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The Life Review (from *Imagine Heaven*)

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From Your Friends
at Guideposts

IMAGINE HEAVEN

JOHN BURKE

Near-Death Experiences, God's Promises,
and the Exhilarating Future That Awaits You

Howard Storm had been rescued from the horrors of the outer darkness, and now he found himself with Jesus, paused in space looking toward what he knew to be God's City. Jesus called in a melodic tone, and seven lights shot across the vast distance from the City of Light to join them. Howard recognized them as angels or saints, more brilliant and beautiful than he could imagine, trumped only by Jesus himself. Jesus asked him if he wished to view his life; unsure of what to expect, Howard agreed. Here's how he described the life review to me:

There are these angels in a semicircle around us. I'm being held. I'm now facing them with Jesus' arms still around me, holding me . . . hanging in space outside of heaven. They gave me a life review. . . . Jesus wanted them to play out, in chronological order, the scenes of my life. Mine was not as some people describe: panoramic, instantaneous. Mine was chronological from when I was born up to the present, moment by moment, life by life . . . in detail; including, knowing, experiencing the feelings of the people that I was interacting with. . . . The entire emphasis was on my interaction with other people—of course, initially, starting out with my mother and father, my sisters . . . school and friends.

The review of his life was not what Howard expected. It seemed to be presented not from his own memory, but from the perspective of a third party. Together he and the angels watched scenes from his life unfold, many of which he had forgotten. He was shown not only the events themselves, but also their effects on other people's lives and the thoughts and feelings of the people with whom he had interacted—details Howard had not known about at the time the events had taken place.

I learned in my life review [regarding] the relationship with my father . . . [that] I had participated in the breakdown of that relationship as much as he did. He was not a good father to me and I resented it, and I was angry at him. So, I did everything I could, subconsciously and sometimes consciously, to be as rebellious and as cold-hearted towards him as possible; which, only aggravated him more and made him more of a hostile father. So, the things that I had seen in my life where I was the victim and everybody else was the bad guy, I came to find out was a two-way street. We were both playing this game . . . as a son to my mother and father; I had failed them. My father and I had no relationship and my poor mother . . . because of my dad and [me] not speaking to each other . . . we couldn't have much of a relationship. I hardly ever saw her. I had a very



poor relationship with my sisters. I had not been a good husband to my wife.

The whole emphasis was on people and not on things. . . As my life progressed, my adolescence into adulthood, I saw myself turning completely away from God, church, all that, and becoming a person who decided that life was all about [being] the biggest, baddest bear in the woods. . . . As a matter of fact, there were some instances where I had won promotions, honors, awards, and they skipped them. And, I said to Jesus, “You’re skipping the most important thing in my life! This is what I lived for, to get this award! Kentucky Artist of the Year: big banquet in my honor and a big cash prize and everything.” And, he said, “That’s not what we’re here for you to see. That’s not important. What I want you to see is how you treated the students.”

Howard could barely watch some of the scenes from his life as they were replayed by the angels. He was particularly distressed by how he had treated his children, when he neglected them to focus on his own career and accomplishments, rather than on their need to feel loved by him.

And, now I began to experience Jesus’ and the angels’ literal pain, emotional pain with watching the sins in my life. . . . I had not been the father to my kids that I should have been, and I knew I hadn’t—because I was busy. I was trying to be somebody. . . . [Their] football games and the band concerts and the choral concerts and the theater performances; they could all wait, because I was busy being important. I was doing stuff making myself into somebody. The emotional abandonment of my children was devastating to review.

Watching his life review, Howard understood how his self-centered nature had dominated his entire life, causing him to put his own desires before the needs of the people around him. At one point Howard was so ashamed by how much his cruel and selfish behavior grieved Jesus and the heavenly beings, he begged them to stop the review. Yet he persisted in continuing to watch it for one reason: in spite of the fact that they were disappointed in the way he had lived his life, Jesus and the angels continued to communicate only unconditional love for him.

Keep reading to discover how these near-death experiences transform lives by giving people an opportunity to love the God who so clearly loves them. See page 240.

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VISITS from HEAVEN

One Man’s Eye-Opening Encounter with Death,
Grief, and Comfort from the Other Side

PETE DEISON

Heaven's Compassion

(from *Visits from Heaven*)

On the morning of January 21, 2013, three weeks after Harriet's death I was awakened by the sounds of hymns playing. I crawled out of bed, wondering if I had absentmindedly left the television on the night before. But the screen in the den stared back at me, dark and mute.

The hymns, however, kept floating through the house like prayers. I finally traced them to the dining room, and there I found the source: Harriet's cell phone. I stood there, stunned. I had carried my wife's phone around with me for three long weeks. It had remained silent except for the times when I played her recorded message just to once again hear the melody of her sweet voice.

But on that cold January day, hymns were playing on her phone, and they warmed my heart. After closer inspection, I realized the hymns were set as Harriet's wake-up alarm tone. I laughed, because it felt as if God had allowed Harriet to nudge me awake with joyful noise and then hug me. She loved the old hymns and often hummed them as she arranged flowers. I listened a few moments longer, and then I turned off the alarm feature. I praised God for His tender mercy and began my day with a smile for the first time since her death.

The next morning it happened again. I was awakened by the powerful lyrics and melody of the hymn "Be Thou My Vision" emanating from Harriet's cell phone.

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art, Thou my best Thought, by day or by night, Walking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

I grabbed my glasses, rechecked Harriet's phone settings, and discovered that the morning alarm was set. That's odd, I thought. I was sure I had disabled the alarm feature the day before. Even more puzzling, the alarm was set to go off at 6:44 a.m., and it was only 6:30. At the time, I laughed it off and chalked it up to odd things cell phones do. But I soon discovered that this wasn't a technical fluke at all. Far from it. It was the beginning of many events that would convince me that my merciful and loving God was allowing Harriet to communicate with me from her new home in heaven.

At this point, I know this assertion must seem unusual. You are probably thinking that in my distraught state, I was interpreting ordinary occurrences



through the filter of my lonely grief and making them into something more than they were. But before you make such a judgment, please read on.

The Birthday Letter

The first of these cell phone incidents occurred three days before my birthday. It was a day I dreaded because Harriet had always made birthdays special for me. On the day before, I opened my mail and found a card from a longtime family friend who lives in Chattanooga. It featured a beautifully designed presentation of the apostle Paul's prayer from Ephesians 3:20: "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us".

She had added this note:

Pete, I know this is an especially hard birthday for you without Harriet, but I am praying for God to bless you above and beyond.

And He did.

On the following day, my birthday, I received a letter from another of Harriet's longtime friends. Within the envelope was a smaller envelope, turning brown at the edges and containing another letter. Before opening that obviously older envelope, I read our friend's note:

Pete, I had no idea why I kept this letter for forty-five years, but when I reread it after Harriet's death, I knew the answer. I kept it for you.

With trembling fingers, I opened the second envelope. Within it was a handwritten letter from Harriet—one she had written to her friend about me forty-five years earlier. We had just become engaged at the time, and Harriet wrote the letter to express her elation:

I want to tell you about this wonderful man God has brought into my life. . . .

Then Harriet wrote two pages about me, including this paragraph that made my heart soar:

I saw him . . . and could not take my eyes off him. It's not necessarily his good looks—mainly it's the radiating love and strength in Jesus that is so obvious in his face and his continual joy! That night, I went to my room and wrote a prayer, telling the Lord I thought Pete was the boy He had picked out for me, and if Pete were that boy, it would be up to the Lord to bring us together, and He did!

I was blown away! My friend's "above and beyond" prayer in the letter I received the day before was answered in a way that only God



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