

NDE – Tim Hawks – 2019

Whisper AI Transcript (errors exist)

The engines were at full power and the aircraft climbed up to about 110 feet off the ground and then we weren't climbing anymore.

Very quickly knew that I was likely going to die.

I was looking down at an airplane that had crashed.

Right then, it hit me.

I'm not my body.

There's my body.

But here's me.

I've always been fascinated with these near-death experiences and by near-death I don't mean like they almost got hit by a car.

I mean like dead, dead.

No heartbeat, in some cases no brain waves and I'm talking 30 minutes, 90 minutes.

At first I was very skeptical of these but I'll tell you, after studying over a thousand of these near-death experiences, it's changed my mind.

The colors were beyond anything we could ever experience here.

I was seeing a lot of colors that I didn't have prior experience in knowing about.

3,000 shades of red and I can see them all.

Blind people, when they have a near-death experience, see they come back saying the same things.

How do you put that together?

A sense of peace that came down right beside me.

An energy that was pure love.

Much more real than I feel at this moment or any other time in my life.

This postulate, there must be at least five dimensions to make sense of some of the things science is discovering.

Is it so crazy to think about what comes after this life?

Wow.

The biggest question for every single human on the planet is the same.

What happens to us when we die?

Is this it?

Is that the end?

Or is there something after?

Is there a heaven?

And if there is a heaven, what is it like?

We live in a culture that's fascinated by the supernatural.

You just go to a store where they're selling books and you'll see all kinds of self-help books on how to tap into spiritual power for your business or your marriage or your life.

The real interesting thing to me is we're also in denial about death.

I mean, let's face it, nobody wants to talk about death.

This past week in our financial peace university groups, we were going through the video on insurance and when we got to life insurance, Dave Ramsey said, we ought to really call this death insurance.

And then he said, well, the reason why we can't call it death insurance is because nobody would buy it because nobody wants to talk about it, right?

We don't like to talk about this.

We don't want to think about it, though as best I can tell in the human race today, the mortality rate is still 100 percent, which means we're all going to die.

We're all going to die, so it's time to talk about it.

There were three buddies that got together to hang out and they were just talking about their lives and their experiences.

And one of them said, what would you like people to say at your funeral?

Well, the first one said, well, you know, I know, for me, I'd like people to say, well,

I was an amazingly gifted surgeon that saved many lives.

His friend said, well, that's not what I'm interested in.

I want him to talk about my family.

I want everybody to say he was a good family man who loved his wife and who loved his kids.

And the third guy said, really?

That's what you guys want to say?

At my funeral, I want them to say, look, he's moving.

And here's what's so strange.

We are saying that more and more as the days go by, so many people that are clinically dead, brainwaves, heartbeat, ceased, are being resuscitated by the medical technology that we have today.

And they're coming back and they're talking about the experience that they had.

These are called near-death experiences.

Now I want to show you what one of these look like.

So let's watch together.

Dr. Mary Neal is an orthopedic surgeon who shares her medical practice and her love for outdoor adventure with her husband, Bill.

In 1999, they planned an adventure that took Mary on a spiritual journey few have taken and returned to talk about.

My husband and I really enjoy kayaking.

We enjoy traveling.

We speak Spanish.

We've traveled internationally a number of times.

And so for my husband's birthday, I said, OK, this is the year we're going to do it.

So we went to Chile for a vacation to kayak.

After a week of kayaking, Bill sat out the final day with a sore back.

Only in the rest of their group, kayaked through a treacherous stretch of the river.

These are drops of 10 to 15 feet, 20 feet maybe, which for an experienced kayaker is not a crazy thing.

I went over the main drop and as I crested over the drop, I could see the tremendous turbulence and tremendous volume.

As I hit the bottom of the drop, the front end of my boat became pinned.

I and my boat were immediately and completely submerged.

I was absolutely pressed to the front deck of the boat and I couldn't move my arms even back far enough to reach my spray skirt, let alone push myself out.

