

MY NDE - The night my life changed forever.

My family and I had just returned from our Bible study/Fellowship group meeting on Friday 5 November 2004, at around 22h00 and were preparing to go to bed. My wife Naomi was visiting with a blind friend in her room (she was temporarily staying with us, prior to being accepted into a care facility), while I got into my pajamas and then went to our TV room and waited for my wife to join me.

I had a sudden bloated full feeling in my stomach and attributed the feeling to the snacks we had whilst at our Bible study / prayer meeting. I tried going to the bathroom to find relief without success. I returned to the TV room but after a few seconds decided that something was really wrong with me and returned to the bathroom, passing our blind guests room and called my wife by her name (which I thought would carry the necessary tone of urgency I felt) and said that she should come IMMEDIATELY as there was something VERY wrong with me.

In the bathroom, I sat down on the toilet and felt an intense prickle over my whole body as if I was having an allergic reaction to something I had eaten. My face and arms were blood red and felt as if they were glowing. I looked at my wife and said that I did not know what was happening to me, but that I felt fullness in my stomach, as if I had eaten too much. My vision suddenly acted up like a faulty television, in that the picture edges started to tear and then everything went black.

My wife Naomi, a registered nursing sister, immediately saw what was happening, as my eyes were open but there was no sign of life, my heart had stopped and I was turning blue around my mouth and my skin was clammy and cold. She could not lift me off the toilet seat to lay me down so that she could administer CPR, and shouted for help. One of my sons, J-P and a friend had decided not to go out the evening and were visiting in his room (which was Gods grace as they usually are out over the weekends).

J-P and his friend Michael reacted like lightning, and laid me out on the bathroom floor so that my wife could administer CPR. They then immediately called the Netcare Ambulance service on 082911 and waited outside in the street to guide the ambulance in on arrival. Naomi began CPR as I was not breathing and there was no heartbeat and I had started to turn blue. She kept up the CPR for about 10 minutes until the paramedics arrived and took over from her. Another grace of God was that she had just completed a CPR refresher course, as she works as a nursing sister at an old age home and the course was to equip her with up to date skills for the work that she does.

The paramedics worked on me for about an hour to stabilise me before taking me to the Willows Hospital at around 23h45. During this period, our teenage children were not even aware of the drama

in the bathroom, and only became aware when the paramedics carried me out on a stretcher to the waiting ambulance.

During this physical activity, I was elsewhere, I descended out of darkness from a great height and gently landed on a road that wound through a beautiful forest much like a road through the Knysna forest. I became aware of a friendly young man walking at my side, of about 28 years old with a physique like a gym instructor, wearing a white T-shirt with short black pointy hair. He said that he was there to show me where to go.

I admired the lush green vegetation on both sides of the road, which led up a gentle slope next to a mountain. It was a beautiful spring like morning around about 10 am with a blue sky and a few clouds and a few seabirds. We crossed over a rise and before me was a beautiful bay with calm clear crystal blue water and white sand and palm trees. Tiny waves lapped at the beach and a wonderful peace came over me. The righthand side of the bay ended in a headland with high cliffs and all under the palm trees were tiny white beach cottages with terracotta roof tiles in various colours, green, brown red blue etc.

The friendly young man led me to a cottage, opened the door and led me inside. The room was in a subdued light gray and blue with a picture window view of the beach. The furnishings were practical and sturdy with a chair, table and bed all neatly made up. I could see a couple with a child walking on the beach.

The young man said that I should make myself comfortable and wait here. As he prepared to leave, I decided to play tourist and that a few questions would be in order (I knew what had happened to me and knew where I was but decided to feign ignorance) I asked the young man why must I wait here? Whereupon the young man said that everyone must wait for Him that must come. I asked "but how long must I wait" whereupon he answered "Time here is not the same as where you come from and that a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day" but I tell you, He comes today, just now, in a short while to fetch all His children.

As he was preparing to leave again, I asked another question. "Do I have a choice in the matter whether I could stay or not?" He looked at me for a while and said that we all have a choice. I felt as if he was drawing me out and not giving me a full answer. "But what are my choices" I asked and he gave me a strange object like a clipboard but multifaceted and said, "In your case you do have a choice". The clipboard had three facets, each with a heading and consequences.

