

Larry's Testimony:

As a young man, I was given a very special gift: *eternal life*. I'm so glad to know that I have eternal life because it gives me the certainty of knowing where I am going when I die. Because of this, I am at peace and have no fear of death or dying, or of life and living. This peace gives me confidence of purpose, which causes me to know that my life has meaning.

I have never experienced this peace more than when I was involved in a serious car accident. For whatever reason, I made a left turn directly into the path of an oncoming car that was traveling at least fifty miles per hour. I was driving a *very* compact car at the time. The dashboard and console exploded right before me, and I had no idea what was happening. Fortunately, I was wearing my seatbelt and basically neither party involved was injured very seriously. But what happened next really shook me to the core.

When the emergency response personnel arrived, based on the conditions of the two cars, I think they were looking for fatalities. After I explained what had happened and they asked me a few diagnostic questions, they determined that I needed to be immediately helicoptered to a major trauma hospital. After they cut all my clothing off of me and wrapped me in a rubber suit of some sort, they strapped me to a transport board. I was completely immobilized and felt trapped. When they placed me in the helicopter and secured the board, I had two thoughts: one, if something bad goes wrong with this helicopter, like a fire or a crash, I am completely helpless; and two, maybe these people know something about my condition that they're not telling me. Right then and there, a wave of peace and actual joy swept over me as God tenderly reminded me that I belonged to Him, and that if today was my day to die, then I would very soon be in paradise with Him. I was so overwhelmed with gladness that it brought tears of joy to my eyes.

The confidence and knowledge of my eternal destiny sustains me through the many trials of this life, and I am certain my future is quite secure.

Question: What is thy only comfort in life and death?

Answer: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ... *-Heidelberg Catechism*

May I ask you a couple of questions?

1. Have you come to a place in your spiritual life where you know for certain that if you were to die today you would go to heaven, or is that something you would say you are still working on?

2. Suppose you were to die today and stand before God and He were to say to you, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" What would you say?

One thing we know for sure is that the Bible was written so that "...you may know that you have eternal life."

Please read the video manuscript presented below...

A Serious Matter

Scene: Begins with narrator sitting/leaning against table.

- Hello. I am *really* glad you are watching this recorded message. It was given to you by someone who cares deeply for you and wants you to hear the message it contains. Of course, if you found this recording or stole it, you definitely need to watch it as well - I don't believe in accidents of fate.
- I prepared this video so that your friends and loved ones, which might include me, can share their genuine thoughts and beliefs with you in an easy, respectful, and non-confrontational manner. I entitled the message, "A Serious Matter," and I think you will see why in a moment.
- Our Sunday school class at church was studying the topics of Heaven, Hell, and the Afterlife and we came across a phenomenal section in one of our books. It stated, in so many words, that in an anthropological and historical sense, *all* of humanity, no matter where or when it has been found, believes in a conscious afterlife! That some sort of conscious existence continues after we die! And because the greatest thinkers in every civilization have also embraced this concept, *immortality* is considered to be virtually self-evident. Simply put, essentially all of us believe that our life continues, in some way, after we die! That amazing fact got me to thinking about death and *us*.

Scene: Move to sit at table.

- Now, death is a very strange topic indeed. It seems so unnatural, especially when it happens to the young or when you haven't seen someone for a *long* time and they have aged or "decayed" greatly on their road towards death. If we believe in a conscious afterlife, then death really is the renting or tearing apart of our physical and spiritual natures - a horrifying event. And, unfortunately, death is the one cup that cannot pass us by - each one of us will partake of death at some time. You might be able avoid taxes, but you cannot escape death - lovely thought, yes?

- If you've lived any length of time at all, then you've no doubt been to funerals of family or friends. I have often reflected on the sadness of death. I remember my fraternity brother, Sam Crawford: crushed to death under thousands of pounds of rock in a caving accident. My high school friend, Luther Richey: died due to complications caused by the AIDS virus. Another high school friend, Trellis Harderson: shot in the face and killed one night while guarding a Flea Market in Atlanta. A wonderful employee of mine, Sam Cho: died from liver cancer three days after being diagnosed. A church friend, Stu Mackinson: woke up one morning just fine, then died from unknown causes. Another church friend, DJ Roman: almost 20 years with lymphoma: died after many years of hard struggle. The terribly sad events that took place here in California: a young, precious 16-year old girl was out jogging and she was brutally attacked, raped, and killed by a sexual predator. My own dear father, Lewis Walker: died from pneumonia after years of poor health, dementia, and diabetes. Yes, from the greatest rulers to the lowliest of servants, death waits patiently for us all - it's happening all around us all the time. "... never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." And that is precisely why I want to talk to you.

Scene: Change?

- If you're like most people, you've given some thought about death and the afterlife. You probably think, "Yes, I believe there is some sort of life after we die; at least I hope so! I hope this is not the end. But who can know what lies ahead? No one's been there and come back to tell us what to expect." Even the research on Near Death Experiences seems very inconclusive. Most of us have some general idea that it really doesn't matter about the specifics; we say to ourselves, "you know, I've been a pretty decent person all my life; given to charities; tried to help out people when I could; been honest in most of my dealings; didn't stretch the truth too much on my income taxes; so, regardless of what lies ahead, I should

end up in a fairly pleasant place." That sounds like fair reasoning to me.

