Death did not end my life

They said, "He's dead," and they were pounding on my chest and everything.

By Howard Johnson

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**At** 17, I joined the Navy. About four or five years later, while I was on a destroyer, I had an appendicitis attack. There was no doctor on board—just the corpsman. And so they sent me to an oiler, another ship that was traveling with us and that had a young doctor.

He said, "You've got appendicitis, and we're going to operate." He proceeded to give me a spinal injection, which was supposed to keep me from feeling the pain of the operation. But when he drew a line where he was going to make the incision, I said, "I felt that."

"No, you didn't, you can't feel it," he said, and went ahead with the operation.

It turned out that I was immune to the anesthetic, and when he began to operate, I went into shock and died. According to the corpsman and the others who were there, I was dead for eight minutes. And when I was passing on, I could see them and hear them talking. They said, "He's dead," and they were pounding on my chest and everything. "He's gone," they said.

But I got up off the operating table. Now there were two of us. To me, this was not an out-of-body experience. There were two material bodies—the one I saw myself to be, and the one they saw me to be. We disagreed—they were saying I was dead, but I was saying to myself, "I'm alive."

There was no doubt about it. A lot of people have said that they've had out-of-body experiences. In reality there is no such thing as an out-of-body experience, because you don't leave your material body until you overcome the belief of being mortal.

So I could hear them talking, and could look at them. Then I turned around and started to approach a door that measured about 15 feet by 15 feet, and was brilliantly lighted. In front of the door was a person with long hair, who I assumed to be a woman.

I approached the door, intending to go around her. But she'd move to the left as I moved to the left. As I moved to the right, she'd move to the right. Not a word was said, but she wouldn't let me pass. Apparently during the eight minutes that the doctors said I was dead, I was struggling to get through that brilliantly lighted door. The woman was back-lighted, so I couldn't see what her face looked like.

Then I heard them saying, "He's coming back." And I turned around and looked. And they said, "Yes, he's coming back."

The next thing I knew, I was back in bed and in the recovery ward. They had removed my appendix, and I went through the typical recovery process.

But there was no time when I had had any feeling of being dead. And one of the most interesting things was that I didn't have appendicitis when I was walking toward that door.

I had a desire to know more about God, and the following experience brought me closer to an understanding of God. I had jungle rot in my feet while I was serving in the South China seas on another destroyer. I was having my feet bandaged one day, and I got tired of struggling with this disease. So I decided to write home for my Christian Science books.

When you were in a squadron of ships in a carrier task force, they sent the mail to the carrier and flew it off and flew it back, so you could get your mail in about a week. It was faster than actually going across country sometimes. So I asked for my books, and the books arrived—my old Sunday School books—the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy.

*This was not an out-of-body experience.*

Before we pulled alongside the carrier to receive the mail that had my books, the corpsman and the captain came down to my quarters to see how I was doing. After they left, they went up to the lounge above the bunking area, and I could hear them talking through the vent. The corpsman said, "Captain, we've got to get him off the ship. He's going to lose his feet." They were going to put me on the carrier.

When I heard that, I pounded on the vent and asked the captain to come down. At that particular time, I was the chief fire control man, a weapons systems chief, and I was the only one in the squadron at that rank. And so I said, "If you send me away on that carrier, I'm going to be gone. But if you wait a few days, we'll be up in Japan, and you can send me over to the naval hospital, and then you'll get me back." He agreed to this. And in the mail that day, I received my books.

There was a big poker game that night that they were all attending, and the corpsman and his assistant forgot to come and bandage my feet. So I just opened *Science and Health* and started reading it. It was so familiar that the love in it just jumped out at me. After I'd read awhile—I don't remember what I read—I fell asleep. And when I woke up, my feet were healed. Completely healed.

That changed the whole ship. I could sense people's love and curiosity. I would be on watch up on the bridge, and these young seamen would come up and ask, "Chief, can we see your feet?" They just couldn't believe it.

I still had a lot of things to deal with, like my drinking and smoking. And that was a struggle for a year or so, but I kept studying Christian Science. I ended up being stationed in New London, Connecticut. At the time of this next experience, I was conducting the Sunday and Wednesday services in the Christian Science church there.

I had an annual physical, which was required, and they took a skin test for tuberculosis. The test came back positive. I got a call from a friend of mine, a chief corpsman, and he said, "Howard, I hate to tell you this, but you've got tuberculosis. So you're going to have to come down and have an X-ray."

So I went down and had a full chest X-ray. And he called me up two days later and said, "You've got tuberculosis in both lungs, and you're going to go to a sanitarium out West." And I said, "I'll go pack." And he said, "No, we're already packing you."

On the ride down to the isolation ward, I thought of something from *Science and Health* [see pages 430-442], "I'm in the Court of Spirit," I thought. "I don't have tuberculosis! That's not in the Court of Spirit." And I saw very clearly that God's law of good was the only law governing me, and that this meant I was free from any sickness.