1. **If I stay** – I would have no more worries, sickness, tiredness and any of the other impediments that affect people on earth, and I would experience lightness in everything I do or undertake like never before. I noticed that I could float off the ground with the greatest of ease...

One thing I did realise there was that people say, you can not take anything with you – BIG mistake, you take all your memories with you which you can recall in the finest detail ever imaginable, almost like having an instant DVD replay of anything in your memory that you would like to recall in your life. You can experience people, places, even smells, and other happenings in the finest detail (I do not know if bad memories go in the package or if they are erased as your sins are forgiven – I suppose so).

2. **If I elect to return**– My loved ones need my support and guidance and three of my children were still at school with my one daughter busy writing matric. I could see/read each of my beloveds requirements as well as my clients unfinished business (I am a Computer Systems specialist with my own business) requirements.

Appended to the going back choice was a long list of instructions, listed in what looked like priority order:

- a. I must be the right person at the right time for all people who I encounter and so be of a blessing to my fellow man.
- b. I must bear witness to what I experience here in detail (and upon reading this, I said to the young man that I come from a very enquiring and exacting community that will doubt many things unless proven. He said that I must not worry about what people will say about my experiences, but that I must just bear witness to my experience and NOBODY will prevail against the testimony as the Holy Spirit will guide me and give me a timely answer to all criticism and comment.
- c. I should tell my youngest brother Dick that a thousand angels are praising God on what was happening in his life (He was about 53 years old and had never gone to church or was interested in Christianity).
- d. I should tell my brother in law, (far right orientated) that they should stop playing at Church, and get involved in a living congregation, as they need the experiences and testimony of the congregation to grow towards the fruition of Gods plan in their lives (They are politically far right and carry this burden in their church going and outlook on life).

The list was extremely long after these 4 points and I asked the young man how could I remember all these things? He answered that it was a list of my life, and that not all people see their whole life in list form. I should remember the first four and at random choose another from the list. The item I chose was that I must see and experience my grand children and teach and enjoy them – none of my children was married yet!

I asked if I might walk down to the beach while I made my choices – these were very hard choices to make and indecision racked me. He said that I must choose now Stay until Time ran out or GO BACK AND DO THE LORDS WILL IN MY LIFE, and choose wisely, as time was running out for choices. I turned to him and said, “In that case, I choose Life – to return to my loved ones and to do His will in my life”, whereupon he smiled, opened the door and said “Then I will see you again shortly – go back and do His will as He is coming shortly” This gave me great pleasure, as I know where I am going when time as we know it, runs out.

Everything became dark around me, I had difficulty breathing, and my throat was extremely sore. I saw white flashing lights and heard a beeping sound with electronic numerals – it was the inside of an ambulance that was taking me to Wilgers Hospital at around 23h45 with the flashing lights being the streetlights we were passing in the ambulance on Lynnwood Road en route to the casualty section.

I came to at around 09h30 the next morning in the ICU, coupled to the breathing apparatus with an intubation tube in my throat helping me breathe, and my throat extremely sore. I saw my wife Naomi next to the bed with a lost and worried look on her face. I wanted to console her but could only move my eyes and I again lapsed into unconsciousness. I regained consciousness at around 10h30 and found that a nurse was supporting me, in the sitting position with all the intubation pipes removed, but my arms restrained by crepe bandages to the bedframe. I felt very nauseous and tried to indicate that I needed a receptacle because I wanted to vomit, but could not get a word out. I spontaneously had a projectile black mass expel from my mouth and again lapsed into unconsciousness.

I came to at around 11h30 and everything looked peaceful and quiet, until I saw the little man with the green cap and apron. I thought it looked like a stage play, and Julius Ceasar was smiling benignly at me (He was the cardiologist who had treated me since I arrived in casualty the previous evening) “Aaah, Mr Lishman, welcome back – and turning to someone to my left exclaimed, “He was dead, and yet he lives! And as they say in the advertisements, who must you thank?” he gestured with a flourish of his hand to the left of my bed. “There she stands, your angel of life – without her you would not be here today” and he gestured towards my wife Naomi. She remarked that she had only done what she could in the circumstances, whereupon he remarked – “Exactly – the right person at the right place and the right time!” and at that moment all the memories came flooding back from my encounter in heaven, I remembered all that had happened as the angel had told me.

