

## TRANSCRIPT / IMAGINE HEAVEN WITH JOHN BURKE

Chris Comeaux Host

00:00

Hi TCN talks listeners and Anatomy of Leadership podcast listeners as well. We're just appending this message to the beginning of our podcast. Many of you know about the devastation from Hurricane Helene that has hit Western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee and Virginia. We've got many of the hospices that we work with. Three of the most impacted hospices Four Seasons, AMOREM and CCWNC Compassionate Care, Western North Carolina. We're going to include links of how you can support those Hospices.

00:29

I want to thank you. The overwhelming response already has been incredible. We've even had other Hospices get together and actually create a huge shipment of medical supplies and supplies for staff and the patients and families we serve. So just want to say thank you, just want to keep it in front of you guys. The road to recovery is going to be years.

00:50

This is one of the most devastating events I know I've ever seen in my life and I've grown up in Louisiana, lived in Florida with my wife and I've just never seen the level of destruction. So we appreciate your support. We ask that you continue to keep us in your thoughts and prayers because this is going to be a long road to recovery. There are a lot of other great organizations that you can support as well, they're helping just the community. People like Samaritan's Purse, operation, Helo, the Cajun Navy those are incredible organizations that we can tell you are doing a great job on the ground helping people. Again, this challenge has been unprecedented. It's really taken an all-hands-on-deck approach. So thank you for listening to our podcast, thank you for supporting us. We really appreciate you.

Melody King Announcement

01:35

Welcome to TCNtalks. The goal of our podcast is to provide concise and relevant information for busy hospice and palliative care leaders and staff. We understand your busy schedules and believe that brevity signals respect. And now here's our host, Chris Comeaux.

Chris Comeaux Host

01:57

Hello and welcome to TCNtalks. I am really excited today. This is a show that literally in some respects has been a year in the making, and I'll connect the dots on that in just a little bit. But our guest today is John Burke. He's a New York Times bestselling author of *Imagine Heaven* and *Imagine the God of Heaven*. Welcome, John, it is so good to have you.

Chris Comeaux Host

02:17

Oh, it's great to be with you, Chris. Thanks for having me on the show.

Chris Comeaux Host

02:21

Absolutely. And I was so thrilled after reading your book and I emailed you and your wife responded literally within 24 hours and I was actually hooped and hollered and my wife said what's wrong? And I'm like, oh my gosh. They responded we're going to have them on the podcast. So, John, first off, just tell the audience what would be good for them to know about you.

John Burke Guest

02:40

Well, I think the reason my wife probably responded so quickly is because we're grateful for Hospice. We've walked through. In fact, when *Imagine Heaven* came out, my mom was on Hospice. She had been through eight years of Alzheimer's, as you know. That's a long, slow, painful way to go and we've been grateful. At the same time, we're walking her dad through a glioblastoma and brain cancer and he died from that, all while this book is coming out. Book is coming out, in fact.

03:28

I think I write about that in *Imagine Heaven*, that I got the manuscript, and I read it to her in those last days. I kind of think she probably did here, though I don't know for sure. But we've just been grateful for hospice as people who've walked with many people in the last days and with families as well. I was just telling you I was with a 38-year-old man with two young sons who just died of cancer, and we've been walking with them for three years. And just those moments are the moments of life that you guys are involved in and how you're helping people go from this life to, I believe, the life to come. And that's really my research and what I'm excited

about, and I know that's why many of you are in this, too, to help people and love people well through the last of this life, so that's why I'm excited about doing it Well first and I said this in our pre-show thank you for writing this book.

Chris Comeaux Host

04:36

And why I said this show is kind of a year in the making. And so in January of this year I went to a conference. It was a very business-like conference and at some level I was kind of regretting it. It was just not regretting it but maybe dreading it. And so I ended up having this just amazing conversation with a good friend, Kent Anderson. He's the CEO of Ohio's Hospice and it was just this beautiful spiritual. You know. Sometimes, you know you just connect with people at such a level it just felt like an oasis. Spiritual, you know, sometimes, you know, you just connect with people at such a level. It just felt like an oasis. And when I got home, I had your book waiting for me. So, Kent bought it for me, and he apparently ordered it before we even left the conference and it was waiting for me.

05:12

And this was a special year for me because I had a five-week sabbatical. It's been 30 years Last time I kind of had a sabbatical. It wasn't a planned sabbatical I broke my femur in an accident, so I was kind of laid up and it didn't hit me till I was in this sabbatical this year. There was almost 30 years to the date. So here I am. I'm a little French fried, been working a lot of hours in this hard work we do in Hospice and I had a sense that I need to. This was like the Christmas present to unwrap during my sabbatical. And that's exactly what it was, John. It was an absolute. I feel like it was an oasis for a parched soul.

