

# God Calling

*“God never stops trying to get our attention.”*

## Heart Issues

I awoke this particular morning with an annoying backache. After a short time the pain began to shoot through my chest and run down my left arm. I had been sick that week and decided to ignore the symptoms so I could keep up my busy pace. My responsibilities demanded that I continue on. Today, however, my body firmly requested I change my itinerary. The pain was severe enough to make me seek medical attention.

In the emergency room my symptoms provided me prompt attention, and when one doctor left and three returned I knew something was wrong. *“Mr. Jackson, we believe you have had a heart attack.”* This was not possible. I was only thirty two and rarely sick, hardly even a cold. The cardiologist assigned to my case ran a battery of tests over the next few days. Each test confirmed the heart attack, so I was given two choices: stay in the hospital for three weeks to strengthen, then submit to a stress test; or undergo a surgical heart catherization that day to evaluate my heart’s condition. I elected the catherization because it gave immediate results, and

the doctor mentioned that being released was an option if the results were satisfactory. The thought of being at home sounded wonderful.

As I lay on the operating table, the surgeon told a few jokes to keep things light. All I could muster was, *“Just give me some good news!”* His response made me understand the severity of the situation. *“Every test has revealed you had a heart attack, so I’m here to assess the damage. To find nothing wrong with your heart would imply you had what we call a false positive. That would mean your heart is fine even though every test indicated a cardiac event. To be honest, I have only seen that once before.”*

I was awake during the entire process and able to watch the monitor as the dye was injected into the veins that surrounded my heart. Each time, the surgeon commented on how good things looked. After injecting the last vein he said, *“Hmm, I’ll be with you in a moment,”* and walked out. He returned while I was in the recovery room and calmly stated, *“Consider this a big warning. There is nothing wrong with your heart as far as I can see. It is probably a good time to take a look at your lifestyle.”* He then shook my hand and left. I had achieved the rare false positive. What a relief! I was free to go home and recuperate.

The pain in my arm came and went over the next few weeks, and my cardiologist suggested an aspirin regiment if my arm continued to bother me. I was free to call him if the pain intensified. The pain did not subside; in fact, it continued for several months. Another battery of tests cleared my heart as the

culprit, and the reason for the consistent ache in my arm was never determined. Thoughts of endless youth faded and I decided to reassess my priorities. Family became more important than the pursuit of the American dream. As I spent more time playing with my boys and enjoying my wife, I realized what a precious gift my family was to me. They were no longer a burden or an obstacle to achieving my goals. They gave my life purpose.

Up to this point in my life, pursuing God was not all that important. In fact, here I was, thirty-two years old and still avoiding the topic of God. As I began to think back on all the things about God that I remembered as a boy, there was one particular situation that came to mind.

### Standing Taller

As a child I contracted a bacterial bone infection, called osteomyelitis, which eventually led to the death of some bone tissue in my right leg. The mortality rate was extremely high for a two year old child in those days and when my temperature hovered near 108<sup>0</sup> the Doctor suggested that my mom be prepared for all possibilities. Heart broken, she called in our priest to administer last rites. Amazingly, within hours after the prayers my condition noticeably changed. And after three years of experimental operations, high doses of penicillin, and months of isolation, I pulled through.

By the time I was five I was given a clean bill of health. Being alive was wonderful, but the years of surgeries and medicines had their side affects. In

fighting the disease my body had sent more nutrients to the sick leg to aid the battle and this had increased the growth rate. My right leg ended up being more than an inch longer than my left. This discrepancy in my legs also caused a curvature in my spine. All of this happened years before my parent's big conversion to God. Mom informed me that my sickness was a turning point in her life. She always believed God played a large role in my healing.

By the time I was nine we were forced to deal with the leg differences so that the curvature of my spine would not increase. I was measured for a lift that would correct the shortness in my left leg, but before the lift could be delivered we encountered our first family miracle. My parents had been attending evening meetings in our church that were supposed to be more "charismatic" than the regular Sunday morning services. After one of these meetings my father sat me down and gathered the entire family around us. Dad was convinced God could heal my legs. Once he placed my feet into his hands, the difference in my legs became quite evident to everyone. He began to pray. I do not remember the words, but I do remember vividly what we all saw that night. To the astonishment of the entire family we watched my left leg miraculously grow out and meet my right leg with equal length. Dad told me to stand up and walk around. The leg appeared normal and I had not felt a thing! We all saw it happen and there was no denying what we witnessed.