After a while, one of our pastors wives (Averil Potgieter), entered the room and looked at me from the end of the bed with her piercing blue eyes (she was also our family physiotherapist). I could still not speak or move properly, and could just look on with out a word. She opened the sheet exposing my foot and ran her fingernail on the underside of my foot making my leg jump, and without saying a

word, turned and exited the room. I wondered what it was all about and was slightly confused. What I did not know was that she had just spoken to my wife outside the ICU and indicated that she would run a quick check on me to test for brain damage and the reaction of my leg confirmed that all was well.

What I enjoyed most the following day was to see all the family and friends in my room that came to visit and show their support – this gave me a lot of encouragement.

Later the day I was trying to put the facts together as to what had happened to me. I was extremely fit and did karate 4 times a week and was preparing for my brown belt. I noticed that the doctor had left my file on the bed and moved it up with my foot until I could get it in hand and read it. I reconned that the facts were as follows: I was alone in an ICU room, so it definitely could not be a cold or flu – it had to be serious and nobody was telling me anything – the diagnosis was Myocardial Infarction (Heart Attack)! No ways, I knew I was as fit as a fiddle with only slightly elevated cholesterol.

The following 3 days subjected me to a battery of tests. They ranged from a lung function test to detect an embolism – Negative, gastroscopy (that showed up a very small ulcer in the top of my stomach that I was not even aware of), followed by an angiogramme that I immediately protested against, I was having none of this, as friends of mine had died in the previous year during or directly after such a test. The doctor sent in a very persuasive young assistant who described the whole procedure in detail and that I could even see the inside of my own heart – horrors, but I then decided that we should try at least to get to the bottom of the problems and consented to the procedure..

In preparing for the angiogramme I was beset by doubts as I had elevated cholesterol but my wife kept us on a good diet and I was exercising 4 times a week, but had to know if that could be the cause of the problem.

During the test, the doctor showed me that all my arteries and heart muscle was in perfect condition – and his exact words “any young man would be proud of such a heart – Mr Lishman we have given your heart its 60,000 km service and it is good for another 60, 000 km or 100 years, whichever comes first!, Good night I am going home!”. While the theatre staff were placing me on the gurney and preparing to take me back to ICU the song “...and I can't thank you enough, for being who you are, and I can't imagine ever life without you!” from the group Eden was playing. I interpreted the you in the music as The YOU and have a love for this track ever since, as it reminded me of Jesus's care in my hour of need and that all the tests were shown up as negative and that I was healthy.

The portion of music track lyrics that played that evening in the theatre has become one of my credos for the right reasons in that my family and I cannot, and will not have a moment of any day without the Lord in it. Every time I hear that music track, all the memories come flooding back and I have to fight

the tears, tears of gratitude that my Lord had given me the experience and the choice to come back to tell that amazing story, as my witness and I thank Him who made it possible.

The tests revealed that the small ulcer had eroded into my aorta and that I was extremely lucky to be living, as I had lost 2.5 Lt of bloods in about 30 seconds into my stomach, causing my heart to fail with my stomach valves sealing tight, preventing more blood loss.

Post operative gastroscopy in March 2005 showed that the medication I took each day had healed the ulcer completely and I had a clean bill of health and I praise the name of Jesus for my healing.

Two weeks after my discharge from hospital, we had a family reunion at one of my brother's homes. On seeing my youngest brother (53 years old) I immediately gave him the message I was carrying, "There are a thousand angels in heaven praising God as to what is happening to you!" He was not a Christian, and had never been to church since Sunday school. He was stunned, as a friend had invited him to assist in the singing, the previous Sunday at a methodist church in Garsfontein. He said if he had known that church was so fulfilling, he would have attended church years ago. In May 2005, he gave his heart to Jesus and has become a reborn Christian who now uses his singing talent in worship at his church.