06:02

And the quote that and it also happened to be it feels very serendipitous that I was reading John Eldredge's book two of them actually the Journey of literally almost someone served up this kind of platter and the CS Lewis quote that just kept coming to me as I was reading these books, because the point of sabbatical was not I'm going to stay in a five-week sabbatical. It's like where do you go from here? And I happen to be kind of like in that midlife it's definitely not a midlife crisis, but just midlife kind of recalibration and that CS Lewis quote of you will find that those who did the most for the present world were precisely those who thought the most of the next. So, John, that feels like a perfect way to begin this discussion. My vision for this show is it'll be a gift to hospice and palliative care staff that do this sacred work all year long, day in and day out. So let's get into your book. I'm curious how did you come to write this book?

John Burke Guest

06:51

Yeah, I mean. So you have to go back decades, the late 70s. I was an agnostic. I was an agnostic. I thought Jesus was a legend and God was a who knows. And I was an engineer. So I studied engineering, I worked as an engineer, so I'm very analytical. I want to know why, how does it fit? How do you know? That's just the way I'm wired and I asked a lot of questions and I didn't get many answers and so I just kind of like, yeah, you just can't know. And there I go.

07:35

And then my dad got cancer and he was on hospice and someone gave him the very first book on the research for near-death experiences. In fact it coined the term near-death experience. I saw it on his bedside table and I picked it up and I start reading it and I couldn't stop. I read the whole thing in one night and I said, oh my gosh, could this actually be evidence that I've been looking for, that maybe this afterlife God stuff is real? And I wasn't convinced because I'm kind of cynical and skeptical. But it did open my mind and since then again I have this insatiable curiosity. So since then I ended up actually leaving my career in engineering and going into ministry, but I also have studied over a thousand near-death experience cases over the last 35 years and you know, I mean it's been all.

08:53

I gave my first talk on this at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 1989. So that's how long I've been at it trying to for me, trying to understand what are these, and I think, because they were my entrance into faith and literally why I've devoted my life, kind of like many of you probably, to helping people, and helping people not only go through this life but also understand, you know, what's the hope? Because, like that quote, you said, understanding. If there is something beyond this, and that's what hit me when I read that book I was like, wow, if this is true, nothing's more important, right? Because we all die. I mean, there's. You know we have two things in common. The old joke goes you know taxes and death, and that's it.

Chris Comeaux Host

09:50

And I'm an accountant, John. So think about that I'm in hospice and I'm an accountant. Yeah, well, maybe they're connected for you right.

Chris Comeaux Host

09:56

Yeah.

09:58

Either that was very risk adverse. I was looking for job security.

John Burke Guest

10:00

Yeah, yeah, anytime job security.

10:03

Yeah, anytime I do taxes, I think I'm going to die. So over the last 35 years, I've been insatiably curious and collecting these near-death stories. Interestingly, I ended up working as an engineer in Santa Barbara, California, which, in the 80s, turned out to be the location where most of the research was taking place. Wow, so I mean coincidence maybe, but I don't think so. I think there was a reason.

10:41

And finally, in 2015, I wrote the book *Imagine Heaven*, and what I was trying to show is there are about and I've now interviewed people all over the globe, on every continent, every religious background, every cultural background. I mean not every, but a lot. And when I say every continent not Antarctica I've never interviewed a penguin who's had a near-death experience but every other continent. And what I found is there are about 40 commonalities of this experience that people regularly talk about, and I'm also, you know, I'm showing in *Imagine Heaven* how this is not new. It's actually what I believe God has been showing us all along and how, how it all aligns. But I think, you know I first had to be convinced, and there were some things that I can go into if you want to that really started to convince me that these near-death experiences are showing us something real, in fact supra-real, beyond our reality.

Chris Comeaux Host

11:56

Well, so before we go there, just something that occurred to me because, having grown up in healthcare, another profound aspect of this is and I'll use the abbreviation NDEs, which are the near-death experiences. So NDEs are more prolific because now we have more technology, so probably as a volume, there are more people alive now. There's like more of a cohort to actually study probably than the whole history of mankind. And so you just alluded to that. There are 40 commonalities. So can you I don't expect you to hit all 40 because I want people to go and read the book, but hit upon some of those things because it transcends culture.

12:34

That to me is like it's almost like an apologetics for eternity in some respects, and I love the fact that, as an engineer, I'm married not to an engineer, she's actually a computer programmer and God brings you together with your opposites and I'm much more fantastical and more passionate, and she's always the one. Oh, tell me more about that when I was telling her about the book. But that's the beauty of your book is, I feel like it's so well-researched. So what are some of those commonalities of your book is?

John Burke Guest

13:04

I feel like it's so well researched. So what are some of those commonalities? Well, and what I tried to do in them is let you see not just my brain and the analytical, logical side but through these people's stories, overlapping, experiencing what it might be like in the life to come. But let me, let me start with this, so you know, when I first started researching these, I was still skeptical. I was like, well, I don't know, how do you know this isn't just hallucination? Yeah, or you know anoxia I mean, the brain is losing oxygen fast.

