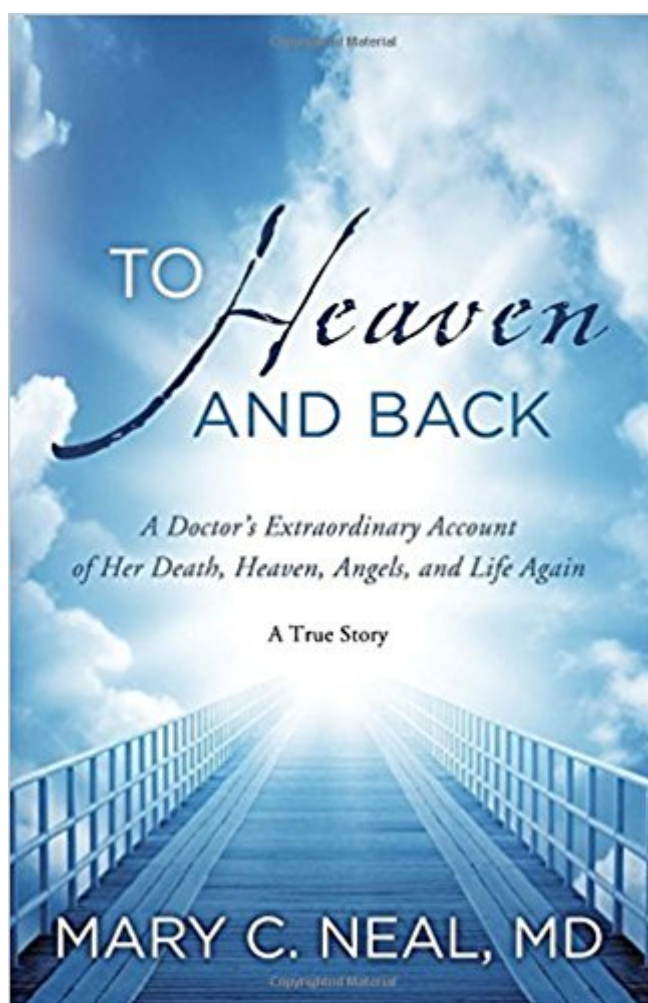


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To Heaven And Back: A Doctor's Extraordinary Account Of Her Death, Heaven, Angels, And Life Again: A True Story



Synopsis

A kayak accident during a South American adventure takes one woman to heaven — where she experienced God's peace, joy, and angels — and back to life again. In 1999 in the Los Rios region of southern Chile, orthopedic surgeon, devoted wife, and loving mother Dr. Mary Neal drowned in a kayak accident. While cascading down a waterfall, her kayak became pinned at the bottom and she was immediately and completely submerged. Despite the rescue efforts of her companions, Mary was underwater for too long, and as a result, died. *To Heaven and Back* is Mary's remarkable story of her life's spiritual journey and what happened as she moved from life to death to eternal life, and back again. Detailing her feelings and surroundings in heaven, her communication with angels, and her deep sense of sadness when she realized it wasn't her time, Mary shares the captivating experience of her modern-day miracle. Mary's life has been forever changed by her newfound understanding of her purpose on earth, her awareness of God, her closer relationship with Jesus, and her personal spiritual journey suddenly enhanced by a first-hand experience in heaven. *To Heaven and Back* will reacquaint you with the hope, wonder, and promise of heaven, while enriching your own faith and walk with God.

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Q&A with Mary C. Neal, M.D. Q. How did you feel when you died? Did you know what was happening? A. I was acutely aware of everything that was happening. I knew that my efforts to exit

the boat were not working, that I was out of air, and that I was too far from the riverbank for anyone to reach me. I knew that I would probably die. Having grown up with a fear of drowning, I was surprised to find my transition from life to death was seamless, peaceful, and beautiful. I felt quite wonderful. Q. What was your faith life like before your death? A. Before my near-death-experience, I believed in God and took my kids to Sunday school but was not particularly religious. Like many accomplished young adults, I felt like I was in control of my life and my future. Although I tried to be a "good" and "moral" person, my faith was not integrated into my daily life and the demands of work and family left little time to think about spirituality. With my near-death-experience, the truth of God's promises and the reality of eternal life became a part of my every breath. I am in constant prayer and regardless of what I am doing, I try to reflect God's love and live for His glory. I try not to miss opportunities to uplift or encourage the spiritual life of others, and I live with gratitude and joy, knowing that I never face challenges alone. Q. Why do you think you came back to life? A. I certainly didn't want to return to Earth, but was given information about some of the work I had yet to complete and wasn't really given a choice. I was expected to share my experiences and my story with others, helping transform their faith into complete trust that God keeps His promises. Q. Do you have any regrets about this experience? A. I have not a hint of regret. In fact, my death and return to life is the greatest gift I have ever received, and I am continually grateful for having had this experience. Q. How do you explain why this happened to you? A. I have always been a private person, am not known to be a writer, and do not relish the attention of speaking. I have been asked this question many times. I do not know the answer, but I am a scientist by training, a skeptic by nature, and a very concrete, rational thinker. Perhaps, I was given this job because I have a developed a lifetime of credibility. Q. How is your experience compared to others who've gone to heaven and come back to physical life? A. I have not read many accounts of other people's experiences, but I have had many patients over the years tell me about their own near-death experiences. It seems that most stories, mine included, contain some consistent elements--that of an overwhelming sense of God's love and forgiveness, intense peace and beauty and no desire to return to Earth. Everyone recalls the details with precision and each person is profoundly affected by the experience. In these ways, my experience is quite similar. Q. What do you want people to know about heaven? A. God's unconditional love for each of us is intense, complete, and is reflected in all of Heaven. Before we return to Heaven, our real home, we have an incredible opportunity on Earth to face challenges that will help us learn, grow and to become more Christ-like in the fruits of our spirit. Our time is so short that we need to be about God's business every day.

