

After 'War Room,' Power of Prayer on Display Again in New Movie

More than 7 million people have read Pastor Don Piper's testimony of his short visit to heaven. As he traveled home from a conference in January 1989, a semitrailer hit him head on, rendering him without a pulse for an hour and a half.

And starting Friday night, some of those 7 million and many others will watch his story come to life onscreen as *90 Minutes in Heaven* premieres across the nation.

While the film is titled *90 Minutes in Heaven* and does portray Piper's testimony of what—and who—he says he saw during his short time there, the story line focuses more on the months following the accident.

His recovery was painful, in every sense of the word—physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. The physical pain he endured, along with the letdown of sensing heaven only to be thrust back to a fallen world sent him spiraling into a depression.

Even though recalling the story brings back painful memories, Piper believes his story is his mission.

"There are things I tried to forget. I once recorded an audio version of the book. And that was hard to do, because reading the book aloud—cover to cover—required me to relive some stuff that I never wanted to think about again. And now, this film brings everything to the surface again," he explained. "But it's necessary to tell the story, because this is ultimately a movie about hope."

The hope has already spread, even before the premiere. Hayden

Christensen, the actor who portrays Piper, has a different perspective of life and death—a much less dismal one than before.

“Like most people, I have a fear of death. It motivates a lot of what I do; it’s actually one of the reasons I act,” said Christensen. “Getting to explore these concepts ... allows me to fear the unknown a little bit less.”

As for Eva, Piper’s wife, the turbulent months of 1989 taught her not only to be hopeful about her future in heaven, but hopeful through prayer.

“Before Don’s accident, I prayed for the right things, but not with the right heart. And when I was in his hospital room, I learned for the very first time how to cry out to God,” she recalled.

“As the recovery went along, I found that I could talk to God at any time. You don’t have to bow your head and close your eyes. Sometimes the conversation is long and sometimes it’s short, but when you are honest and open with Him, He sends you the most amazing peace and comfort.”

Don added that one other thing he anticipates about going back to heaven is being there with one of his heroes of the faith, Billy Graham.

He recalled visiting the Billy Graham Library just a few years ago with Chris, one of his sons. Library historian Wayne Atcheson took them through Billy Graham’s childhood home and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association’s headquarters.

“Along the way, I mentioned several Crusades I had attended,” Piper said. “A bit later, Wayne came back with photos from each of those Crusades. I cherish them and have them hanging up at home. It was a thrill to be there. I felt like I was standing on holy ground.”

And as his hero releases a book later this month that reassures readers of heaven's reality, Piper looks forward to eternity more than ever.

"I can't wait to see Billy Graham there. I don't want to lose him, but I know where he's going. And I'll see him at the gates," he said. "For me, that's a glorious, awesome reality. There will be a great reunion someday!"