13:37

Um, and there have been lots of alternate explanations fighter pilot syndrome. You, you know fighter pilots, when they're being trained, you know, they get this anoxia or hypo, where their brain starts to shut down and then they have a tunnel, like they're going in a tunnel with a light at the end. And you know, skeptics have said, oh see, well, that's that tunnel and the light at the end. That's what a near-death experience is. And in my new book, imagine the God of Heaven, in chapter two, I go through the 10 points of evidence that convinced me and have, by the way, convinced many skeptical cardiologists, oncologists, other medical doctors who have studied as many of these near-death experiences as I have, that, no, this is something real and this is actual evidence that our consciousness survives our mortality. I'll give you just a couple of the things that convince me and within that I'll lay out kind of what one of these experiences is like. You know, the first thing is that when people say they die, they commonly say that I left my body and I raised up above it. I was still myself, I had what they would say is a spiritual body, but I was still me, fully me, in fact, not just alive, but more alive than I've ever felt, and not just with five senses, more like 50 senses. And at the same time they're still in the room where their resuscitation is taking place. And that was key because when they're resuscitated, many times they can report things that they saw while they had no heartbeat, no brainwaves, right and they can report things that can be checked out, that can be verified. So I give multiple examples in the books, but one is Mary in London, who this is back in the 90s so there were still ceiling fans in hospitals and she dies.

15:52

Giving birth couldn't stop the bleeding, her heart stops, she said she was out of her body and then, as is common. She travels through a tunnel uh, that's dark, and comes out in this place of light and in the presence of this God of light. She'd grown up Catholic and, you know, had gone away from all that and you know, wasn't sure there was a God at all. And she said but now I know, she said I knew this was God and this was the most unconditional love you can ever imagine like, far beyond the unconditional love of a mother, a father, and she never wanted to leave. But he said your son, Michael, is going to live and he's going to need you. You have to go back. Well, as she's coming back, she said she.

16:45

She passes through the ceiling and notices on the top side of the ceiling fan a red sticker. She comes back into her body and, as many are, at first tried to explain to the nurses and the doctors I just had this incredible experience and of course they're looking at her like, yeah, you're psychotic, this is the drugs or the loss of blood, and nobody would believe her. And finally she kind of cornered one nurse and she said look, here's what you did, here's what you said, here's where you went. And that nurse realized she was saying that while her eeg was flat. So how in the world does she know that? And then Mary said to her look, I can prove it to you. Go get an orderly get a ladder and look on the top side of the ceiling fan there's a red sticker and here's what it says. And the nurse did and, sure enough, found the sticker. It was just what she said. The nurse did and, sure enough, found the sticker. It was just what she said.

17:45

Now you could say, oh well, you know, nice urban legend story, John right, and that's what I would have.

Chris Comeaux Host

17:53

I'm being skeptical.

John Burke Guest

17:54

That's my skeptical mind. That's where I started. But here's the thing these have been reported consistently all over the globe.

18:09

So another cardiologist that I interviewed, Dr Pim Van Lommel, is actually a cardiologist in Holland. He did a study across 10 hospitals all across Holland of cardiac arrest patients and he concluded this cannot be a hallucination or effect of anesthesia. None of those things explain there's no brain-based explanation for what people are reporting and experiencing. Now he wrote this up in the Lancet. Okay, this one case I'm going to tell you about, which is Europe's most prestigious medical journal. Yeah, this one case I'm going to tell you about which is Europe's most prestigious medical journal. But what people don't realize. There have been 900 scholarly articles written in the Journal of the American Medical Association, the Lancet Psychiatry, documenting this phenomena. So it's not just me who has studied thousands of them, there are medical doctors who have been convinced as well.

19:07

So Dr Pim Van Lommel reports on this man who was brought into the ER. He was found in a park with no heartbeat after 30 minutes in the hospital. He's brought into the hospital because it took that long for the ambulance they tried. Brought into the hospital because it took that long for the ambulance. They tried to do CPR to no avail. But he comes in the hospital. A nurse wants to give him oxygen, notices he has dentures. Takes the dentures out and puts them in the lower drawer of the crash cart, intubates him, ventilates him. Then they shock him. They get his heart going in the ER but he remained comatose the whole time. They move him out to ICU.

19:51

A week later he comes to in the ICU. Nurse comes in to give him meds and he says you know where my lost dentures are because you took them out of my mouth and put them in the lower drawer of that cart with all the bottles on it. And he goes on to explain that he was in the room trying to get everybody's attention but no one would listen to him. He describes the number of doctors, nurses, what they were wearing, what they did, and that that particular nurse put his dentures there and that's where they found his dentures. That's incredible. So that got my attention as a skeptical engineer, like okay.

