-luster in our spiritual experience is at least partially; because we don’t understand how it all began. Adam’s story isn’t some stuffy old fable; the beginning was a series of awesome miracles. We are still living those miracles today!

And despite all the pain and suffering and wrong in the world; there is an overwhelming reason to rejoice, to worship, and above all, to be THANKFUL. We are the privileged recipients. We are God’s miracle in the flesh. God formed the universe just to have you exist. He has that much love for you and me. … When we even begin to understand; how can we be anything but thankful?

Today let’s do something special; let’s make our thanks an offering to God. During the singing of our closing hymn, take a moment to settle your mind on something you thank God for. Write it on a response tab or any piece of paper. Then fold it up and drop it in this tray by the Altar. It’s just a way to put our gratitude into physical form. Thank Him here, and then go out and live your thanks before others out there.