

DISCOVERING HEAVEN

**True Stories
of God's
Glorious
Promise of
Life after
Death**



Guideposts

God's Promise that Death Is Not the End



HEAVEN IS OUR HOME. That's the wonderful promise God gives to those who love Him. He will take us to live with Him there. "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." (2 Corinthians 5:1, NIV) But have you ever wondered what heaven looks like, sounds like and feels like?

Experience the vivid sights, sounds, colors and glory of heaven as told by ordinary people who journeyed to heaven and came back. These real-life stories will help you find the answers to some of life's greatest questions such as, "What happens to me when I die?" "Is heaven a real place?" "Will my loved ones be waiting for me?" "Will knowing the truth about heaven change my life here on earth?"

True Heavenly Encounters You'll Never Forget



MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE experienced a near-death experience tell of encountering loved ones in heaven who share deeply profound messages with them. Others reveal how “dying” changed them and taught them to live life with more happiness and a stronger desire to make each day about the magnificence of God.

Alma Was Healed in Heaven



ALMA BLAZQUEZ THRILLS to tell others that heaven is real, one of the reasons God sent her back to her earthly body, she says. For over nine years, Alma suffered from a degenerative spine disease. She was only 54, but she looked like a very ill, skeletal 100-year-old. She was in constant severe pain and literally bent over double. Given her continued health issues, she knew she was going to die from complications of the disease. On the night of March 8, 2012, Alma had a violent seizure and before she could come out of it, she knew she had passed over into heaven.

Alma saw herself standing in the midst of a beautiful garden. Standing! Straight and tall! Something she had not been able to do for years. She looked down and saw that the ground sparkled like diamonds. She looked up and saw the bluest sky she had ever seen. Below the sky she saw the gates of heaven and felt eternity all around her.

Then she saw a great orb of immense white light, brighter than anything she had ever seen. Alma knew this

meant God was with her. She asked Him, “How can I still be breathing if I’m dead?” God immediately answered her, “Because I breathe for you. I have always been breathing for you.” Alma was filled with a great sense of peace and love. She felt her body being healed.

But Alma’s heavenly encounter continued, and she saw her life pass before her eyes. She saw many of her relatives—her father, her aunts and uncles, and her maternal grandmother, who was her earthly protector. Her grandmother was smiling at her; Alma said hello to her with her eyes. She seemed happy to see her!

Alma wanted to stay in heaven, but God wanted her to return, and she knew that God wanted her to be a messenger of the reality of heaven. “I was sad to leave, but also filled with the joy of heaven. I returned so I can tell others not to be afraid,” Alma says.

Today, Alma feels joy from her near-death experience, knowing that heaven is real. Alma says, “I know that God is everything. He’s not just everywhere.” She is filled with what she calls “the most profound love.”

Alma believes that she returned not only to share her message that heaven is real but also to pray for others. “I didn’t understand that until about three years after I returned. I have been praying my whole life, and God wanted me to continue to pray.”

Alma’s memory of her time in heaven is just as real today as it was in 2012. “I was with God. How blessed am I? I’m just a normal, average person, and I’ve been to heaven.”

HOW I'VE CHANGED SINCE MY NDE

Alma Blazquez's life has changed dramatically since her near-death experience in 2012.

“Since hearing the sound of heaven, I have no interest in listening to music or television or anything like that here on earth. I can still hear the sound of heaven, and I would rather tune into that than anything else. My relationship with God has grown closer as a result. However, I would say that my relationships with people have become more challenging because it is so difficult for me to see people who will not accept Jesus. They are unable to love themselves and others. Oftentimes I have to distance myself from those who will not accept the truth because it hurts me to see them month after month, refusing to accept the one thing that will heal them. Jesus and God the Father are with me all the time, and my angels are my constant companions. I can't see them, but I know they are here with me.

The other major way the NDE has affected me is by showing me the power of forgiveness. When you forgive something unforgivable, it is so freeing. I blamed my mother for not stopping my childhood abuse so that I could have had a better life. But after the NDE, my anger was gone. I was able to hug my mother and tell her I forgave her and truly mean it. I believe that started her own healing. She told me she was filled with regret and shame for not realizing what was happening to me. I told her that I know what it's like to feel so much shame, but that when we believe in and trust God, He takes away all that guilt and shame. Forgiveness is a great gift from God. Because He first forgave us, He taught us how to forgive others.”