20:34

Since then, Dr Jan Holden has actually done a study on verifiable observations of near-death experience patients, on verifiable observations of near-death experience patients. So each one maybe will make five observations, 10 observations, and she studied about 100, close to 100 patients and she found that of all their observations, 92% were completely accurate. So think about it Wow, 92%. The other 6% were mostly accurate. Only 2% were inaccurate and that turned out to be one patient. And this has been compared to control groups of heart attack patients who didn't claim to have a near-death experience and were asked what do you think



happened during your resuscitation? And it was like guesswork, like 20%, they were saying what they'd seen on ER. So that got my attention.

21:36

But the second thing that really started to convince me is that when people blind from birth have a near-death experience, they can see and they report the same things that sighted people do all over the globe. So if this is just happening in your brain, if it's just a brain-based thing, how do you explain a person who has never had a mental image they don't dream in images, they don't have physical mental images how do you explain how a brain would come back? And they're still blind when they come back, and yet they're able to describe things physically that other near-death experiencers describe. So I'll tell you Vicki's story, which I report in *Imagine Heaven*. She was blind from birth, 22,.

22:30

At age 22, she's in a car accident. In the hospital she finds herself up above a body in the ER with all this confusion and she has this new sense that she's trying to figure out what is this? And at first it's hard for them to adjust. They're like and, and and she. She realized there was this body that they were working on and she realized that was her because she saw her long hair and she had an orange blossom on her wedding ring and she realized I must be dead. But she wasn't troubled, she felt wonderful, she had incredible peace, felt wonderful and she was trying to get their attention going look, I'm okay, stop panicking. And finally she's like I'm out of here and she takes off like shoots up through the roof of the ceiling of the hospital and is looking out on, you know, the cityscape around her for the first time. And then she said it was like a tunnel opened up. And so these are all commonalities of near-death experiences.

23:43

They also say things like I saw colors beyond our color spectrum and it's interesting because the blind people I've interviewed and I report on about six of them in both books. They say things like well, I don't have words to describe the different colors, but all I can say is they were all like different brightnesses. And then Vicki said I go into this tunnel and suddenly there's no color and I wondered is that darkness? And many times that's what people say is a tunnel, and it was black, but at the end there was a light and they're going up through it. Now, that's not always true. Sometimes they shoot up and out and they're gone and it's almost like through our universe, but to another world. Okay, sometimes it's in a tunnel, sometimes it's not.

24:36

Now let me pause just a second because for those who are kind of like, this sounds like fantasy. You know, this sounds like like sci-fi, but I think it's really important to understand, especially for those helping people transition from this life right. So I think what's happening after interviewing so many of these people is you know, imagine, death means separation. So imagine, at death, our soul leaves our body and enters a higher dimensional plane that's already all around us. So imagine it. We have to imagine it by analogy.

25:19

So, imagine that we're living this three-dimensional experience, but on a flat black and white painting in your living room. Okay, right, so we have up and down, we have side to side, but we don't even have in or out. There's no such thing. We can't even conceive of it. So, death means separation. So, at death, your two-dimensional soul is peeled off your two-dimensional physical body and suddenly brought out into this three-dimensional world. That was always right there, but you couldn't conceive of it because you didn't have that dimension. And you're actually able to look and see what's going on in the flat two-dimensional world and can later describe it, but they have no idea where you are and you're experiencing three dimensions of color. And then you get resuscitated in your two-dimensional black and white world. Imagine trying to describe three dimensions of color in two-dimensional black and white terms and when I use that analogy with near-death experiencers.

26:20

They've said ah, that's it exactly yeah and that's why they, that's why they struggle for words, because this is an experience that's more real than this life. Well, what does that mean? But if you understand by analogy, if you're experiencing not only yourself in three dimensions but five, you know time being the five, six, even two dimensions of time, and I go into all that, what in imagined heaven, what two dimensions of time would even feel like? And it's what near-death experiencers say. They commonly say they say well, there was no time on the other side. Or some say, well, there was past, present and future at the same time. Some say, no, there was time and time moved, but at each point in time you had all the time you needed. That's incredible. And so, Vicki then, by the way, what's interesting, you know, my fascination has been how all this aligns. And um, in the Bible, in second Peter 3:8, Peter, who is one of Jesus followers, says to the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day. He's saying the same thing. Near-death experiences have said to me almost the same exact thing, like I don't know if it was seconds or hours or days. You know I was only dead for nine minutes, but, and, as we'll see, I re-experienced my whole life up until that point. Wow, so things like that happen.

