

Experiencing the Power of Miraculous Healing

My wife Leslie found me on our bedroom floor, comatose. Frantically, she called the paramedics.

I remember awakening in a hospital emergency room, a physician looking down at me. "You're one step away from a coma," he said, "and two steps away from dying." I slipped back into unconsciousness.

An unlikely cascade of medical issues had put me on the edge of death as I approached my 60th year. A routine heart procedure a few weeks earlier had caused complications that were shutting down my kidneys. Pneumonia was developing in my lungs. I had a rare and severe allergic reaction to medication given to me for a voice problem. But my doctors were unaware that any of this was going on.

What threatened my life the most was *hyponatremia*—my blood sodium level had plummeted to the point where life was unsustainable. Water was entering my cells and triggering dangerous swelling of my brain. Doctors needed to raise the level back to normal in order to stabilize me, but it had to be done slowly and carefully. If it were elevated too quickly, the brain could be irreparably damaged, leading to death or severe disability.

Blood sodium level? I had never heard of it. Neither had anyone else in my family. As it drops further and further, symptoms become increasingly severe. Nausea, headache, fatigue and muscle weakness are followed by disorientation and altered mental states, including hallucinations. Finally, there are seizures, unconsciousness, coma—and death.

My brain was already reacting. In the days before I fell comatose at the house, my thinking became more and more

muddled and irrational.

Classic symptoms of paranoia began to set in. I started to think people were eavesdropping on my conversations and plotting my downfall. *That jogger going by the house—certainly he's working undercover for the FBI.* Sounds funny to me now, but back then it seemed to make total sense. This went on for days, with the fear and confusion getting increasingly worse.

One afternoon when Leslie went out, I sat down on the couch in our family room. It was mid-afternoon, not long after I had taken some medication that was inadvertently worsening my condition. I felt sapped of all energy, unable to even lift an arm. The room began to darken. An ominous and malevolent presence filled the house. My heart raced.

I was descending into hell.

The room was cold and damp. I felt suffocated by dread and hopelessness and despair. Menacing creatures began to gather at the periphery of the room and slowly inch toward me, taking their time to heighten the fear. Snakes and demons slithered on the floor; I wanted to lift my feet to escape them, but I couldn't move.

On the wall, the clock stopped, then the minute hand began to inch backward. Deep inside, I felt what it was like to face eternity in this den of evil and terror.

I have no idea how long this experience lasted, but suddenly I heard the back door close.

Leslie walked into the kitchen. The disturbing images disappeared. I still sat on the couch, shaken and processing what just happened. Too embarrassed to talk about it, I sat quietly as Leslie made herself a cup of tea and sat down next to me.

She took a sip and then looked at me. I was pale and breathing

heavily. "Are you OK?" she asked.

My heart was breaking. "Leslie," I whispered, "do you think there will be many people in hell?"

"I don't know," she said. "Why do you bring that up?" She reached to feel my forehead. "You're sweating. You don't look well. Why don't you lie down for a while?"

Alone in the bedroom, my yet-to-be diagnosed hyponatremia continued to worsen. I became utterly convinced that everything in my life was gone. My wife was leaving me. My children were denouncing me. My friends were abandoning me. My bank accounts were dry. The house and cars were being repossessed. Police were hunting for me for unspecified crimes. Though innocent, I was headed to prison and disgrace. I imagined myself living in a dirt field, alone, shivering against the Colorado cold, with nowhere to go and nobody to help me.

From my perspective, this was no medically induced fantasy; this was indistinguishable from reality. I felt the full emotional impact of every part of it. I have never been homeless, but in my mind I experienced what it's like to be. I have never been broke, abandoned or ostracized, but now I knew what those feel like. I have never been imprisoned, but now I could understand the dehumanizing effects of incarceration.

I wish I could say that my instinctive reaction when my mind became unhinged was to seek Jesus, but it wasn't. As my brain was squeezed against the inside of my skull, my irrationality increased. I was overwrought with emotional turmoil over my perceived situation.

In my complete confusion, I began to think that Jesus had abandoned me like everyone else. Why wouldn't He? I was homeless, without family or friends, without anything to my name. My reputation would be destroyed, my accomplishments dashed.

I had nothing whatsoever to commend myself to God.

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Lee Strobel was the award-winning legal editor of The Chicago Tribune and is the best-selling author of The Case for Faith, The Case for Christ, and The Case for a Creator. Strobel and his wife live in Spring, Texas, where he's a teaching pastor at Woodlands Church. Visit Strobel's website at .

Lee Strobel shows how God's grace healed him from atheism, which was influenced by wounds from his father, at .

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