I asked one of our ministers at church if I could witness at a church service on my experience, whereupon the minister said that the program in the mornings was full. Another minister allowed me to witness before his service, late in December 2004 and the result was that only about a fifth of the community heard my witness testimony, as most were away on December leave. After the service I was approached by a woman who said that she had a problem with my testimony in that Jesus said upon the cross to one of them crucified next to him "I tell you, for today you will be with me in paradise!" I recollected what the angel had told me, and that I should just bear witness and the Spirit would lay the correct answer on my tongue – he was so right!

I immediately said to the woman "your Today and the Today where I was did not fall into the same time framework as what we were used to – one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day" oh she said, I never thought of it like that!

I never got around to telling my brother in law the passage that I had to bring to them until it was almost too late – he had a haemorrhage in his brain and was laid up for around two months. I felt guilty and brought the message to his wife and she just pooh – poohed the whole testimony and said it was a bad dream and that such things never happen to us as everything about the future is a mystery – I let it go, remembering what Jesus said regarding the prophecy of a prophet in his own town.

During January/February 2005, I wrote the first draft of this testimony in Afrikaans and have subsequently distributed around 50 copies. I always wanted to translate it into English, but time has always run away from me.

This testimony is an account as it was for me on that last waiting day, where Gods mercy was so great that he gave me a choice to complete the work He had ordained for me for which I was still searching. It was at around 10h00 that last waiting day where it dawned on me that everyone goes to the last day and time is so different as to the earthbound time we live in. I praise the living God that He gave me a choice, even so late in my last day experience. My youngest son gave me a text from Psalm 91:14 that encouraged him on the Saturday while I was in ICU, and nobody knew what to expect. I thank our community, the church choir and my cell group for the prayers and the care given to my wife and family during my stay in the ICU and especially to my darling wife, without whom I would not be able to retell this testimony.

My family and I, we will serve the Lord as He sees fit – the right people at the right place and time with our whole heart.

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A youth prayer group (Purple Rain) at Moreleta NG church recently invited me, to relate this testimony at one of their prayer meetings and afterwards a young teenager (Ryan) handed me a book and suggested that I read it. I glanced at the title and thought “This is not my kind of book – I like adventure and travel type of books” and the book lay at my bedside for three weeks.

During this time during our morning reading and prayer, I prayed for revival in each one of us and in our family as a whole, not really with conviction. One evening at the end of July, I picked up the book and started reading (I can finish 750 pages in a week). After one week of reading, I found that I had only got through about 90 pages, and bubbling over enthusiasm. My wife and family could not wait for me to finish the book, and asked me to buy one for each of the family members, so that they could share in my sudden and dramatic revival. The book has radically changed my way of life and my passion in life as well as my family’s lives.

Reading the book brought my own NDE experiences vividly to mind, and I started to bear witness as far as I went. The Spirit told me that I could not let an experience like mine gather dust instead of souls for the Lord. I gave my all up for Jesus and asked Him to use me as He sees fit. In a very short time, the Lord gave me a burning passion for telling His revelations and plan to the marginal Christians.

The Spirit led me to permanently switch over from listening to a popular secular radio station to permanently having my radio in my car and office tuned to Impact Radio, enhancing my testimony and preparing me to witness effectively.

The book described in detail some of the places I had seen and experienced and I have to tell all I know as the time is short. I praise the Lord that He has dramatically and irrevocably changed my life to conform to His plan with me.

I have learnt to give my all to the Lord, Listen to His voice in the spirit and be totally committed to saving the people with whom I meet in my consultation business. I have resorted to purchasing a few books at a time, carrying them in my car and giving them to the people that the Spirit moves me to, and which I come into contact with, or just as Christmas gifts – my gift for life, so that they may live!

CUM Publishers (According to a report in Beeld) says that a successful Christian publication in SA sells between 5000 and 8000 copies and then it is a winner – The book, of which I speak, has sold 90000 in SA to date, and to my mind, is a must for all Christians to read. It is available in English and Afrikaans in SA. The book is currently a world best seller, and really prepares one for God's glory and plan for us.

The book title is “Die Hemel is ‘n werklikheid” or “Heaven is so real” by Choo Thomas and is available at any CUM bookstore. I have even purchased the audio book, which I plan to play at the old age home for the reading impaired old people, where my mother in law resides.

James Lishman - September 2007

Soli Deo Gloria. So that all may believe and have everlasting life.