27:57

So Vicki finds herself coming out of this tunnel and into this place of light, but it was like a beautiful garden and this is another commonality is they come to a place that is not unlike earth. I mean, they describe mountains and valleys, and flowers and grass and trees and palm trees and everything and more that we have here of the beauty of earth, but experienced in new dimensions of time and space. So, like Vicki said, there was this light coming out of everything and she said but it wasn't a light like the light on earth. She said it was love and life in the light and you could feel it and it was coming out of the grass, it was coming out of the birds, coming out of the trees and even coming out of this group of people that were coming toward her to welcome her.

28:59

Now, what I found both fascinating and incredibly evidential as well is that this is exactly the same thing that a commercial airline pilot that I interviewed who died in a plane crash, and I have a picture that was in the LA Times of the plane crash. It was a little three-passenger plane that hit a monument 70 feet high at 120 miles an hour, and it was just like nobody survived. He came back and he describes flying into this same, into this beautiful place and this city that he knew was like this holy, sacred city, city that he knew was like this holy, sacred city, and he also describes the light that he said was love and life, and it was coming out of everything, but not hard to look at. In fact, the things were all vivid and brilliant, but clear, more clear than anything we could see on earth. So here you have blind people.

30:09

I interviewed a spine surgeon whose kayak was pinned under a waterfall for 30 minutes Wow, 30 minutes and yet she came back, she was resuscitated and she had no reason. That's the other thing about these people I interview. They're bank presidents, CEOs, spine surgeons, um anesthesiologists, commercial airline pilots. Why in the world would they go make up these wild stories about this eternal place and this god of light and love when all it does is hurt their career? They're not trying to make a buck by writing a book. They don't need to do that. Yet what they say is in agreement with what a blind person says. So Vicki sees this light coming out of everything.

31:03

Now here's what I find fascinating. You know, most people, even Christians who have read the Bible, don't know this. The Jewish prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 60, says there is

no sun or moon in heaven, for God is its light. Heaven for God is its light. And then John, one of Jesus' followers, claims, when he wrote the book of Revelation, that he was either taken up or given a vision of heaven. And he describes this same city which, by the way, I have a Hindu man who grew up in India, who had never read the Bible before, he just knew the Hindu scriptures. He describes the exact same city, the exact way God I mean John does in Revelation. That's in my new book. Imagine the God of Heaven, where I have people from every religious background describing the same things and the same.

32:05

God, it's amazing. It transcends culture, not just Western culture.

32:09

Oh, no, no, no, no, yeah, every culture, every background you can imagine, but they're saying the same things and that's why it gives such hope. Right, and it's also what convinced me. It's also what convinced me. So, here's the thing. Isaiah says that. John says in Revelation 21,. He's talking about heaven. The kingdom of God has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God is its light, and the lamb he's referring to, Jesus, is its lamp, and the nations will walk in that light. Right, okay, now think about this. And it's not just Vicki, but other blind people as well. Brad, an eight-year-old kid who was blind, said the same thing. He's going up this beautiful meadow with palm trees and grass and flowers, but the light, everything was soaking in that light, he said it was coming out of everything. It was so brilliant, way more brilliant than anything anybody had described to me on earth. That's exactly what the Bible has been telling us all along for thousands of years, that heaven's going to be like. And yet why would a blind person say that? A blind person would have heard that light shines on things, not out of things. And yet they're confirming what other near-death experiencers are saying all over the world. So, Vicki, then you know.

33:37

Another commonality is this welcoming committee. So commonly people say I had this welcoming committee of people who had died before me. Vicki sees her grandmother, who had died before, but she also sees Debbie and Diane. Me Vicki sees her grandmother, who had died before, but she also sees Debbie and Diane, her two childhood friends who grew up in the home for children for the blind. They had died at age nine and seven because they had a lot of health issues. She sees them as well, but she said they were all in their prime which is another commonality like about age 30. And they're whole and they're healthy and they're coming

toward her. But she recognizes them, she knows them intuitively. And there's this great reunion Now again, interestingly, Jesus said the same thing in Luke chapter 16.

34:28

He says use your worldly resources to make friends in this life so that when it's all gone they will welcome you into an eternal dwelling. That's exactly what near-death experiencers say consistently. I had this welcoming committee of people who had gone on before me and they were there to love me and guide me in my journey toward God and my journey into the next life. And so Vicki has this great reunion and then she sees a light brighter than any, in turns and looks, and she said there was Jesus, but he was brighter than the sun, but not hard hard to look at, and this is also a commonality, um, now, now, people don't always identify him as Jesus.

35:18

She was a believer in Jesus, um, and she describes him, and and this is what's fascinating is she describes him kind of like you would think he would be, with beard and even a robe, but she said she runs to him and hugs him, and the hug, though, went deeper than any hug on earth. She could feel his beard on her face. So, again, we think about the life that comes as ethereal, wispy, you know, oh, we're spirits and you know nothing's tangible or physical. No, no, no, it's the opposite. This, they say, is the shadow. That's the real thing.