I very sincerely asked that God's will be done and I meant it.

After several minutes of searching, the group leaders realized Mary was trapped under the falls.

They came out on the rocks and they kept trying to get to the boat, but the force and the volume of the water was such that they just kept being flushed through.

I mean, they just couldn't get to me.

At one point, they sort of recognized that it was really turning into body recovery, not so much of a rescue.

I know I've been underwater too long to be alive, yet I feel more alive than I've ever felt and this is more real than anything I've ever experienced.

Thousands and thousands of people are having near-death experiences around the world and what they describe is they should be dead, but they feel more alive than you could ever feel.

In fact, they describe that they don't just have five senses, they describe fifty senses or more, something they're experiencing there.

Now, Dr. Mary Neal, an orthopedic surgeon, was dead for thirty minutes.

She was under the water for fifteen.

So you think about it, a minute with no breath, two minutes with no breath, three minutes with no breath, four minutes with no breath, five minutes with no breath.

She described being released from her body as she hovered over for a while and watched them trying to get to her.

They eventually got her out and for fifteen minutes, they worked on her to try to resuscitate her before she came back into her body and during that time, she said she traveled outside of this existence and encountered some unbelievable things that are commonly described by people that are going through near-death experiences.

Now, the question you should be asking is skeptical?

You better believe it.

Like I'm skeptical of this.

When somebody's telling a story like that, I'm going like, what?

You know, seriously?

Where does this come from?

And so when you're asking that question, I think there are two things that you should be ready to wrestle with.

The first question you have to ask is, are these near-death experiences credible?

Is there any evidence to say that this is actually something real?

And we're going to answer that question in just a moment.

The second question you ought to be asking yourself is, is this biblical?

Is there any evidence in Scripture or the Bible that would support what they're saying?

So let's start with the first question and let's answer that together.

Let me just say at the front end, as I'm answering this question, I'm highly frustrated that I'm only going to give you guys a taste of this information.

In fact, as I was going over my sermon with the team and explaining all that I was going to say today, I could see their faces going, yeah, you can't talk for that long.

No, you can't talk for that long.

So anyway, I just want you to know I'm a frustrated preacher and there's a whole lot more evidence that I'm not going to be able to give you, but I am going to give you a resource at the end that you can take home that's going to help you as you work through this.

So our first question is this question, is this idea of a near-death experience credible?

Is there really any evidence to this?

Well, a couple of things I want to point out, and then I want to take us into some medical discussion.

The first thing I want to point out is actually this phenomenon is happening globally and a massive number of people have had a similar experience.

In fact, the Gallup Organization estimates from their polling that about 13 million Americans have had a near-death experience, which is about one in every 25 people, which means that in every room of all of our campuses, there's at least a couple of people that have had one of these near-death experiences.

In fact, the couple of times I've talked about this in the past, I always have people coming up to me sharing with me what they experienced when they were clinically dead and then after they were resuscitated and it's very profound.

Second thing I would also want you to know is that many people who are making these reports have nothing to gain by telling such fanciful stories.

When you think about people like Mary Neal, a spine surgeon, bank presidents, airline pilots, tenured college professors, coming and sharing a story like this, like everybody thinks you're off your record, there's nothing to be gained.

These people don't need the money.

It's not something that will enhance their life, so why?

And it's a global phenomenon.

We're seeing this all over the globe.

So let's focus in on just a little bit of the scientific evidence for just a minute because it's really profound.

Cardiologist Dr. Michael Sabum, he said this, he said, I didn't believe that there was such a thing as near-death experiences until Pete told me that he had left his body during his first cardiac arrest and watched the resuscitation.

So present in the room watching the resuscitation, Sabum said, these people like Pete Morton saw details of their resuscitation that they could not otherwise have seen.

One patient noticed the physician who failed to wear scuffs over his white shoes during open heart surgery.

He says, he described the resuscitation in such detail and accuracy that I could have later used the tape to teach physicians how to do a heart procedure.

That he could not have known unless he was present in the room.

