

'I Died an Unbeliever': Boy Who Came Back to Life After an Hour Shares Details of His Resurrection

One of the most amazing miracles I've ever heard of happened four years ago when a 14-year-old boy in St. Louis, Missouri, fell through the ice and died. He was underwater for 15 minutes and had no pulse for the next 45. This boy wasn't saved at the time, but his mother was full of faith—enough to pray that God would bring her son back to life. And that's exactly what God did.

Charisma reported on this modern-day resurrection, which was recently turned into a movie called *Breakthrough*. The motion picture releases in theaters April 17, right before Easter. I recently had the opportunity to interview John Smith, the boy who fell through the ice. We discussed his experience four years ago and how God orchestrated the creation of *Breakthrough*. [Click here](#) or scroll to the end of this article to listen to my entire conversation with John.

With Rev. Samuel Rodriguez's help, *Breakthrough* is being translated into Spanish. Because of that, John says he has received hundreds of direct messages from people from different countries.

"I've had close to 300 direct messages from people in other countries, contacting me about *Breakthrough* and how it's coming to their country," John says. "[They say] they couldn't be happier, and they couldn't be more excited about God being shown on the big screen."

John says he's thrilled God can use his story to draw others to Him, and he hopes people will come to Christ as a result.

After all, when his heart stopped in that icy water four years ago, he wasn't yet a Christian.

"I grew up in the Assemblies of God my whole life," he says. "But I kind of fell away from the church. I had an attitude, and I was a bit of a troublemaker. So I ran away from God, and I wanted to pursue what I wanted, not what He wanted. ... I actually died an unbeliever."

But God had mercy on John. He tells me he was under the water for four to five minutes before the Fire Department got there to search for him. One of the rescuers even broke protocol to find him. He was supposed to have a rope tied around his waist while he searched, but they didn't have any rope, so he went anyway. John says the rescuer searched for him for several minutes with no success.

"He's searching, searching, and he just can't find anything," John says. "So he hears a voice saying to go to his left. And he does it—he already checked that area actually. And the clock is ticking by now—I'm up to six to eight minutes underwater. And they finally find me, and he pulls me up. And it's a miracle from then."

John says the doctors did everything they could medically to resuscitate him but to no avail.

"They bring my mom and she prays," he says. "I had no pulse for over an hour. Nothing. But instantly when she prayed—not five minutes, not 10 minutes later—then my pulse came back."

John has 300-plus pages of medical documents stating that what he went through was a modern-day resurrection. He says there is no denying that what happened was supernatural—down to the very moment his mom walked into the room to pray over him.

"They said that when she walked in the room, not just the atmosphere changed, but the physical temperature of the room changed," he says. "They also said that when she prayed for

me, something rushed up my body so powerful that it pushed three nurses back. And keep in mind one of these nurses is about 6-feet-6-inches, 250-plus pounds.”

John says he doesn’t remember anything about the time he was medically dead. Some who have died and come back to life report seeing a white light or heaven, but John says he didn’t see anything.

“We prayed I wouldn’t remember anything because it was so traumatic,” he says. “And I can honestly say that if I would have remembered anything more than what I do, I wouldn’t be serving the Lord because I know me. I would have turned to earthly abuses rather than turning to God.”

By God’s grace, John didn’t suffer severe mental issues or physical disabilities after this incident. But the following few months were still difficult. He says he was very weak and lost a lot of weight. Yet he wanted to get back to playing basketball as soon as he could, and again by God’s grace, he was playing within a year.

But the physical challenges were not the only things John found difficult.

“You would think that [after this event] I would get a warm welcome from my friends, and I did at first,” he says. “But eventually, when the magazines and all this started unfolding, they all turned on me. When God does something great, the enemy just loves to knock it down. And that’s what the enemy was trying to do. But I’m blessed to have so many great mentors in my life. Pastor Samuel Rodriguez; Mr. Devon Franklin; my own pastor, Jason Noble; Brad Riley—these men have walked me through this hard time.”

John says God orchestrated these relationships at the perfect time. Rodriguez actually met John because he had read John’s story in the news and was preaching about it on Christian television. Someone in John’s family saw Rodriguez preaching

and reached out to him to ask if he wanted to know the whole story. Rodriguez didn't know that Joyce had prayed so powerfully for God to raise her son from the dead.

Rodriguez flew John's family to TBN so they could share their story on television. While John was there, he met Devon Franklin, whom John calls "the nicest guy in the world." Franklin told him he had just produced *Miracles From Heaven* and wanted John's story to be his next film.

But John knows his story isn't really about him. The main thing he wants to see happen through *Breakthrough* is lives transformed by God's power and love.

"This is the first major market film that pronounces Holy Spirit, God and Christ," he says. "The world, especially my generation, is so hungry for the supernatural. And I think it's important that my generation [finds] the right kind of supernatural, not this demonic, not these evil spirits that people want to say are fake when they are very real. But instead, we need to feed them with the gospel, with the Holy Spirit, with Christ who died for us on the cross. And my hope is that this movie will spark curiosity to the point that people want to go back to church."

I echo John's desire for *Breakthrough*. I believe this film has the potential to turn many people to God or at least to instill a desire to know more about Him. I have only seen the trailer, but it looks like it will be a quality film that the masses can enjoy. It even stars several prominent actors, such as Chrissy Metz from *This Is Us*, Topher Grace, Josh Lucas and more.

To hear more of my conversation with John, click on the podcast below. And be sure to share this article on your social media so we can get as many people as possible to see *Breakthrough* in theaters.