Chris Comeaux Host

36:00

You know I was thinking of that whole. You know Raphael's picture of the like. You know chubby babies on clouds and how much of a disservice. And obviously rafael was very talented. But if that's what you're waiting for on the back end, then then you're like you know what I'm gonna try to get all I could get here, because that doesn't sound like something that's very good. What you're describing is so amazing. I was a huge cs lewis fan growing up and the last battle, the unicorn, is such a beautiful scene where he's going further into Narnia and he says this is much like Narnia, but much more real and better than anything we ever imagined before. And I keep thinking about that as you keep describing this.

John Burke Guest

36:41

Well, I'll tell you, I've read lots of CS Lewis and I think he might have had a near-death experience. A bomb went off when he was serving in World War I, right near him, and he's never talked about that as far as I know. But the way he describes things I'm like okay, that matches so much of what near-death experiencers are saying today. Fascinating little side note I

think the Apostle Paul, who wrote a good chunk of the New Testament, may have had a near-death experience. So, in Acts, chapter 14, it reports how he was in Lystra which is modern day, either Greece or Turkey and a mob turned on him and it says they stoned him to death and they dragged him out of the city and left him for dead. And then, as his friends are gathered around him, suddenly he revives. But he writes in 2nd Corinthians 12, he says of himself In 2nd Corinthians 12, he says of himself 14 years ago whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know, only God knows. I was taken up into heaven and I heard and saw things inexpressible. So maybe he was referring to that time in Lystra. You know that 14 years earlier, because then he writes about things that near-death experiencers are confirming today. Like in 1st Corinthians 15, he says our bodies are buried a natural body, but they're raised a spiritual body. They're buried in weakness but they're raised in the Greek word he uses is Duname, where we get our word dynamite. They're raised in power. Well, that's exactly what near-death experiencers say. They say my spiritual body, like I had like telescopic eyesight, like I could see.

38:41

For Santosh, this Hindu man I interviewed who describes the city of God that, like John does in Revelation 21, said on the other side you can see for like thousands of miles, as if you're right up close. And he said so. So this city, he called it a giant compound and we helped build a hospital in India for people in impoverished to you know, so that they could have care there. So I've been to India many times and they're compounds everywhere. They're like big, high wall gated communities. So he says to me it was like a giant compound, like thousands of miles, but I could see the whole thing and these huge, tall, wide, gorgeous walls and and inside this beautiful landscape and these otherworldly buildings of otherworldly building material. He called them mansions or these large buildings, and he's a manufacturing engineer. So he describes this otherworldly building material which a manufacturing engineer would look at and think about.

39:52

But he said I long to go into this place because I realized this is the like, the goal of human life to live there. And he, you know, he sees people very busy about stuff and he looks and he's looking for a way in and he said I counted there were 12 gates all the way around it and it was in a square shape. Now, that's exactly if you go read Revelation 21, that's exactly what John describes. And he sees an angel at the gate nearest outside the gate. And he said then I realized I'm looking at the kingdom of heaven. And he has this whole experience with this God of light and love. He has a life review, which Vicki also has. Now, this is another thing, another commonality all around the world. That's fascinating. Around the world, that's fascinating. So, in the presence of this God of light and love who, again, you know, I mean what Santosh described

is this God had so much compassion and love and tenderness for him, even though in his life review he saw all is good but he saw all his wrongs and all he could say is forgive me, lord, forgive me, because he and this is a commonality is as people re-experience their life. In this life review they often say God was not judging me, god was just loving me unconditionally. I was judging myself, I knew the truth and I was judging myself. And you know, I mean again, I trace all these things. They're not new, all this stuff is not really new, but it's being confirmed by people all across the globe. And so in this life review, back to Vicki, Jesus says to her would you like to see your life? And she says okay. And so she starts to see.

42:02

And what they'll commonly say is it was like I watched my life from a third perspective replay, almost like in a panoramic, three-dimensional, almost like a hologram. But it's not, it's real. And not only are they watching, they're also back experiencing it. But here's the fascinating thing Not only are they and they commonly say the emphasis was on our relationships, not the things we accomplished, but the way we treated people. And not only is Vicki re-experiencing what she thought and felt in each moment, she's experiencing what the other people thought and felt from her interactions with them so fascinatingly. And they say that changes them more than anything, because they realize how much we really are connected and that what God? They come back commonly across the world, saying two things God is love and the way we treat or love one another is what matters most to God, and that it even has a ripple effect through humanity.

43:18

Now again, 3,500 years ago, Moses experiences this God of brilliant light in a bush on Mount Sinai, but the light doesn't burn. The bush Sound familiar? Yeah, and this God says to him I am the self-existent one or I am he who is Now. Fascinatingly, I interviewed a woman in Tehran who's related to the Prophet Muhammad, who's related to the prophet Muhammad. When she has a heart attack, she's expecting to be judged by Ali. That's not what happens. She sees the same God that Santosh describes, but he's in the form of a man, but of light. And he says to her I am he who is and boom, she's back in her body, but with a peace and a joy she's never experienced before.