He goes on to say, in many cases, I was able to confirm the patient's testimony with medical records with the hospital staff.

Dr. Sabum studied near-death experiences for five years with the goal of trying to prove that there was some kind of scientific explanation that would explain away what these people were experiencing.

And after five years, he compiled his report and got it published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, JAMA, one of the most prestigious medical journals in the U.S.

Dr. Jeff Long, a radiation oncologist, read that article and he said, bunk, there's no way.

And so he started asking his patients and lo and behold, they started to say the same thing.

Jeff then set out to disprove near-death experiences and he and his daughter have studied over 4,500 documented cases of people that have experienced this.

He not only now is a believer in near-death experiences, but he also is a believer in Jesus Christ from what he heard from his patients.

He's written two books about this already.

One of them's a New York Times bestseller.

He's traveled around the world speaking in different settings.

And he's one of the foremost experts.

Now there's about 20 different ideas populated as to what could be going on besides these people experiencing life outside their body and having a glimpse into the afterlife.

When all 20 of those have been thoroughly debunked, over 900 articles in scholarly and scientific journals have been published, 55 research teams have done major research on this topic.

It's not a small topic.

There's massive numbers of people who are studying this and coming to the same conclusion.

So Jeff Long writes this, now listen carefully because it's a little bit complicated.

So follow along with me.

He says with a flat EEG, that means there's no recorded brain activity, there is, he says,

no chance that the electrical activity in the lower parts of the brain could account for the highly lucid and orderly experiences described by near-death experience.

He said, lucidity coupled with the predictable order of elements established that envy ears are not dreaming or hallucinating, nor are they due to any other cause of impaired brain functioning.

In other words, what he's saying is that as the brain shuts down, what we expect in people is diminishment.

They would understand and see less with a brain that's no longer actually functioning,

but what these people are describing is so lucid and so specific and so detailed, and they remember it, that they're experiencing something that the average person can't even do.

How many of you can remember the name of the person you just greeted, right?

That's our normal brain.

These people are experiencing something that is hyped up to a level that is beyond anything that we can actually explain.

So let me make three observations.

The first observation is that people are describing things that actually happen in their surroundings.

So people will come out of their body and begin to describe in detail things that happened while these procedures are going on, or like in Mary's case, at the site of her accident and her resuscitation.

People are reporting these things in the kind of details that you would say, how could this be possible?

How could anybody know this when nothing's going on brain-wise?

Second thing you want to notice is that people all over the world, like globally, are describing things beyond their surroundings.

In other words, they leave their surroundings and they travel, and they're describing things in the spiritual realm that are in common with one another.

In other words, people are describing the same kinds of things that they see and observe.

How is that possible?

Now these are things like separation from their physical body, heightened senses passing through a tunnel, finding the presence of a brilliant light at the end of the tunnel that is actually a person that most of them describe as light, love, and God, common all over the world.

Brilliant light, meeting others, family members and friends that have died and gone on before them, a life review where everything in your life from beginning to end is reviewed by the person of light, and finally a return to the body.

Those are just some of the things that are common.

They're not every one of them, but lots of them are common across people all over the world.

The third one, blind people who have near-death experiences describe the same things without ever seeing anything.

In other words, like a person that's born blind that has never seen a tree, has never seen grass, is given the same exact description of what the grass and trees in this realm in heaven look like as the other people who've been seeing all their lives.

In one case, Vicki, who left her body after a car accident where she was pronounced dead,

blind from birth, has her life review where she's sitting with this person of love and light and going through everything that she's ever done in her lifetime, and if she's going through a life review, two of her childhood playmates are part of her life review, and when she returns, she describes their physical characteristics totally right on specific,

and she never ever saw them in real life and describes them in detail, vivid detail.

So you have to ask yourself the question, is it possible that there is something to this that this phenomena could be actually giving us a glimpse into the life to come,

and there's so much evidence out there that you have to wrestle with it?

Now, let me just say, talk about my personal experience for just a minute.

