

Meet the Real People Behind the 'Breakthrough' Miracle Story

This week, the unbelievable, miraculous story of John Smith, a boy who was prayed back to life, will be shared with millions throughout the world in the film *Breakthrough*, spearheaded by Hollywood producer and minister DeVon Franklin and starring Chrissy Metz, Josh Lucas and Topher Grace.

Smith, a 14-year-old boy, walked out on a lake in his hometown, fell through the ice and stayed under for 15 minutes before his body was recovered by first responders. After doctors attempted to revive him for 45 minutes, Joyce Smith, his Spirit-filled mother, was brought into the emergency room to say goodbye. But instead of saying goodbye, the Holy Spirit rose up in her, giving her the boldness to ask God to bring him back. The machines started pinging and signs of life suddenly appeared.

During a set visit, I had an opportunity to sit down with the real Joyce, John and Jason, who explained more about John's miraculous journey.

Joyce, you had some pretty amazing faith that God was going to raise John up. That doesn't happen very often or there wouldn't be a movie. What gave you the absolute assurance that he hadn't passed?

Joyce: I'll preface this with I've prayed for more people who have died than have lived. We had prayed to God for 17 years that we could have a baby. I had three older children, and we lost two children. This boy was our gift from God. On my way to the hospital, I just started praying to God, "You gave him to me. You can't be taking him away from me. Please. What's going on?" And the Lord just started talking with me and said,

"Don't worry about this. I've got this. I'll take care of this."

Now, I didn't know what "I've got this" meant, other than I just knew that He wasn't going to take John. Something we didn't find out until after we had written the book was that the charge nurse there said, "When you walked into the room, there was something else that walked into the room with you. There was a presence there with you." And she said the whole atmosphere of the room changed, even the temperature of the room changed. And she said, "When you prayed for your son ... " and as I say, I knew God was going to bring him back; I didn't know how He was going to do it, but He was going to. She said, "When you prayed for him, there was something that moved up the table so hard and so forceful that it pushed me and the other two people there back away from John, almost to the point where I couldn't keep my finger on his pulse."

And she said, "We all felt it." She went on to say, "We wouldn't even talk about it to each other that day. It wasn't until the next day when we got together and one of the nurses said, 'OK, I have to ask this question. What did you guys feel when that mother prayed for her son?' And the other nurse said, 'Well, what did you feel?'" You know, nobody wanted to come out and say it first, and so finally they all agreed that they'd never had anything like that happen. And it's been a bonding time for everyone who witnessed this miracle.

Jason: What I'd say, too, for probably eight months before this happened, God had been preparing Joyce. She'd been studying *Believing God* by Beth Moore. So, God was preparing her, and she had allowed God to prepare her. So, when it happened, God had put her right there, in those studies from the Bible, and all of that stuff. And so, maybe more than in her whole life, she believed that. When you look at this, I think there is a difference between faith and belief. And I think her belief is what God had grown and what she'd been working on. Because the Bible says you either have faith or

you don't. It's not something you can grow. But belief, and that's by studying God's promises, being in His Word. And I think these miracles are available to anyone who will really get in and run after it.

Joyce: One of the Scriptures that we held onto is "The power of life and death is in the tongue." I don't mean someone should say, "I won a million dollars" and it's going to show up; I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about reading God's Scriptures and knowing His promises and His truth through them. And that's just one of the things. It wasn't an accident that we were studying about believing God at that point in time. I mean, it was undeniably ordained. Because the confessions that went on with that study in the mornings when you would do your homework or whenever you would do it, you would say, "I believe God is who He says He is. I believe God can do what He says He can do. And I'm believing God." I mean, you're reinforcing this.

Also, in one of her studies, I learned we are created in God's image; He's omnipotent, so our words are potent. They have power to them. And later on in that teaching, she talks about speaking God's words. Satan knows God's Word because he was in heaven with God. So when you start speaking the Scriptures, Satan stops hearing evil and starts hearing God's voice. He's under God's authority. And so, when you start praying that stuff, it's just amazing. I just had no doubt that God was going to bring him back. I was getting irritated at the doctors because they weren't on the same page as me.

How long was it until he left the hospital?

Joyce: Sixteen days until he walked out of the hospital, from the time he fell through the water. And there's a timeline that goes with that. He woke up on the third day, seven days later they took him off the vent, seven days after that he walked out of the hospital. And 40 days from the day that he woke up, he was released from all doctors. We didn't know that

until later. A friend of mine called me. "Okay, let's look at these dates." She goes, "I have to know because I know if this is God's miracle, there's God's numbers on it."

Jason: And God had it just set up. I mean, it was perfect. We were saying over here, everything was within a moment. If it would've been a minute longer in the water, they would have put the rescue team in. John was right on the edge of the ice shelf. Even just a little wave could have moved him under it. It was literally within minutes every time. And one of the things we tell in the story is, the heartbeat was just the beginning, because when we got to the hospital in St. Louis, he was brain-dead. They said that he [was] not going to live overnight. They were preparing to give another kid his heart.

We went in and prayed like crazy. He just woke up, eyes open. He had probably 10 things going on that should've killed him. His organs were in catastrophic failure; his muscles were exploding. It wasn't just the heartbeat; that was only the beginning. That's where we talked about praying, "OK, the heartbeat's just the beginning, and we're not giving up until this boy walks out." And that evening, we did walk out of the room saying, "He's walking out of here. He is walking out of this place." And that's exactly what he did. He didn't even take the wheelchair. He walked out of the hospital.

John, what an amazing story.

John: Yeah, we were out on the ice there (celebrating a win), and I got a phone call from my mom, and of course she asked me if I wanted to go play basketball, so of course I said, "Yes, let's hit the gym," and what we figured out was I was walking and talking, so as I was on the phone, I wasn't thinking about where I was going. So the farther I went, the thinner the ice got. She said, "I love you," and I said, "I love you too, Mom," and I hung up. They said within about three to four seconds, crack, the ice fell, and the three of us were fighting for our lives.

That's extraordinary faith that your mother had. It's inspiring. There are a lot of prayers that people don't pray, because they talk themselves out of praying, they don't think it can happen. They don't believe. The book is called *The Impossible*, right? How has it changed the whole family, even the people who have heard this story, to pray for bigger things?

John: Regarding my family, it's brought everybody closer. My brothers aren't serving the Lord. One is, but the other two aren't. So, this story really got their eyebrows raised and brought us all closer, and it's giving us a chance to witness to them. The story is impossible. Even so, there are certain doubts that still come up. My parents are older, so I think, "When I leave for college, are they going to be well enough that they don't need me?" But mom has always come back with, "We are going to be OK; I'm not worried. God's got us under control. I continue to pray. I know He's had us for 33 years before we even had you; I'm going to be OK." That sense of confidence, really, really inspires me to continue to grow in my faith. {eoa}

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