

Horrific Car Accident Leads to Angelic Encounter

Dann Stadler remembers the horrific car crash that almost claimed his life, and the life of his wife, Tracey. Stadler says, "There was so much wreckage pushed in on us that we just couldn't move. Tracey was literally trapped by the engine and everything else had collapsed in on her."

"I looked at my husband and he reached over to try to unbuckle my seatbelt," says Tracey, "and then whoosh, he started on fire. I tried getting to him but I couldn't move. I was trapped."

On the night of their fourth anniversary, Dann and Tracey Stadler were fighting for their lives inside their crushed and burning car. They had been hit head-on by a drunk driver who was going the wrong way down the interstate. The driver of the other vehicle was dead—Dann and Tracey were trapped and badly injured.

Tracey says, "The whole entire car was filled with smoke. I could smell the burning leather. I could smell the burning flesh. I knew that I was going to start on fire very soon because I couldn't breathe. I could feel my lungs burning."

Motorists arrived on the scene and quickly began rescue efforts to get them out of their burning car.

Dann says, "They stopped their car and ran up to our car, which was now engulfed in smoke and flames."

"They began praying as soon as they came upon the wreckage and they moved into action almost as quickly," he continues. "They were doing everything they could spiritually to help rescue us; however God's will was going to play out; they were there involved in it."

"I remember leaning up and looking at all these people lined up and they were hysterical. And I remember even locking eyes with a woman," says Tracey.

The car doors were jammed shut. One man pulled on the driver's side door frame until the glass finally broke out.

"The window then shattered into a thousand pieces and kind of fell away," says Dann. "I was literally on fire at that point—my face, my head, my right side, my right arm, my right leg, they were all burning. And so I pulled myself out and they came over and grabbed me and took me over on the median in the grass and rolled me out and put the fire out that way. In the meantime Tracey was trapped in the car. She could feel her face burning and at that point she was convinced she was going to die."

Tracey says, "I realized, 'This is it. I'm leaving.' And so I prayed. I said prayers I never even knew were in my mind. I said, 'Father I pray that You forgive me for my sins. You said You have many mansions in heaven and I pray there's one for me.' And I said, 'Please don't let me burn to death.' And then I looked up and there he was."

"When I say 'He' it was a person who I knew wasn't of this world. It was a heaven-sent person in an angelic form. And at that point he just lifted me up and I went with him. He pulled me out and we started getting further away from the accident site. At that point I know I left my body. I know I did. He told me I could look back if I wanted to, but I didn't want to. And the further we got away from the accident site the more peace I felt—such peace. And the love? The love can't be explained; we're too finite in our words. It can't be explained in human terms. The love, like you are going home. There was no pain, no regret, only anticipation. The only thing that mattered was my relationship with Christ. And I felt like I was in the arms of God, of Jesus Christ himself."

Tracey says as they ascended into heaven she saw her grandmother who died when Tracey was a little girl.

“And I was so thrilled to see her and she was thrilled to see me” says Tracey, “She knew me and I knew her right away. I started to go toward her and I stopped and I said, ‘Megan!’ That’s our oldest daughter who was 9 months old at the time. And I said, ‘I have to go back.’ I mean I knew I was going to see the face of God. I knew it. But I couldn’t let Megan grow up alone. And we started going down, and this was just the opposite of going up. It was hard. It was cold. It was fast, and it was painful coming back.

She says her spirit returned to her broken and burned body. At the same time rescuers saw a man walk out of the woods and up to the car.

“And they saw him come closer and closer to the car and he appeared to have a glow about him,” remembers Dann. “And, at the same time there was another man who was behind all of this going on. He was praying fervently for our rescue and our recovery. And, he said just as the angel came upon the scene, he was buckled to his knees because he felt the healing power of Jesus Christ so intensely that it just overpowered and overwhelmed him. One of the rescuers was able to free Tracey, and that’s when he said she was just as light as a feather. She just essentially popped out right in his hands. As the angel was there he bent over her, and he put his hands over her face.”

Tracey says, “He took his hands and I knew he was healing me. And he said, ‘Tracey, everything’s going to be alright.’ He healed me.”

Dann Says, “He turned and looked and locked eyes with one man in particular and very slowly and deliberately he said, ‘Take care of Tracey.’ Nobody knew our names at that point. Tracey’s purse was in the car burned up. She was pulled unconscious

from the car. I had not been speaking her name, Tracey had not spoken her name, so for him to know her name, he could only have been heaven sent.”

The man turned and walked back into the woods. Soon after, emergency workers arrived on the scene and transported Dann and Tracey to nearby hospitals. The next several months were filled with pain and difficulties as they recovered from multiple fractures and Dann’s severely burned body, but Tracey says the presence and peace of God was with her when she prayed.

“That sustained me.” She says, “I could feel peace from my head to my toe when I prayed to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It worked better than any pharmaceutical out there. It really did. And the peace again, I prayed to be filled with peace.”

In their book *Angels in the Fire*, Dann and Tracey recount how God has used the crash to show His presence in their lives. They say they are thankful they’ve been given a second chance in life, even in difficult times.

“I just recognize that fact that God is with me every day through everything; in the littlest decisions, He’s there,” says Tracey.

“God was there for us.” Dann says, “Jesus Christ was there for us. He gave us—He gave Tracey in particular, a healing. He’s used what happened to us for many other things. We do have a lot of joy in our lives; not always happiness, not always thrilled with some of the challenges we’ve faced, but the joy of Christ is always with us.”

Tracey says, “I don’t know why I was saved, but He for some reason thought I was worth saving. I’m very thankful for that. I really am.”