So, when I was a kid growing up, these near-death experiences first started coming out, and some of them were being recorded as we were seeing some people revived and they were talking about their experience, and what happened in the early days is there was just a few of them and people were latching onto them.

If you grew up in a Christian church, you might recall a movement that kind of swept through the country during the kind of psychedelic days of sex, drugs, rock and roll, and LSD,

and part of that attached itself to Eastern mysticism and called itself the New Age movement.

The leaders of the New Age movement latched onto these near-death experience and said,

see, it proves reincarnation.

It proves we all go into the light.

It proves that we all just go into the brahman, and a lot of Christian churches got scared and started preaching against this.

Some of you may have grown up in a church that preached against it.

I did, and so between that period of time and now, we have so many more, we have so many more scientific studies, and we've had people that have started to take these experiences and compare them to Scripture.

One of those people is a pastor right here in Austin.

His name is John Burke.

Now John was essentially an agnostic.

He was in college.

His father was dying, and as he's sitting by his father's dying bed, one of the first books ever written on near-death experiences was sitting on his father's table.

His bed stand there, he picked it up, he read it in one sitting.

Seeing his father passing away, he thought to himself, like, what is death all about?

Read the book, and when he finished reading the book, he said, wow, maybe there is evidence of life after this life.

The next year he got involved in a Bible study, first time in his life he was ever interested in anything spiritual or religious, and there he met Jesus and came to faith in Jesus.

After that he quit his engineering company.

He became a Christian pastor, moved to Austin, planted a church, and continued to study the Scripture and near-death experiences.

He wrote a book called Imagine Heaven, which became a New York Times bestseller, where he walks through over a thousand descriptions of what happened and parallels them with Scripture and it's fascinating.

It's fascinating.

Is it possible that what the Bible describes as the afterlife, people are experiencing a taste of that and coming back to tell us to give us evidence, even today, in a culture where most people want to pretend like there is nothing after this life that God is showing us that there actually is and we need to pay attention to it as a chance to challenge our thinking and move us forward?

John writes this book, travels all over the world speaking about this because the world is fascinated by what's here and it's just how I got into it as I began to read what he had to say and it started to blow my mind.

And so the first question is, is it credible?

Like is it credible?

And I've given you just a little bit of information, but I'm going to give you a resource before you leave to give you even more, to give you even more.

The second question is this, is this biblical?

Like what we're hearing from these people, does it parallel what's in the Bible?

And again, I would love to give you more information, but I'm just going to give you a little bit because that's all the time we have today, but here we go.

First of all, I just want to say, if you're skeptical, I get it, I am too.

So here's where I'm coming from.

I just want you guys to know where I'm coming from.

First of all, I believe that the Bible is fully trustworthy.

I believe the Bible is fully trustworthy.

I believe that God who lives in heaven, who created heaven, who sent his son Jesus from heaven to describe heaven to us, actually is more accurate than anybody's personal experience.

I just believe it is.

I just believe it is.

So whatever the Bible says is really what's true and where we're going to get that from.

Second, when people are having an experience, they interpret it through their own understanding and so you have to be somewhat skeptical as people try to explain things.

Two people on two different corners see an automobile accident and oftentimes give different descriptions of the same accident.

That's why you all are so frustrated with the instant replay because you got what, six or seven refs out on the field and they have to stop the game every 10 minutes because nobody can figure out what they actually saw.

And so there are people that are having experiences trying to use their words to describe it and there's differences between them because they're trying to put it in their own words.

Here's the third thing I would say by way of a disclaimer about people's experiences.

The people that have these near-death experiences tend to report, most of them report, that they got close.

They had some kind of a connection to the afterlife and moved in and felt and experienced some things but they knew that there was a barrier that they couldn't cross.

They knew that they weren't fully biologically dead, that they had some kind of an option to return and therefore rather than being in the room, they felt like they were looking through the window into something that is way more significant than what they were experiencing.

And so if somebody were to be resuscitated any point along the way in their experience, they might come back and have a slightly different thing to say.