Chris Comeaux Host

44:15

Wow.

John Burke Guest

44:16

That's the same God Moses experienced, right yeah, and then you have. And what I like to point out is all the way back in Genesis 12, it's the very first book of the Bible, written 1500 BC God says to Abraham and Sarah I'm going to raise you up to be a blessing to all the nations. And this is exactly what these people are testifying to today. They're experiencing the God who cares about every person in every nation. And then John, in Revelation 7, says he sees heaven, and there before God's throne are people from every nation, every tribe, every language, every people group. That's what it says, revelation, chapter 7. And so I think that is, I think, the story and the history of God. That's what I'm trying to show as well in the new book, in Imagine the God of Heaven, that God has always been the God of all nations. You know, sometimes I think Christians give people a sour taste in their mouth because somehow they act like he loves one group of people more than another, cares more about one group of people or another, or one group's favored over another. And of course this also was the problem that the Jewish people had, thinking they're chosen because they're better than no. They're chosen with a responsibility, and I think they had a responsibility which I think was to record what got recorded. And I go into all that, but I'm showing how as well.

46:04

You know when Jesus came. It's very interesting because several things. First of all, at one point the eyewitnesses of his life and teachings said he went up on this high mountain and he basically said I'm going to show you my glory. And he was transfigured. And they said his face shone like the sun, his face shown like the sun. Well then you have Jesus saying things like um, he came to demonstrate God's love in a form we could understand. And and he said I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but we'll have the light of life. And then you have Paul, who at that point was one of the religious leaders who had Jesus crucified in the name of God. And this is what I know. In hospice probably there are a lot who have come across Christians and they just drive them crazy. And I get it honestly even after being a pastor.

Chris Comeaux Host

47:11

Yeah, it's because it's then religion in a human construct.

47:15

It's not what I feel like you're describing.



John Burke Guest

47:17

Religion arrogance, yeah, and it's not who God is. And I think near-death experiences are revealing again what I think the scriptures actually teach about who God is and the hope to come as well. And Paul, he was actually one of the religious Pharisees who had Jesus crucified, and the reason they crucified him is because Jesus called them out that they were only in it for power and money and they didn't like it that they were losing their power and their following. If you don't believe me, go read Matthew 23 sometime. It's like whoa Jesus man, you're brutal and sarcastic and it's like you brewed a viper, yeah. You white, brutal and sarcastic. And he's like you brood a viper, yeah you whitewash tombs, you know.

48:17

Outside you look all white and pretty, but inside you're full of rotten decay right, and so he was calling them out on the heart, you know. And so religion can go bad, there's no doubt about it. If people are not humbly seeking God and trying to really follow God.

48:36

But Jesus, you know, he reveals that the whole point, just like Moses said, is to love God first and second, as Matthew 22,. He said the second commandment is love your neighbor as much as yourself. Keep those two and you keep all the commandments of the Bible. That's Jesus, that's also Moses and, by the way, that's what just about every near-death experiencer who has been in the presence of God and had a life review says the same thing.

Chris Comeaux Host

49:07

You're giving me chills, John. So many people have asked me on the back end of my sabbatical. So, Chris, what did you learn? And I'm about ready to tear up. I said I just really feel like your book was definitely a key part of it. A couple other books, incredible book called Silence and Solitude, the whole point of this life. Because I'm listening to you and like, okay, there's great hope now for what's beyond, but yet we're still here. So the question is well then, how do we live now? How do we live now? And it's love God and love people. That's the whole point of

why we're here. And just listening to you, John, and I have to wipe some tears from my eyes here here. And just listening to you, John, and I have to wipe some tears from my eyes here.

49:46

I think one of the scriptures has always kind of maybe bothered me a little bit is when Peter said be prepared. When people ask John, you live with such hope, please tell me. What is this hope that you have? And I'm like thinking I've never had someone kind of stop me and say, Chris, please tell me. You live with such hope. There's something about you. And yet how many Christians of the same way right. People are not stopping us and saying there is something different. Please tell me, what is this hope that you have? I feel like in this 45 minutes, you just exude this amazing hope and then the question is well then, what do we do with this? Because if you have this certainty, there is something beyond. Then how do we live today? And you just nailed it it's love God and love people, and by golly wouldn't this world be such a different place if we lived that on a day-to-day basis.

John Burke Guest

50:35

Yeah, and it changed my life. First of all, I saw that, you know, and I just went through, well, really, three points of the 10 points of evidence that convinced me. The third one is that, you know, imagine the God of heaven. I have Santosh, who grew up in India. I have another Hindu man, the chief anesthesiologist of the Bakersfield Heart Hospital, who thought near-death experiences were just psychosis. And then he had one, and he has a Damascus Road kind of experience.