About 20 minutes after I got there, they said, "We have to take some X-rays to send with you." So they took a series of X-rays. I waited, and then in about 20 more minutes, they said, "We have to X-ray you again. Something's wrong here." So they X-rayed me a second time, and then a third time.

After the third set of X-rays, the doctor called me in and said, "Howard, I want to show you something. Here's the first X-ray, with tuberculosis in both lungs." He could point out the white splotches. The second set showed scar tissue. The third set showed nothing. He said, "I've got to let you go—you don't have tuberculosis!"

*As I focused on the good that was coming into my life, I began to see more of my spirituality.*

This happened on a Wednesday, and that night, when I went out to conduct the church service, the doctor, the corpsman, and the chaplain were all sitting in the first row.

The chaplain began to come every Wednesday—he couldn't come on Sunday. And one Wednesday he gave a testimony in which he said, "I've witnessed a lot of healings, and I've heard about other healings. I'm going off duty now, I'm going back to my parish, and I'm going to start preaching. I'm not going to be a Christian Scientist, but I'm going to preach Christian Science from that pulpit."

The experience of having passed on never left my thought, and a few years after I retired from the Navy, early in the 1970s, I started having problems with my heart. It was hurting all the time. I called a Christian Science practitioner and asked her to pray with me for healing.

I saw her every week, and we prayed together, and I talked to her every day. But she only gave me one passage to study. It says: "Self-renunciation of all that constitutes a so-called material man, and the acknowledgment and achievement of his spiritual identity as the child of God, is Science that opens the very flood-gates of heaven; whence good flows into every avenue of being, cleansing mortals of all uncleanness, destroying all suffering, and demonstrating the true image and likeness. There is no other way under heaven whereby we can be saved, and man clothed with might, majesty, and immortality" (Mary Baker Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings,* [p. 185](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Self-renunciation+of+all+that+constitutes+a+so-called+material+man%2C+and+the+acknowledgment+and+achievement+of+his+spiritual+identity+as+the+child+of+God%2C+is+Science+that+opens+the+very+flood-gates+of+heaven%3B+whence+good+flows+into+every+avenue+of+being%2C+cleansing+mortals+of+all+uncleanness%2C+destroying+all+suffering%2C+and+demonstrating+the+true+image+and+likeness.+There+is+no+other+way+under+heaven+whereby+we+can+be+saved%2C+and+man+clothed+with+might%2C+majesty%2C+and+immortality)).

I looked up every word in that passage, to see if there were related references to study in the Bible or Mrs. Eddy's writings. I wanted to increase my understanding of the whole concept of what that was saying. Every day and all the time I was reading and memorizing this passage. I also added this sentence from that same page: "The will of God, or power of Spirit, is made manifest as Truth, and through righteousness,—not as or through matter,—and it strips matter of all claims, abilities or disabilities, pains or pleasures."

So I continued to study every word. But for about a year I continued to get worse. Then, one day I was walking across the plaza where I worked, and I stopped breathing and collapsed onto a bench. If people saw me, they must have thought I was resting in the sunlight. I thought, "I'm passing on, and this time I'll see what's behind that door!" Then this passage I'd been studying really hit me in a different way.

Up until that time, I had been thinking *about* the child of God, even though I had been claiming to be one. All of a sudden I saw that I *was* the child of God. I started thinking as though I was the child of God, with the Mind of God as my mind. And I saw heart trouble as something that just was not true. I was healed! I've never ever been bothered with heart problems since.

Someone may say that it took a long time for that healing to come, but God measures time according to the good that is appearing in our lives, so I was not keeping a record of the time. As I focused on the good that was coming into my life, I began to see more of my spirituality. And when the healing came, I saw it was the result of my increasing understanding that my health, which really has its foundation in Spirit, had always been perfect.

These experiences have helped me tremendously in helping other people, because I know there's no death.

The sin and disease people suffer from are always based on the premise that life is going to end in death. Once you know there's no death, you can know there's no condition that can lead to death. It's so important not to try to heal physical matter to prevent death. As "the scientific statement of being" puts it in *Science and Health,* "There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter" ([p. 468](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=There+is+no+life%2C+truth%2C+intelligence%2C+nor+substance+in+matter&book=tfccs.main.sh)).

So if you stay with the infinite, the "allness" of God, then there's no past. And if you take the good of the past, that's now. If you take the good of the future, that's now.

But the lies of the past, the sins of the past, the diseases of the past, don't exist in God. And so if you see that, you don't drag them into the future with you.

I have found that knowing there is no death has helped me in the healing of others. For instance, there was a girl I just talked to today. She's in college now, but when I was called to help her, she was young, I'd say about five years old. Her father called me and said, "My daughter is very sick. I wonder if you have the time to come see her."

And I said, "Yes, I do."

And he burst into tears. I said, "What's the matter?"

He said, "You're the ninth practitioner. Eight practitioners have turned down the case."