God Gave Bud a Vision of His Future



BUD EVANS WAS A YOUNG SOLDIER—just 19 years old—on night patrol on the outskirts of Hawija, Iraq. He was sitting on the top of his Humvee as it patrolled what his unit thought were quiet streets. Suddenly, the soldiers were under attack. Rockets were headed straight for Bud’s unit.

Bud grabbed his machine gun, jumped off the Humvee, and ran for cover while firing his weapon to help his fellow soldiers run to safety too. “It was an ambush,” said Bud. “Bullets were flying all over and I was pinned down.”

But it was about to get much worse for Bud. A rocket exploded very close to him, and he was hit by shrapnel. Blood was pouring out of him. He was then shot and felt immense pain. He instantly couldn’t breathe. He was choking on his own blood.

Suddenly, Bud felt no pain—he felt like he was floating. Then Bud’s entire life started playing out before his eyes. He heard a voice say, “Babe, I love you.” Bud knew it was his wife, but he didn’t have a wife! He also heard two little voices

saying, “We love you, Dad.” An immense feeling of love enveloped Bud as he realized God had given him a vision of what his future could be.

After being raised by an abusive parent, Bud knew he wanted this family—a family that unconditionally loved him. It was then he heard his platoon sergeant shouting, “Evans, stay with us!” Bud was taken to a combat hospital in Germany, where he is sure he was taken care of by a female nurse who helped him remain calm, stayed with him during surgery, smelled of wildflowers and spoke to him with love and compassion. After waking up from being in a coma and being told there were no female nurses at that hospital, Bud knew he had been in the presence of an angel.

Bud’s recovery was long, and he was later medically discharged from the army. During the time of his recovery, he met a girl named Jen. Bud knew it was the same girl he heard in his heavenly vision. Two years later, they were married and are the proud parents of a girl and a boy.

THE SPLENDOR OF HEAVEN

Heaven is the holy dwelling place of the Lord. God's throne is there. His angels are there. His Son, Jesus, is there. And God promises that we will be in heaven too. The Bible gives us some beautiful descriptions of heaven, a spectacular place filled with joy and wonder.

Perhaps none are more awe-inspiring than what the Apostle John wrote in the book of Revelation. John peered into heaven and the throne room of God in his visions. His descriptions of the wonder and beauty that await us in heaven are dazzling.

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 22:1-5, ESV)

If you've ever wondered what heaven is really like, let the Bible be your guide, as you discover what other scripture passages tell us about our heavenly home.

- **HEAVEN IS JOYFUL.** “In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” —Psalm 16:11 (NKJV)
- **HEAVEN IS LIGHT.** “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.” —Colossians 1:13 (ESV)
- **HEAVEN IS FULL OF OUR FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES.** “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms.” —Ephesians 2:6 (NIV)

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE EXPERIENCE THE AFTERLIFE AND OTHERS DON'T?

Dr. Jeffrey Long, a radiation oncologist, is the founder of the Near-Death Experience Research Foundation. He has been studying NDEs for over 20 years. He says that only 10 percent to 20 percent of people who have a close brush with death actually glimpse heaven. But why just a select few?

Dr. Long believes, according to the research, that those with a life-threatening event are more likely to have an NDE than those who die peacefully. Dr. Long tells this story about a woman named Laura.

When Laura had her NDE, she asked God, “Why me? What makes me special?” God replied to her, “Nothing. My love falls on everyone equally. Everyone is special. You needed this to accomplish your life mission.”

That may be the best reason. Dr. Long does say that his research shows that whatever the reason an NDE occurs, people who return grow more loving and compassionate. They no longer fear death, and they believe in God more deeply.

A Prayer of Heaven

Dear God,

Thank You for Your promise of heaven, for the beauty, joy and peace that is Your home and where You have invited me to dwell with You for all eternity.

Lord, You are in control of everything that has life and breath. You know every beat of my heart. Help me to remember You in my daily, earthly life and to never doubt that my eternal life is with You in heaven. And when my time comes, please see me safely into Your loving arms.

Help me Lord to do Your good works here on earth for my family, loved ones, friends and strangers. Teach me to be more loving and compassionate. Help me to become more like You.

Lord, abide with me all the days of my life on earth and with You in heaven. —Amen

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