51:14

You know, like I was just telling you, where Paul is arresting followers of Jesus, because he doesn't believe in him. When this brilliant God of light appears to him this is Acts, chapter 10, he doesn't believe in him. When this brilliant God of light appears to him this is Acts, chapter 10, same God of light that appears to people all over the globe and he says who are you, lord? And he says I'm Jesus, who you're persecuting. Rajiv has the same experience and he asks the same question to this God of light who are you Lord? And he said out of the light steps a man in a robe with a beard and says I'm Jesus, your Savior. You can't make this stuff up, Bebe, in Tehran, Heidi, a Jewish woman who heard from her atheist father there is no God. Your life is worthless.

Jesus is the biggest hoax ever perpetrated on mankind. Yet when her horse lands on her and crushes her at age 16, she's up above her body. She's there with this God of light who she knows is Jesus. She comes back and she actually becomes a hospice nurse. So today she's a hospice nurse. She's still Jewish, but she also knows that she said to me I can't explain to you how God can be love and God can be a man and God can be light.

52:38

I can't explain it, but that's what I experienced. And so you're talking about people all over the world Dr Bell Chung in Singapore, I have professors in Australia, people in London, an agnostic commercial airline pilot from Newfoundland and they're experiencing the same things. And so what I would say is you know, you guys are, you're on the front lines, not the end of life. You're helping people go from chapter one of life to chapter two, but the book keeps going and you know, uh, I. I hope you take this as encouragement and, just like you said, that what I've seen with all these people is that you know, just like god said, if you seek me with all your heart, you will find me and god is love, but a love like we've never even imagined, and the point of life is love and you're loving people well as you're helping them and you're helping their families not only transition through grief and loss that's very real but also have hope in it.

Chris Comeaux Host

54:03

Yeah, what keeps coming to me, John, just listening to you, is faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love and I feel like, just in this conversation with you, I feel like I understand that now at a deeper level, because faith is that first step, that even that skeptic side of you, you could try to get everything nailed down, but there's still. I remember CS Lewis saying that you know he was a great apologetics. He literally almost put himself in a nervous breakdown, tried to dismantle every argument and intellectual and it was kind of brought to the end of himself and he finally said it just, it comes down to faith. It is that choice of you. Know what? I am not God, there is a God, and it's just faith and then hope, because you're painting this beautiful picture that there's something so amazing on the other side.

54:48

So then, where does that leave us today? It's love, and we'll understand that love at levels way beyond our comprehension today. But if we could at least focus on that today, we probably would make each part of our world a Hospice nurse by the bedside, a hospice worker. If you're a leader, whatever part of the kingdom God has given you, some say over your family, your community. Just make it better, man. Thank you. This has been. I'm trying not to like break

down in tears here. I got tears kind of streaming down my face. This was a true gift, John. Any final thoughts?

John Burke Guest

55:24

Well, the one thing I would say is that you know, I know, being on the front lines, you know, having just walked this family through the death of a you know a son and a fiancée and a father. There aren't many things that are more emotionally taxing. There aren't many things that are more emotionally taxing, especially if you don't shut your emotions off right One way.

55:54

You know, having been a pastor for 26 years, I know you can deal with it by hardening your heart, just so you can get through.

56:00

But that's not the best way to go. It's actually to keep your heart tender, but that costs something as well, and so I just want to encourage you guys that God gets that, and what you're doing is a noble, noble work, and he's there with you to walk you through it as well, and to keep healing up your heart so that you can keep giving out you can't give out if you have nothing as well. And to keep healing up your heart so that you can keep giving out, because you can't give out if you have nothing to give, right, yeah, and so you know. Just want to encourage you that you know that one day I believe in God's presence. He's going to show you Every little act of kindness, every little care given, little act of kindness, every little care given, every word spoken that did bring hope or comfort in grief. It mattered to him. He saw it. It mattered, and great is your reward. So thanks for what you do.

Chris Comeaux Host

56:58

Thank you, John. Thank you again for writing this book. We're going to put a link to Imagine Heaven and also your new book, imagine the God of Heaven. And so to our listeners, this is a gift. This was a gift to me. I hope it's a gift to you. Please share the heck out of it, give it to as many people as possible and, as always, we always want to leave you with a quote, just something thought provoking. I ran these by John and they felt very appropriate. This, the first one, is from the desire of ages. "God never leaves his children, otherwise then they would choose to be led If they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with him. And I think about you, our hospice and

palliative care workers. And then this last one, from Victor Frankl. I couldn't pick one. He who knows the why for his existence, he will be able to bear almost anyhow. Thanks for listening to TCN Talks.

Jeff Haffner Ad

57:59

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58:18