However, when you start looking at thousands of these, you see common threads through them that parallel what the Bible says.

In fact, when we ask the question is it biblical, I would suggest to you that Paul describes something in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 that sounds like a near-death experience.

Look at what he says.

He says, I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven.

Now what's interesting is that Paul doesn't say his own name even though later on in the chapter we find out he's actually talking about himself.

But this feels so weird to him that he doesn't even identify himself as the person and he says he was caught up into the third heaven.

Later he says that he was caught up into paradise.

So he's not talking about the atmosphere, heaven number one, or the galaxy of stars, heaven number two.

He's talking about being right in the presence of God.

Listen to how he says it.

He says, whether it was in the body or out of the body, I do not know.

God knows.

And I know this man, whether in the body or apart from the body, I do not know.

But God knows was caught up into paradise.

Do you see Paul struggling?

I don't know, am I in the body, am I out of the body?

A lot of NDEers will say that, like, there's my body, but here's me.

Like, I don't know, my consciousness is here, but I can see my body.

Sounds very similar to what he's been describing.

Here what he says is, is he heard inexpressible things, things that man has not permitted to tell.

So he heard two kinds of things.

First of all, inexpressible things, things that are difficult to share.

Anybody ever read the book of Revelation?

John is also in the presence of heaven, and he starts trying to write it down in human words, and it gets so confusing to understand, because how do you describe a being that's outside of our dimensions and put it into human words?

He also says things that man has not permitted to tell.

Daniel the prophet, Zekele, John the apostle, all said that there were times when they were told, don't write that, don't put that down.

Paul's saying there were things that he saw, I can't even tell you, I know I'm not supposed to share.

So it appears that Paul kind of had one of these, or we see a similarity with this in Scripture.

So what I'm going to do is I'm going to give you two characteristics of near-death experiences.

I can only give you two.

I'd like to give you 10, but I can only give you two.

The other ones are in the book, so you can look at them.

I'm going to give you two and show you the parallel with the Bible.

So here's the first one, out of body in a new body, out of body in a new body.

Near-death experience people describe leaving their old body, but not leaving it into unconsciousness or oblivion.

They describe it as becoming more alive in a body that's different and better than what you could ever possibly imagine.

Mary Neal, the one we saw that was in the kayak accident, she said this.

She said, I felt my body release from the boat and begin to tumble with the current.

At that moment my body was released and I began to feel a pop.

It felt as if I'd finally shaken off my heavier outer layer freeing my soul.

So we know her body's still in the boat.

She says, I rose up and out of the river, and when my soul broke through the surface of the water, I encountered a group of 15 to 20 souls, human spirits sent by God.

Many people describe friends and loved ones who have already died that are part of a welcoming party that immediately come around and welcome you, as you bring you into the presence of God, who greeted me with the most overwhelming joy I've ever experienced and I could ever imagine.

In another place she said, we danced together.

So while she's looking down as they're trying to resuscitate her body, she's with this group of spirit beings in some form a body and she's dancing together with them.

She says, it was a joy at an unadulterated core level.

Bank President Marv Bestemann said this, he said, my old geezer body felt young and strong and fantastic.

The aches and pains and limitations of my age were just gone.

He said, I felt like a teenager again, only better.

That sound good to anybody?

Yeah, it sounds good, right?

So here's what the Bible says.

In talking about this, Paul writes this, he says, so it will be with the resurrection of the dead.

The body that is sown perishable, like that's getting spoiled, is raised imperishable.

It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.

It's sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there's also a spiritual body.

So what these people are describing is, the body that they find themselves in is different.

It's better, it's supernatural, it's spiritual.

I love what Vicki says, the one I described earlier that was blind.

She was in an automobile accident.

She flatlined there at the scene.

She found herself coming out of a tunnel onto grass.

And here's what she describes.

And by the way, the book of Revelation describes this, trees and flowers in a vast number of people surrounded her in a place of tremendous light.

And the light, Vicki said, was something you could feel as well as see.