Mom scheduled an appointment with the pediatrician who had worked with us throughout

the entire osteomyelitis ordeal. After seeing me through numerous surgeries and years in casts, he was well aware of the problems with my legs. He asked the reason for our visit. Mom requested he measure my legs again, and with some reluctance he obliged, but he also reminded Mom that the lifts for my shoes were already ordered. There was no need to do this again. Doctor Brown measured my legs and found only a quarter-inch difference in the bone length between the two. *“This slight difference is common to most of us; our heel pads make up for the discrepancy,”* he remarked, then asked, *“David’s legs are normal and I know bone length does not change that much in one week, so what happened?”* Mother told him of our remarkable experience.

If it were not for the miracles, I would have missed God’s presence.

Years later when I returned to his office with my own children, he mentioned to the nurses that I was the boy with the osteomyelitis whose leg miraculously grew. By their responses it was evident they were familiar with the story.

That experience stayed with all of us throughout the years. It was the first time I had seen the true power of God at work. Even now, my brother asks about that time my leg grew out and I just smile and say, *“It was awesome!”* We cannot hide from the fact that God showed up that day. My legs testify to that miracle every time I take a step. What we experienced became a permanent part of our lives.

My parents tapped into something more powerful than any of us realized. We saw lives turned around

and bodies healed without explanation. If it was not for the miracles I witnessed, I would have totally ignored Mom and Dad's trust in God. These extraordinary events made a strong impression on my life. They slowly opened my eyes to the idea that there was something more to this God stuff than I knew. My heart attack was another opportunity for God to reveal Himself. I may be a slow learner when it comes to God, but now I was more aware of His presence once again.

### New Direction

Even with a clean bill of health, in the back of my mind, I still wondered if I was having other heart-related problems due to the lingering aches and pains in my arm and chest. Summer arrived and it allowed us to enjoy some welcomed relaxation. Dad and I could be found in our lawn chairs discussing life on a daily basis. Dad could see that my heart attack left me a little unnerved, so one day he pressed me on a topic we rarely discussed, and made a suggestion. "*You should give your life to the Lord and serve him!*" A year ago I would have calmly explained to him how I had my whole life planned and how smoothly everything was working out, but not that day. I had nothing to say, nowhere to run, and no more gimmicks to get me out of my current situation. I had tried every worldly avenue to make my life happy. The American dream was not solving life's problems and I knew it. Busyness and stress had taken their toll. God was one direction I had not tried, so I agreed. The prayer was simple:

*“God, forgive me for all my sins and mistakes. Take over my life and help me live the life you desire. I accept your forgiveness in Jesus’ name. Amen.”*

Something inside me changed that day. My spiritual DNA was altered and I have never been the same since. All my senses were supercharged. Every color seemed so much richer; the sky was bluer, the grass was greener, and the clouds were a white I had never seen. I could not explain it, but the heaviness of life was gone. A new zeal overtook me within days, and I felt purpose again. A transformation had begun in me that I had never expected. Deep inside I felt different, though outwardly life was the same. There was a peace I had not felt in years. The pains were becoming distant memories. My greatest companion became the Bible, and the words seemed to have a life of their own. The change was so fast and so complete that I had to ask myself, *“Was God in the background all these years just waiting for me find Him?”* One day, to my surprise, God answered that question.

I only took a small step of faith, but it has made all the difference.

### Called Out

It was now Fall, almost a full year after my heart attack and just a few months after my internal renovation. My sister Karen invited our family to a nearby church to listen to a visiting speaker. We were looking to learn more about God, so we decided to attend. Karen informed us that this particular minister had a unique spiritual gifting. Apparently, he was able to hear from God, and he used his

gifting to strengthen people who were going through tough times by giving them words of encouragement.

At first, I was a little skeptical, but people were evidently touched by the minister's words, and they seemed very genuine in their responses. It was not until he called me out of the crowd that I realized the truth of his gifting. After looking intently at me for a few moments, he said in a polite way that God had a word for me, and that I would have to judge the word for myself. He continued, "*God says your heart is totally healed. You will have no more problems the rest of your life and God wants you to know that He has something for you to do.*" I was shocked because his words were right on target. There was no way he could have known about my heart or the stress that it had created, nor could he have known of my quest to discover if God was reaching out to me, since none of us had ever met him. I was convinced God had to be involved.

My wife began to cry as we both felt the stress of my heart episode lift off us. It has now been over ten years since the incident; I still visit the cardiologist, and his tests always confirm my healing. God has kept His promise and my health is a witness to His faithfulness. That day I realized God was calling me and I just needed to listen. I only took a small step of faith by asking God to get involved in my life, but it has made all the difference. I went on to experience more than I could ever have imagined, and this was just the beginning.





God  
has focused  
all  
His resources  
on getting  
our attention,  
because  
His love for us  
demands it!

**Helpful Biblical Principle**

*See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children, and we really are!*

1 John 3:1 NLT