Mary C. Neal, M.D. is an orthopaedic surgeon. She studied at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine, completed her orthopaedic residency at the University of Southern California and is fellowship trained as a spinal surgeon. She is the former Director of Spine Surgery at the University of Southern California and is a founding partner of Orthopedic Associates of Jackson Hole. Her after-life experience has been featured on national media including WGN, Dr. Oz, and Fox and Friends. She has served as a church elder, on several non-profit organization boards, and created the Willie Neal Environmental Awareness Fund. Dr. Neal lives with her family in Jackson Hole, WY.

At the same time that Dr. Mary Neal was drowning in a river in Chile, her husband, Bill, appeared to me in a dream. Bill is an old friend of mine from high school. We had shared many adventures and confidences over the years, but neither he nor any other friend had ever stared at me in a dream and woke me up. I shook it off at the time, only to learn a few days or weeks later why I had seen him. The story of her experiences from the drowning, through the repeated revivals and her ultimate survival are the events upon which this book is anchored. But the meat and meaning of it are in the unfolding of her life as guided and protected by her God. I'm obviously no disinterested party. Skeptics can be reassured by my report that if it came from Mary's pen, it will be the truth and the whole truth. I doubt, however, that her or anyone's personal account can penetrate fully into the modern psyche. That is, into those who think that they need proof of what we call God. As an account of a brush with the Hereafter, there have been many others similar to it, and they're well enough known to be used as shorthand in bad films. What Mary and those like her have experienced are gifts from somewhere, given not just to them. She gives it back to us disguised as a simple offering. She doesn't baffle the reader with melodrama, hyperbole, fantasy, or excessive adjectives. She tells her story in a concise & detailed way, with a voice of eloquent and unadorned sincerity. In this way, it's easy to read and difficult to put down, vividly descriptive and completely convincing, humbling and inspiring. Fortunately for us, she kept waking up in the middle of the night until she couldn't keep from writing it down for us. The reason to read this remarkable account is witness, which is one of the few ways that we have left to hack a little hole in our jungle of unbelief.

To Heaven and Back is a moving memoir by Dr. Mary Neal. The book reflects on the miraculous events of Neal's life and how they tied into her stirring spiritual journey. The most gripping and page-turning sections of the book were when Dr. Neal described the unbelievable events in her life. She has several near-death experiences and faces many tragedies. Not only are

the stories remarkable, but the connection back to God after every trial is inspiring. Her struggles served to strengthen her faith and see how truly present God is in our lives. While the book has the extraordinary events of Dr. Neal's lifetime included, it also addresses everyday common struggles faced by many of us today. Neal's book focuses a great deal on the challenges she faced throughout her life with her relationships, career, and her family. With her busy and ambitious lifestyle, Neal found she often had a hard time knowing what God was to her, and where He fit into her life. If you find yourself struggling to know who God is and what he means to you, this book may resonate with you. I would specifically recommend this book to parents, as Dr. Neal references her experiences with parenting often throughout the book. The relatability of many of the struggles Dr. Neal describes throughout her life make it a book anyone can enjoy and take something away from.

The profound autobiography, *To Heaven and Back*, written by accomplished author, Mary C. Neal, MD played a tremendous role in the restoration of my faith. Neal impeccably describes her close encounters with God while addressing fluctuations in faith she experienced following each divine intervention. While the majority of readers have not experienced a near-death experience, many can relate to Neal's raw, vulnerable portrayal of family life filled with love, loss, and the Lord. I recommend this memoir to individuals who may be struggling with their faith. The magnitude of God's adoration for his children is unmistakable throughout the novel. To some, the content of this autobiography may seem farfetched or unrealistic, however, this account truly highlights the miraculous workings of God. Neal includes graphic details during the recollection of her accident, so individuals who tend to be squeamish may find parts of her novel disturbing. Currently, I am in school to become a registered nurse, so I find Neal's orthopedic profession quite mesmerizing. The medical aspects scattered throughout the story only added to the intrigue I experienced. Accompanied by a myriad of emotions, this novel genuinely feels as though the Holy Spirit is interlaced between the paragraphs of each page.

I did not like this book because of the lack of focus on heaven and jumping around in the story of different people in Dr. Neal's life during her recovery and life. Unlike many other Heaven stories this book doesn't talk hardly at all about Heaven. Dr. Neal started with the beginning of her life and spent a third of the book on that part of her life before the accident. This book was well organized but too long and misleading to readers that are reading for the afterlife story. She also spends another third of the book talking about her relationship with many of her family members in separate

sections. The title gives a false hope of the story and insight into heaven. I would suggest this to a person that is interested in the story of a doctor and her recovery from injury and how it affects her relationship with others. This could be helpful for someone that knows or is in a similar situation as Dr. Neal. If you want an easy read that engages you through the whole book this is not the book for you. Before ordering this book make sure you understand that it's a story of life not death.

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