Everybody there was made of light, and I was made of light.

What the light conveyed was love.

There was love everywhere.

It was like love came from the grass, love came from the birds, love came from the trees.

She says, I was made of light.

Everything was made of light, and it was filled with love.

Want to see what the Bible says?

Here's what Daniel wrote, multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake.

He's talking about the resurrection.

Some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

He said, physically, light, we're going to shine.

It's the glory of God is going to be displayed in us.

I could give you a whole bunch more scriptures, but let's just jump right to Jesus.

Here's what Jesus said, then the righteous will shine like the Son and the kingdom of their Father.

The Bible describes those who come into a relationship with Jesus when they're in heaven as having a body that shines like light.

Paul describes it in Philippians.

John describes it in Revelation.

Most of the time we read this, we think, well, that's metaphorical.

Well, I mean, it's just kind of talking like we're going to be really special.

No.

You're going to be transformed in unbelievable ways.

You're going to get a body that's so much better.

Some of us, yeah, and I agree with that one.

So I was in the gym yesterday morning.

I know you can tell, right?

I know you can tell, and you know what I am today?

I'm not swole.

I'm sore.

We work so hard to preserve these bodies.

In heaven, you're not going to have to work hard because you're going to be different, and it's better than you could ever imagine.

It's better than you could ever imagine.

Absolutely phenomenal.

Another thing I want to talk about is the God of love and light.

Near-death experiences almost universally across the board describe encountering this light that shines so bright.

They describe it as five times brighter than the sun, but they can still look at it.

In fact, they can't look anywhere else.

And in the light is a source of love.

And the closer they get, the more and more they realize, oh, this isn't a light.

This is a being.

This is a person.

Now, what's interesting is that many people who see the being and describe the being, who know Jesus, will actually describe the being as Jesus himself.

Others describe the same being.

They don't know who it is.

Now, some of you may raise the objection, you may say to yourself, well, that does make any sense, right?

I mean, why would Jesus show himself to a nonbeliever?

Well, in Revelation chapter 1, verse 7, John writes that every eye will see him, even those who pierced him.

Philippians chapter 2 says, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess.

Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father.

There's coming a day when every person on the globe will stand in the presence of Jesus.

And you say, well, if they see Jesus, why wouldn't he preach the gospel to them?

Why wouldn't they put their trust in him?

Well, what's so interesting is the seeing is not believing.

Many people saw Jesus on earth and they saw his miracles and they chose to crucify him.

They didn't even believe him.

So seeing is not always believing.

Some of us become so skeptical over the course of our life that we refuse to believe anything.

Refuse to believe anything that's good.

But the Bible describes God himself and Jesus as light and love.

Look at these verses.

This is the message we've heard from him and declare to you.

God is light.

In him there's no darkness at all.

God's light.

In him is no darkness at all.

Then he goes on to say this.

He says, dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God.

Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God.

Why?

Because God is love.

When God's describing himself, the essence of how he describes himself is love.

He goes on to say this is how God showed his love among us.

He sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him.

The greatest expression of God's love is sending Jesus to come and share that love and invite us into a relationship with God by sacrificing himself.

So would it be surprising to see Jesus as light in the same way God is light?

Here's what Jesus said.

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, I am the light of the world.

Like, God sent me as the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but watch this phrase, but will have the light of life.

What he doesn't say is we'll see the light of life.

Now think about this.

Our experience with light is that it shines on things to illuminate them.

Jesus is saying that those who are my followers will actually have the light of life.

The light that I have will become their light as well, the glory I have.

I'm going to share with them, and that's why Jesus makes it clear that we've been adopted into his family, that we are brothers and sisters with him, that we share in the glory of God.

And that's what these people are experiencing in these near-death experiences right out of the Bible.

You could talk about people who describe the city in the kingdom that John describes in detail in Revelation chapter 20.

It's phenomenal.

I mean, I could go through example after example of things that people universally are talking about.

Here's one that I think is really profound.