So I went. She was paralyzed, and the only thing moving was her chest—a little breath which you could hardly see. She couldn't move anything. Not even her eyes.

I prayed along with the family, and we deeply pondered the statement from *Miscellaneous Writings*that I mentioned earlier, and we read the weekly Bible Lesson from the *Christian Science Quarterly.*As I saw her as a child of God, it became very clear to me that I did not have to fear that she would die.

I saw this girl every day. Within a few months, she was starting to move, and they carried her out on a futon and put her in front of the television. She said, "I can't focus." So they slid it back and forth until the TV was in focus for her. That's when we realized that her eyes were still paralyzed.

In a month's time, she started to function. Then she could get up and hobble around a little bit. After a total of four months, she could go back to school, but she couldn't exercise or anything at first. In the end, she was fully restored to health and, as I said, is now an active, lively college student.

If I were asked, "How should I feel about death?" I'd say, "Understand that you cannot be separated from God. And the closer you become in your relationship with God, the greater the destruction of the fear that says you're separated from Him. Birth, sin, disease, and death are all an illusion that separation from divine Life and Love can occur. This can't happen, because you're always the loved child of God."

# Heart trouble cured

By Howard E. Johnson

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*Adapted from an interview on the radio edition of the* Christian Science Sentinel

**When I was** in the United States Navy, I had an operation to remove my appendix. This was before I began relying on spiritual healing in Christian Science. Because of a mistake in anesthetizing me, I went into shock on the operating table and "died." The doctor later told me I was supposedly dead for eight minutes while the medical team worked to revive me. During that time, this is what I remember. I got up off the operating table and stood looking on as the doctors pounded on my chest. I heard them saying "He's gone." But as far as I was concerned, I had my body, whole and solid. I also saw a brightly lighted door and wanted to go through it, but a figure blocked my way. The next thing I knew, I woke up in the recovery room.

While I wasn't interested in trying to understand any spiritual implications of this experience at that time, it did leave me with a conviction that what we call death is an illusion. Some time after that, I had a disease in my feet that the navy called "jungle rot." I didn't want to go to a hospital ship, so I decided to try Christian Science, which my family had practiced while I was growing up. One evening I began to read *Science and Health* by Mrs. Eddy. The next morning I was completely healed. My shipmates were astounded.

After this I began to study Christian Science. Many years later, I developed a heart condition and asked a Christian Science practitioner to treat me. We prayed every day for about a year. Again and again she turned me to this passage from Mrs. Eddy's writings: "Self-renunciation of all that constitutes a so-called material man, and the acknowledgment and achievement of his spiritual identity as the child of God, is Science that opens the very flood-gates of heaven; whence good flows into every avenue of being, cleansing mortals of all uncleanness, destroying all suffering, and demonstrating the true image and likeness. There is no other way under heaven whereby we can be saved, and man be clothed with might, majesty, and immortality" (*Miscellaneous Writings*, [p. 185](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Self-renunciation+of+all+that+constitutes+a+so-called+material+man%2C+and+the+acknowledgment+and+achievement+of+his+spiritual+identity+as+the+child+of+God%2C+is+Science+that+opens+the+very+flood-gates+of+heaven%3B+whence+good+flows+into+every+avenue+of+being%2C+cleansing+mortals+of+all+uncleanness%2C+destroying+all+suffering%2C+and+demonstrating+the+true+image+and+likeness.+There+is+no+other+way+under+heaven+whereby+we+can+be+saved%2C+and+man+be+clothed+with+might%2C+majesty%2C+and+immortality)).

To me this meant I had to accept the attributes of God—goodness, wisdom, love—as my identity, and renounce the error of life in matter. Then there came a point when I appeared to be passing on. The thought that came to me was, "Now I'll get to see what's behind that door." In the back of my mind, I had always been curious to know what I'd missed by not going on during that experience years before. Right after that, though, came this thought: "No, I've got to renounce that. I have to acknowledge what I am—my spiritual identity as the child of God. "

I saw that all those months I'd been thinking *about* the child of God. I had to think *as* the child of God. As the child of God I didn't want to go anywhere. I wanted to express the attributes of God, divine Life, right here.

This was a turning point for me, and soon I was completely healed of the heart condition. This took place more than twenty years ago. Looking back over these experiences reminds me of a statement from *Science and Health*: "Mortal existence is a dream of pain and pleasure in matter, a dream of sin, sickness, and death; and it is like the dream we have in sleep, in which every one recognizes his condition to be wholly a state of mind" ([p. 188](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Mortal+existence+is+a+dream+of+pain+and+pleasure+in+matter%2C+a+dream+of+sin%2C+sickness%2C+and+death%3B+and+it+is+like+the+dream+we+have+in+sleep%2C+in+which+every+one+recognizes+his+condition+to+be+wholly+a+state+of+mind&book=tfccs.main.sh)). To wake up from that mortal dream, we need to think God's thoughts. We need to think as the child of God.

Howard E. Johnson
La Jolla, California