- I found out the other day, that, according to a recent poll, most of us believe in God - 94% is the figure I heard. Certainly God's a *fair dealer* and will be forgiving or lenient of any slip ups we've had. But is that right? Now I've kind of set up a straw man here, but what gives us the idea that "good" living guarantees a "good" spot in the afterlife? Why is that valid thinking? Listen; think about what's going to happen to you when you step across the threshold of life into death. Why would you think that the God that you have vaguely known or even ignored all your life is going to be there to lovingly take your hand and escort you into heaven? But is that even the real scenario to expect?
- There are many philosophies and ideas about our lives after we die. Just think about all the bizarre scientific ideas that have existed in the world before the true facts were known. How much more bizarre do you think are our ideas about the unseen world of the afterlife? Some ideas may be partially right. But just like science, there is only one completely correct view; one that describes the way it truly is. So, you might be asking yourself, "Ok, so what am I supposed to think? What's a person to do about this situation? How do I make sure I go to the right place when I die?" Well, let me see if I can help you.

Scene: Change?

- There was a person that lived a while ago, who spoke with authority about death and the afterlife. He said *he* knew exactly where he was going after he died. He said *he* alone held the keys to the place of death. He said *he* was the only doorway to bliss after death. He said *he* controlled our destiny after death. And it was said of him that after he died, he came back from death and went around for many days with those who knew him to prove that he ruled over the domain and power of death. Interesting claims, never made by anyone prior or since that I know of. His bizarre and outlandish statements seem to deny the fact that our destination after death is unknowable.

What are we to make of all this? Was this guy just another of the many deluded individuals throughout history?

- Well maybe so, but what if he's telling the truth? A lot of what this guy had to say makes sense. And a lot of the other things he had to say have been admired and followed for centuries. You've probably already even guessed whom I'm talking about. Almost universally, he is considered to be an honorable man, wise, and sincere, loving. Of course I'm talking about Jesus of Nazareth, also called Messiah or Christ. He spoke on this topic of death and the afterlife with confidence and authority. Now that doesn't necessarily make it right, but he did say many things that we all agree are good and right. He gave us the Golden Rule. He told us to love one another, to forgive each other, to bear one another's burdens. He taught us what it means to be a Good Samaritan. His teachings are the primary foundations for our entire Western culture - laws, right and wrong, work ethic, etc. In light of this, maybe we should give his other sayings some due consideration.
- One very important thing that he said was that if you believed in him, if you trusted him, had faith in him, or basically accepted his work on your behalf, that he would be there to greet you when you stepped through the veil of death, and he would take you with him to a glorious place - a place that has been called paradise - to live forever. Otherwise, if you ignored or rejected his work and message, he would not be there for you and you would be separated from him and his glory forever. He will leave no one behind who would have trusted him.
- You might ask yourself, "Why do I need to trust in what Jesus has done for me? I don't understand that exactly." Well... our Creator called us into existence and he also called us into a fellowship of love with himself. In that relationship, he expects certain things from us, no different than relationships we have with each other: certain things that we should do, and certain things that are unacceptable. The problem is we are incapable of meeting God's expectations. You know it yourself, our hearts lie to us, our

physical appetites are disordered, our focus is mostly on ourselves. God created us as free moral agents, and we preferred ourselves to him. Ordinarily, we are blind to these things. Part of God reaching out to you is letting you see and know your situation.

- So we need a mediator between us and God: one who satisfies God's demands and reconciles our fellowship with him. And this mediator, Jesus, asks that we trust him and what he has done: he lived a perfect life and in his death paid the price for all our rebellion. So, what is it that you need to do for this miraculous transaction to occur? It's very simple; you pray - you call out to God. Say this: God, I have no idea what lies ahead for me after I die, but I trust completely in Jesus, and him alone to take me to a better place after this life. I know that my relationship with you is not right, and I am willing to turn from anything that is not pleasing to you. Please come into my life and save me. That's it! That's all there is to it. Trust him. We are taught that if we believe in our hearts and confess Jesus with our mouths, God will save us to be with him. We all start out in the same state, and God makes us right with him when we trust in, or transfer our hope to Christ alone. There was a thief on a cross right next to Jesus when he died, who simply asked Jesus to remember him when he entered into his glory. Jesus told the thief that he would be with him in paradise that very same day! Eternal life is God's gift offered freely to you, waiting to be accepted. It is written that "[truly], he who believes has eternal life."
- Let me go just a little further. "Belief," "trust," and "faith" are states of mind that cause action: real belief generates a response. Like the King that he is, God requires your allegiance, your loyalty, your heart - completely. You will know you truly believe by how that belief affects your life. Find yourself a church, a group of people, who teach and study the truths of the Bible, and join their community. Tell them you are a new to knowing about Jesus and you need guidance. Or come to see the one who gave you this recording and ask them for their help along your new road. We

need each other so we don't become confused or wrapped up in unimportant or erroneous things.

Scene: Change?

- We were talking about the sadness of death, which is indeed "A Serious Matter." A believer, or one who trusts in Christ, says to death, "Oh death, where is your victory? Oh death, where is your sting?" Death holds no power over you when you trust in Christ. I hope you made a decision today. If you did, let the person who gave you this recording know about it. If not, please consider what has been said. Don't make a decision by not doing anything at all; after all, doing nothing is also making a decision. In the whole of your life, there is nothing more important that you need to do.
- Whatever you are thinking about right now, God put you and the person who gave you this recording together in life for a reason. A divine appointment if you will. We care about you and appreciate you and will always pray and be there for you.
- It says in the Bible, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. {14} But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." We want you to find it. May God bless you.