I love this one, so I got to share it with you.

A group who was studying these near-death experiences studied 500 people from India, primarily Hindu religion, and 500 people from the Americas, predominantly Christian religion, to compare to see if religion actually influenced these near-death experiences.

And here's what they discovered.

The various Vedic loci of the afterlife, that is the Hindu heaven, were never mentioned by the 500 in India that had the near-death experience.

He said, nor were reincarnation and disillusioned in Brahma.

In other words, the maintenance of Hinduism were not seen there.

He goes on to say, the concept of karma-accumulated merits and demerits may have been vaguely suggested by a report, listen, a report of a white-robed man with a book of accounts.

Probably what the book of Revelation describes Jesus to be, the white-robed man with a book of accounts.

It's interesting that people who don't know this story are seeing what is in the Bible.

Isn't that really interesting?

In other words, they're not seeing Vishnu.

They're not seeing Shiva.

They're seeing this man in white with the book of accounts.

Very, very interesting.

But I want you to know also that not all of the near-death experiences are positive.

In fact, 23% of those who report being out of their body and traveling to a different place report a hellish experience.

The three common phrases that they use to describe what they experience, darkness, heat, and torment, the three words that are used in the Bible to describe a place called hell.

Howard Storm, professor of art at Northern Kentucky University, was taking students on a tour of the museums in Paris.

When his small intestines ruptured, filling his cavities abdomen with toxins.

He had hours to get a surgery to repair this before he would die.

And being in Paris, they got him to the hospital.

There wasn't a surgeon on standby at that point in time, so he was waiting.

And while he was waiting, he died.

And here's what he describes.

I knew for certain that there was no such thing as life after death, only simple-minded people believe in that sort of thing.

I didn't believe in God or in heaven or in hell or in any of the other fairy tales.

He expected oblivion, but instead he found himself alive standing in the hospital.

So at first, Howard felt so wonderful that he assumed that they had somehow gotten him and done the surgery and he was well.

He didn't realize he was dead.

Then he encountered a welcoming committee of sorts, of nice people he thought were the hospital staff, but they deceived him and led him into outer darkness just exactly like Jesus described in Matthew 8, 11 through 13.

Now here's an interpretive key.

If he would have met the welcoming committee and felt good and his near-death experience would have ended there, he would have come back reporting that everything is okay.

And some people would listen to that and say, oh, I'm good, but he saw more.

He experienced more.

Watch what happens.

He says there in that horrifying darkness, these beings turned on him and mauled him like the worst prison scene imaginable.

He says at first, it was pushing and kicking and pulling and hitting, and then it became biting and tearing with their fingernails and hands, and then they were taking pieces of me.

And there was a lot of laughter and a lot of foul language.

Then they were more invasive.

And I don't ever go further with this because it is so demeaning.

I mean, I don't talk about it.

There has never been a horror movie that could begin to describe them purely sadistic.

The emotional pain was worth than the physical pain.

The physical pain was from head to foot, just solid, horrible, acute pain.

It didn't begin to match what I felt on the inside.

And in that place, I heard a voice which I identified as my voice, except that it didn't come out of my throat.

It's strange, but I feel like it came out of my chest.

This voice said, pray to God.

And I thought, I don't believe in God.

I don't pray.

And the voice said, pray to God.

And I thought, I don't even know how to pray.

I couldn't pray if I wanted to pray.

And the voice said, pray to God.

Eventually, in his desperation, Howard remembered a song that he had heard when a neighbor child had brought him to Sunday school.

Jesus loves me this I know.

That's all he remembered, and he began to pray.

I thought, why would Jesus care about me?

Even if he is real, why would he care?

He must hate me.

I'm so sorry I thought enough of this.

I'm done.

I don't have anything else.

I wanted it to be true that Jesus loved me.

I yelled into the darkness, Jesus, save me.

I've never met anything more strongly in my life.

And when I said that, I saw a light, a tiny little speck of light, and it very rapidly got bright and came over me.

