

# Mother Who Prayed Her Dead Son to Life Shares Details of What Really Happened

Several years ago, a young man came back to life after being dead for an hour—all because his mother cried out to God in desperate faith. John Smith had been underwater for about 15 minutes, and doctors couldn't get a pulse for another 45 minutes. But as soon as his mother, Joyce, prayed over him, his heart started beating again. Many call it a modern-day resurrection.

That miracle went viral on the news, and John's story was recently made into a major motion picture called *Breakthrough*. The film recently hit theaters, and as of Tuesday, it holds the No. 2 spot right after *Avengers: Endgame*.

A few weeks ago, I interviewed John in what became one of the biggest podcasts on our network this year. Recently, I also interviewed his mother, Joyce. She recalls the events leading up to the moment she saw John lying dead on the hospital bed. She says she had a strange sense of peace as she approached her dead son.

"I thought I was being very quiet and demure," Joyce tells me on the "In Depth With Stephen Strang" podcast. "But according to Dr. Sutter and everyone else in the room, everyone in the ER could hear me when I prayed. And I did walk up to the end of my son's bed, and they said I very boldly and very loudly called out to God and the Holy Spirit that He would come and please bring me back my son. And to quote Dr. Sutter, I did it with a boldness that he had never seen before."

In my interview with Joyce, which you can listen to [here](#) or in this article, she shared with me which parts of *Breakthrough* were true to the story and which parts were the product of

literary license. She says one difference between the film and the true story is that when she was praying over John, she was surrounded by people.

"[Dr. Sutter and Alex, a tech nurse] both have the same story," she says. "Dr. Sutter says when I walked in the room, something else walked in the room with me. And it was so powerful that not only did it change the atmosphere, but it changed the temperature of the room. ... In moments of prayer, all of a sudden, the monitor starts beeping. And Alex had been there for 27 minutes, doing everything she possibly could. She was stunned. She says to me, 'I've got a heartbeat.'"

But a change in temperature and a restarted heartbeat weren't the only supernatural things Dr. Sutter and Alex witnessed that day.

"Alex said something so powerful moved up John's body that it was pushing her and the people who were working on John away from the bed," Joyce says. "They had done everything they possibly could to bring my son back to life, but nothing was working. And it was almost like God had set the table with all these professionals in there and said, 'OK, you've done everything you can do. Why don't you step back and watch what I can do?'"

Joyce tells me that after John's heart started beating, she said down, stunned, and thought, *This is surreal. I just watched God bring my son back to life.*

And it certainly was a miracle. After all, John was underwater for 15 to 16 minutes, according to official reports. And then he had no discernible heartbeat for the next 45 minutes.

Even the way the rescue divers found the body was supernatural. Fire Department Captain Tommy Shine was scouring the lake for John's body with only a pole and a hook to help. He had searched everywhere he could when he heard a voice telling him to check a place he had already searched. To

Shine's surprise, John was right where the voice had told him to go.

"He did hear a voice telling him to go back and look for John, and it unnerved him so badly that—he had been invited to a friend's house to have a barbecue, and he wouldn't even go because of this," Joyce says. "He did not know what to do with this."

John's body was found right near the edge of a drop-off that took the lake from 10 feet to 50 feet deep. If the search team had used a boat, the wake would have been strong enough to knock John off the edge of that drop-off, and the team would never have found him.

Certain parts of the film—such as Joyce's conflict with Pastor Jason Noble about the church's music and her riding in the helicopter with John to the second hospital—happened differently in real life. After all, life tends to be more complicated than movies have time to portray. But Joyce says the movie didn't have to embellish what happened. John's resurrection stands on its own as a miracle.

"We have 310 pages of medical records and police reports to back up everything that we have put in and told in our story in the book, *Breakthrough*," Joyce says. "We wanted to make sure that people knew this was the truth. God did such an awesome job. It doesn't need to be embellished."

Joyce shares many more fascinating details in our interview, including how she prayed God would spare her son's life and give him a second chance if he wasn't where he needed to be spiritually. In my interview with John, he told me he wasn't following the Lord at the time he went through the ice, but God used that circumstance to draw him to Jesus.

So I encourage you to listen to my entire interview with Joyce to hear more about this supernatural story. And if you haven't already watched *Breakthrough*, I highly recommend viewing it

while it's still in theaters!