And I saw out of the light, hands and arms emerge out of this impossibly beautiful light,

so intense, way brighter than the sun, and these hands and arms came out and they reached and they touched me.

And when they touched me in that light, I could see me in all my gore.

And all that gore began to dissolve and I became whole.

And much more significantly to me than the physical healing was that I was experiencing a love that is beyond, far beyond words.

I've never been able to articulate it, but if I can say that if I took all my experiences of love in my entire life and condensed them into a moment, it still wouldn't begin to measure up to the intensity of this love.

And that love is the foundation of my life from now on.

He gently picked me up and held me against him real tight, up against his chest.

So here I am with my arms around him and his arms around me and I'm falling like a baby and I'm slobbering and drooling with my head buried in his chest and he starts to rub my back like mom or dad with a child and I knew.

I don't know how I knew, but I knew that he loved me very much just the way I was.

Jesus does love me.

I called out to Jesus and he came to rescue me.

I cried and cried joy upon joy billowed through me.

He came to in that hospital room.

He went home.

He walked into his office at the University of Northern Kentucky and resigned.

He told his wife who was also an atheist, they were atheists together, that he had had an encounter with God and that he was going to give the rest of his life to loving people and serving people and she's good to give you the rest of it.

She divorced him like I'm not living with a lunatic and she divorced him and he's become a Christian pastor and he travels around the world everywhere you can go telling people about this God of love and light and how you can have a relationship with him.

Now why do I share this message with you?

A couple of reasons.

First of all, I want you to know that if you have a relationship with Jesus, what you have on the other side is so much better than this, that you do not need to be afraid of it.

Now for those of you who are struggling with depression and think, well maybe I just need to end my life and just go to be with Jesus, I would tell you that's the wrong way to think.

It's got you in this world for a purpose and the more you believe that and know that on the other side is eternity, it's going to be awesome so you live out your life for him, the more your depression lifts.

But so many of us are so wrapped up in what's going to happen this afternoon and what am I going to do this week and how do I scratch and claw to get ahead because if I don't get it here and now, I'm not going to have it ever and what you need to know is the God of love and light is so much better than you could ever imagine and if you could only imagine heaven, it would change your life.

For those of you who have friends that won't talk to you about your relationship with Jesus,

I want you to know this information because I think people are interested in this.

I want you to have conversations with people.

In order to help you with that, we took John's big book and we reduced it to a little book.

So I'm going to give each one of you a copy of the little book on all of our campuses if you'll promise me this.

In the next week, you'll read this little book.

It took me 80 minutes to read it.

For those of you who are doing the math, that's an hour and 20 minutes.

Okay, 80 minutes to read it.

Some of you are faster, some of you are slower, some of you like to read in one sitting, some of you like to spread it out, but this is fascinating.

I want you to read it.

If you read it and you go, I'm still skeptical, there's always the 300 pages.

And many of you have read this and benefited so much from it, it's so good, okay?

And then I want you to give this to a friend.

Every one of you know somebody that you probably had tried to talk to it somewhere along the way and they said, yeah, I don't want to talk to you about that.

Maybe they'll just read this and then you talk.

And so I want you to take one and I want you to give it to a friend.

For those of you who are skeptical of Christianity and you think, yeah, like, I got too much life to live.

I'm not worried about what happens after I die.

I just want you to know that in these two experiences is a very different future.

More joy than you could ever imagine in heaven and more disappointment and frustration in hell than you could ever imagine.

This is not Tim.

I don't like the idea of hell at all.

This was Jesus and this is what these people are experiencing and today would be a really good day to choose Jesus and choose heaven as bar heads for prayer.

Father, I just pray that in this moment that your spirit would settle over us and do whatever you need to do in us to prepare us for our time when we're face to face with you.

May you transform us in such profound ways that every day we walk in the joy of our future and the glory that we will experience with you.

You love us so much, Father.

Lord Jesus, you've done so much to give us your life.

May we fully experience it and live it as we open our hands and our hearts to you.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen.