

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse
In View
of
Heaven's Backyard



Jeff H. Ulrich

Copyright © 2019

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Produced in the United States of America, 2017-2019

First Printing by <http://www.thebookpatch.com>, 2019

**THIS PREVIEW OF “THE HOPE IN PERSONAL APOCALYPSE
| IN VIEW OF HEAVEN’S BACKYARD” INCLUDES EXCERPTS
FROM THE BEGINNING AND END OF THE BOOK.**

AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER: Jeff H. Ulrich – Jeff Ulrich Legacies

Send Correspondence to info@JeffUlrichLegacies.com

Disclaimer: Identifying details of people and events reasonably differ in this book from the author's recollection of personal experiences; this is enough to preserve the anonymity of true-life individuals and places. The author maintains in good conscience that the accounts as represented are still – in essence – truthful and as applicable for the reader to consider as the nonfictional events upon which they are based. But the reader should receive this work only as literature from which to draw and be inspired by the author's overall life and message about hope. The author does not assume, and hereby disclaims, any liability to any party who identifies or associates themselves with any character, location, and / or other detail that might be a fictional element of this book.

Scripture quotations taken from the **Amplified® Bible (AMP)**, Copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org

Scripture quotations marked **ESV** are from the **ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®)** copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. ESV Text Edition: 2016. The **ESV®** text has been reproduced in cooperation with and by permission of Good News Publishers. Unauthorized reproduction of this publication is prohibited. All rights reserved. The **ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®)** is adapted from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. English Standard Version, **ESV**, and the **ESV** logo are registered trademarks of Good News Publishers. Used by permission.

Scriptures marked **KJV** are taken from the **KING JAMES VERSION (KJV)**: KING JAMES VERSION, public domain.

Scripture quotations taken from the **New American Standard Bible® (NASB)**, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org

Scripture quotations marked (**NKJV**) are taken from the **New King James Version®**. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Dedication

Dedication

To: My daughter, Grace

My Dear Grace,

I began to write this book when you were nearly fourteen years old.

I clearly remember when, on the 24th of July in 2011, you first embraced hope; you were only nine. You demonstrated such wisdom beyond your years. With the courage of faith, you have since come through some difficult times. You have become a fine young lady of grace. I am proud of you for choosing to cast off bitterness!

I taught you many lessons – learned through my perseverance in trials – so that you could overcome your biggest challenges.

Next to raising you as my wonderful daughter, I consider my highest achievement to be the victory in my heart. Therein has abided the hope that withstands all adversity and that inspired me to leave this inheritance for you to most cherish.

Sweetheart, this book is a special gift for you to open when you need a boost. When you do so, you might be much older and, before then, my time in this world might end. But I lovingly preserved my spirit for you in these pages. I wrote each chapter to renew your heart and to encourage you with the hope of my life.

Soar on wings each time you read this book and reflect on our time together. Never forget that you have been loved as much as any good father can ever love his daughter.

With all my love,

Dad

From: My beloved wife
To: Her late father, Harry

Hi, Dad,

It's almost Father's Day. I miss you!

I wish that you could be here to read this message in person, because I would have you know that this book honors you. Jeff included a chapter, *The Hope in Harry*, to fulfill his promise – he told you that your courage and grace would not be forgotten and that something good would come from your ordeal.

In this book, Jeff shared the hope that you were inspired to represent until the very end. Dad, your example made a positive impact on me and on people who were around us at the time of your passing. Now, in this meaningful way, you can continue to touch the lives of people who struggle as much as you once suffered.

Dad, this is our tribute to you, not just for this Father's Day but, for all time.

Still loving you in my heart, now and forever,

Your “#1 Daughter”

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Foreword & Acknowledgements	
Introduction.....	
~ Devotional ~	
Chapter 1: Hurting for Hope	
~ Devotional ~	
Chapter 2: Glimpse the Realm of Possibility.....	
~ Devotional ~	
Chapter 3: Conviction	
~ Devotional ~	
Chapter 4: A Stronghold of Wisdom.....	
~ Devotional 1 ~	
~ Devotional 2 ~	
Chapter 5: The Hallmark of My Undying Hope.....	
~ Devotional ~	
Chapter 6: Finding Purpose and the Hope Within.....	
~ Devotional ~	
Chapter 7: The Passion of Hope	
~ Devotional ~	
Chapter 8: Ambassador of Hope	
~ Devotional ~	

Chapter 9: An Undying Hope
 ~ Devotional ~

Chapter 10: The Life of My Story
 ~ Devotional ~

Chapter 11: The Hope in Harry
 ~ Devotional ~

Chapter 12: Our One True Hope
 ~ Devotional ~

Proface

Introduction to Near to Heaven’s Backyard

Chapter 1: Enter a Realm of Possibility

Chapter 2: Peace in the Valley.....

Foreword & Acknowledgements

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

Foreword & Acknowledgements

FOREWORD:

By Mike Connolly and William H Schnakenberg IV

Chaplain Mike Connolly

This book you're holding, *The Hope in Personal Apocalypse*, was written from the heart of my great friend, Jeff. I am now on my third reading of this book, which he sent me to review at a time when I was slowly traveling through my own seven-year apocalyptic wilderness experience; my health had fallen into a deep life-threatening decline. The help, encouragement, and hope that Jeff's book continues to provide me were born out of his own hardships, the personal apocalypse he faced, and the resulting lessons he learned.

After working in law enforcement and serving as a hospital chaplain, I became acquainted with Jeff through social media, which wonderfully bridged the more than 2,000-mile gap between our locations. I first stumbled across Jeff five years ago on his Facebook ministry page which, even at that time, had a worldwide following – many of whom were terribly burdened with their own personal, spiritual, emotional, and/or physical apocalypses.

Soon after meeting Jeff, he graciously asked if I would consider becoming a contributor to his page by praying for those in need and possibly even write articles of encouragement based on the Bible; I eagerly accepted his offer. What followed, for me, was the truly spiritual, emotionally rich, and gratifying experience of being provided the opportunity to minister to others on such a large scale. Not long after, Jeff created a Facebook ministry page for me, and I am still actively mentoring several thousand people in need to this day.

While Jeff's ministry page was neither designed nor intended as a vehicle for sharing his personal life story and the challenges he's faced, with the expectation of helping others through first-person accounts and personal narratives, *The Hope in Personal Apocalypse* is crafted to do just exactly that. Every aspect of Jeff's book has wonderfully ministered to me in unique ways and built up nicely to its final chapters.

Chapter Eleven of twelve, titled "The Hope in Harry," is the true-life story of an older man, very near my same age, who Jeff knew very well; his story and

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

Jeff's message provided me with the determination and hope that I was desperately searching for and encouraged me not to give in or give up while fighting my own personal apocalypse. Like Jeff, I discovered that through God's love, mercy, and grace, and through His strength living within me, I could, indeed, do all the things He has created me to accomplish for Him.

Unlike your typical novel, which is often read once and then discarded, *The Hope in Personal Apocalypse* is a book that I believe must be read more than just once. Each time I read its twelve chapters, I am supplied with a renewed sense of hope. My earnest prayer is that God, through the reading of *The Hope in Personal Apocalypse*, will minister His personal presence, love, comfort, and peace to you.

Chaplain Mike Connolly

Prescott Arizona



Chaplain William H Schnakenberg IV

I was deeply humbled to be asked to write a short foreword for *The Hope in Personal Apocalypse*. The author and I met, as I would like to think, only through 'divine intervention' around a decade ago. Though many might consider this meeting a random event, we both felt it necessary to stay in touch. Over the years, the author and I have built a special and important relationship. I am honored and blessed to have him as a friend. He has touched me and made such a significant impact on me. I thank the Good Lord that he is in my life.

Through his recent endeavor, *The Hope in Personal Apocalypse*, I believe he will make a similar impact on you.

The book is a work of art. As you will see with each turning of the page, the author truly has a gift with words and analogies. This is a skill we non-writers can only sit back and admire. The wisdom is displayed with every keystroke. Each chapter pulled me forward, wanting more. This is a book that calls to be read in one sitting and then draws the reader to start back at the beginning, highlighter in hand. I have found myself approaching it somewhat like a devotional, reading it through twice and then using it as a reference, reviewing highlighted passages that

Foreword & Acknowledgements

have helped me through difficult times. Readers will want to refer to it again and again, not just this month or even this year, but over the course of a lifetime.

I was particularly touched by the author's personal stories and his use of the "handicap" concept, such as in Chapter 2 where he states:

"Despite this limitation, I try to put forth my best effort in every situation; and I am ever thankful for this gift of sight – partial though it may be."

The author may not have perfect sight, but he truly sees things that even those with 20/20 vision may not see. Reading *The Hope in Personal Apocalypse* feels like a personal visit with the author, one in which you are allowed to really know him. He is approachable and vulnerable, allows you to discover that, though he may seem to be handicapped from the outside, the Lord has used his handicap as a gift that lets faith move mountains. It may sound strange, but through his partial blindness, he sees the physical and spiritual world more clearly. Some may feel intimidated, fearful, even cursed by such a disability, but this author recognizes the blessing and accepts it as a source of encouragement. I think of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, where he describes the thorn in his flesh and prays three times to have it removed.

"But he said to me, 'My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' So then, I will boast most gladly about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may reside in me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9 to 10 – New English Translation).

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

Through examples such as this, the author of *The Hope in Personal Apocalypse* helps us to see that we, too, can be so humble and see that His grace is enough and His power made perfect in weakness.

Know that when you pick up this book, it may be the first time but it will not be the last. You will have to go back again and again to grasp all of its wisdom. If you are ready to be encouraged, get your highlighters ready, and turn the page!

In Christ's love,

Chaplain William H Schnakenberg IV

Author/Chaplain-Pastoral Apologist

Blue Collar Believer

www.bcbschnakenberg.com

Foreword & Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS :

By Jeff H. Ulrich

My wish is for the exceptional people, both in my past and present life, to know the depth of my appreciation for their positive impact on me. I share about other key figures in this book, but the following individuals also deserve my utmost gratitude:

- To all former music teachers, high school Geometry and English teachers, as well as college English professors – You were patient and provided fair opportunities for me to achieve my potential. I have since worked very hard to honor you with my life.
- Mom, Grandpa and Grandma, Uncle Bill, Aunt Sally, Martha, Dorothy, Pastor K., Pastor R., Rev B., Pastor B., Chaplain Mike, Chaplain Bill, Father L., Gary, and my precious Ms. B. – You are the saints who will forever occupy a special place in my heart. Because of your faith and unconditional love, I have endured by drawing from and cherishing my memories of you as worthy examples of how to live.
- Mr. O., Mr. S., Mr. K., Mr. C., and Mr. D., – Some of you are still living. I look forward to revealing this book to you. You once hired me. You believed that I could do the job; you certainly allowed me to succeed. You patiently shaped me into someone who could better serve. Where would I be without people like you who could recognize a diamond in the rough? Thank you for giving me chances and for being more than bosses. Some of you are truly saints.

I thank God for the aforementioned people and so many other good characters who have been my role models, encouragers, givers, and loving hearts. I credit some of them for inspiring me and for providing feedback toward the completion of this book. Karen, Leslie, Ms. O., Ms. A, and Ms. D. are good friends who contributed constructive input with care.

Many of us can testify that certain animals are good for the soul in companionship; through their special connection with humankind, Heaven embraces the one who is broken and who could otherwise be lost. Such creatures

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

seem to bear our burdens and sooth our pain to help us to endure the darkest nights. I have personally been blessed to have such timely relationships with unforgettable furry friends. They had a healing effect of which I would not take for granted by neglecting to mention them here.

Above all, I thank God for His hope and for His Word of which my expression in this book is abundant to discern.

Introduction

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse



***apocalypse* | /ə'pɑ:kə,lɪps/ | noun | [singular]**

“: a great disaster : a sudden and very bad event that causes much fear, loss, or destruction.”

***"Apocalypse." – Definition for English-Language Learners
from Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary.
N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Nov. 2016.***



Introduction



There Is a Way

Do you feel alone and afraid? Are you carrying a heavy load? Are you suffering and weary for answers?

I want to assure you that, if you earnestly reach into this book, you would grasp crucial answers that are for all who seek the treasure-trove of heavenly hope that brings unspeakable joy.

Disconcerting is a thought of colossal suffering that, in an instant, could bring any one of us to our knees. Life has many ways to so indiscriminately prove our fragility. But there is a way to prepare for and to cope with tribulation.

Their Way Leads to Hope

My sight defect from birth has certainly been a factor in the variety of challenges and hardships that I have since faced. Yet, through the trials of my more than fifty years of life, I made a discovery that has proven itself to be effective and essential for my survival.

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

I found that, as I fashion myself with thoughts and behaviors that reflect those of upright individuals, I strengthen my heart against menacing forces and influences that could otherwise corrupt me in, the vulnerable state of brokenness that I refer to as, “Personal Apocalypse.”

I have known and was inspired by such people who rejoiced in their sufferings. Once I aspired to live according to their “upright” examples, I began to see that their way leads to a hope for everyone – even for someone like me.

Therefore, I try to be like that person who diligently seeks wisdom, stands for truth, and lives to do what is right.

During trials, that person’s traits are most desirable. He is hopeful and loving in patience and humility.

He also has a healthy perspective whence he faces every tomorrow. Should his entire world be decimated and fall into ruin, he might weep over lost comforts; he is, nonetheless, only human. His tears, however, would wash away ashes of his devastation. Ultimately, he would not grieve beyond the night.

Before the light of an early-morning sun, all could see the shine of his impenetrable fortress of good character. Therein lies his source of strength in a sustenance of hope that replenishes peace and contentment.

Seeds of Hope

Rather than put your hope at risk in life’s wasteland, cradle it in the one securable location that could withstand the harmful effects of neighboring madness. Your heart should be such a refuge where peace could flourish amidst an ever-renewing crop of hope.

Until darkness comes, venture beyond your walls toward every horizon. Live a full life, and explore different paths in search of joy. Every road has its challenges, but you would be strengthened in your faithful endeavor to overcome life’s obstacles if you **toil in the light of purpose against the obstructive rocks of adversity. Move them to uncover seeds of hope.**

Let this book be your guide in planting for a new harvest – a supply of hope to sustain a strong foundation for your life.

Introduction

~ Devotional ~

“...we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

See Romans 5:3-6 (ESV)



Prayer of Hymnspiration

Heavenly Father, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and His righteousness. I trust no other foundation. I wholly lean on Jesus’ name.

On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.

When I cannot see my Savior in the darkness, I rest on His unchanging Grace; and my anchor holds in every storm.

O, God, when the angels trumpet at Christ’s return, I long to be standing faultless before Your throne – dressed in Your Son’s righteousness.

Thank You for supporting me with the promise, covenant, and blood of Jesus. When my soul gives way to the overwhelming flood around me, Jesus is my hope and protection.

Lord, I praise You for Your love and mercy. Amen.

BASED ON

MY HOPE IS BUILT ON NOTHING LESS

BY EDWARD MOTE (1834)

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

Chapter 1

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

Hurting for Hope

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

Hurting for Hope



Reaching Beyond the Threshold

You and I share an enemy that, despite its many forms, we could mutually identify as “suffering.” Many of us quickly learn that our common adversary strives to break us.

Not far from a mother’s womb, discomfort awaits her unborn. I remember when a doctor would swat a baby’s bottom to clear its lungs, airways, and mouth after its delivery. The newborn would be stimulated to cry its first time by that procedure, as would it inevitably be compelled by its most basic instincts to demand attention when it would grow hungry or feel tired.

As children grow, they are apt to learn from the little boo-boos that they suffer. The worst spills of a rambunctious tyke usually prove their worth in his shed tears of ensuing pain. When children survive their poorly executed stunts, they could stand stronger and wiser than were they before their falls.

Most of us learn from childish ways but shudder to reach beyond that threshold to prepare for exceeding trials. Naturally, we overestimate our capacities to persevere through inevitable tribulations that, otherwise, would break our hearts and crush our very souls.

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

A Realm of Impossibility?

I can empathize in a world that seems ablaze around scorched earth and bleak in the shadow of falling skies; these words, of course, are not to be taken as literal but, more so, as overwhelming circumstances to which someone could relate whose life has become like – in every practical sense – a realm of impossibility. Such a dimension of life is all too familiar to people who have either been violated or who have been crushed by betrayal. They are in a place of deep disappointment and humiliation where impact of failures at work, school, and home have created gaping faults. A heavy fog of sorrow envelops the inhabitants who grieve for loved ones. Weary hearts hide in the gloom from abusive spirits who prey upon their humanity. But there are many souls who cannot reach shelter; their bodies are broken.

No matter how you look at suffering, we could all probably agree that its ways are innumerable. Regardless of the direction from which pain comes at you with its cruelest effects, it could not overtake you if your hope is of the boundless source of enduring strength. Fortunately, there is such a hope with which we could all cope with the hurt and ills of this life.

The Cosmos of Possibilities

The everlasting hope of life abides in every heart that beats with exceeding confidence in life of the heart — the supreme wisdom of its omniscient source — rather than with fluttering uncertainty of wishful thinking. Life loses meaning without the enduring hope of such higher meaning.

During seasons of adversity, **such hope is the precious resource to sustain hearts desirous of fulfilling its purpose for them.** This imperishable hope in noble passion provides peace during hardship. In a world of hurt and despair, no other source of nourishment is as vital to our spirits.

In this challenging universe, I am humbly with you as a work in progress. Together, let us explore the cosmos of possibilities in search of a new hope.

Hurting for Hope

~ Devotional ~

“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.”

See Psalm 42:11 (ESV)



Prayer of Hymnspiration

Lord, my spirit is sinking within me. But I have not forgotten you or your kindness.

Troubles swell around me like waves in a sea, and they threaten to muffle my cries with their tumultuous noise. Yet, O God, I have faith that you hear me when my joys are drowning in sorrow.

Lord, I beseech you. Command your love and grace as I pray and sing in the night.

I shall cast myself before you. My God, you are my foundation. My soul should not indulge in the grief of my heart. My heart should hope in you, Lord. I praise you for being my rest and sure relief.

God, you are my exceeding joy. May I employ your light and truth to lead me to your heavenly hill. Amen.

BASED ON

MY SPIRIT SINKS WITHIN ME, LORD

BY ISAAC WATTS (1674-1748)

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

Chapter 2

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

Glimpse the Realm of
Possibility

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

Glimpse the Realm of Possibility



My Gift of Sight

I was born with blindness. **My retinas were so underdeveloped and deformed that I could only distinguish between light and darkness. I learned how to crawl, walk, and run without my sense of sight.**

When I was almost a year old, **a miracle occurred – my retinas further developed. Thus, my vision improved.**

Even though I could not qualify for a driver's license, my eyes are sufficient to see some of what I would otherwise miss.

The scope of my legal blindness is acute near-sightedness accompanied by light sensitivity and involuntary rapid-eye movement; my vision is effectively distorted. Despite this limitation, I try to put forth my best effort in every situation; and **I am ever thankful for this gift of sight – partial though it may be.**

I have been blessed to see my lovely wife and beautiful daughter.

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

Proface

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

Proface

My confidence is in the hope that has empowered me with the strength to rise from obscurity. Although I still face setbacks, I am living proof that the invaluable principles of hope can sustain us through hardships, handicaps, and all other adversities. My life is not perfect, but my heart is satisfied. Hope is doing its part.

These foundations have proven to be effective, not only for me but also, for my teenage daughter whose sense of confidence and success has grown over the years.



This book reflects my faith, but its purpose is not to indoctrinate. I wrote *The Hope in Personal Apocalypse* to encourage and strengthen readers from all walks of life. My life has been so enriched by good people who hold different beliefs and, in this same spirit, I offer this book to you. When we are secure in our beliefs, we could find common ground in hope.

I do believe that my hope has been made richer by its bedrock of faith – which is “*the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*” (see **Hebrews 11:1 ESV**) I feel secure in my belief that lasting and redemptive hope is to be gained through faith.

With hope, live a meaningful life that inspires present and future generations.

The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

Introduction to NTHB

Near to Heaven's Backyard

THIS INTRODUCTION IS TO THE FIRST TWO CHAPTERS OF MY NEXT BOOK ENTITLED “*NEAR TO HEAVEN’S BACKYARD*” (NTHB).

READ OF TWO MIRACULOUS EXPERIENCES THAT, TO ME, HAVE BEEN AS REMARKABLE BLESSINGS TO REVEAL GOD'S PRESENCE.

FOR PATRONS, ADDITIONAL CHAPTERS AND BONUS CONTENT WOULD APPEAR ONLINE IN ADVANCE OF FORMAL RELEASES.

VISIT <http://JeffUlrichLegacies.com>!

Near to Heaven's Backyard

Introduction to NTHB



The Distant Shore

Figuratively speaking – just a celestial throw from God’s glorious estate, there lies uncharted vestibules of the spiritual universe. To my soul’s delight, it was delivered from that dark void where it had once been lost on our journey to this world.

Albeit **my** soul is now well, it once felt that it would forever be estranged from the heart with which it first boarded my craft. They were to accompany me on my life’s maiden voyage.

Fate would have it that, before we could reach the painted lining – silver to designate where God would have angels and meet humankind halfway – a storm of destiny would nearly capsize us. Somehow, my heart braved with me the breaking waves that crashed against my bow with much ferocity. My earthbound vessel still made it to port but, when we arrived, I discovered that one in my entourage had gone missing. We would have turned back in search of it, if only there had been a means to do so and with any indication of its whereabouts. We could only have guessed where, in all the chaos and confusion, the high seas had swept away my soul.

It is only natural that, in time, my memory of such an event and of the casualty, which I now hold so dear, would fade. God, however, would not abandon a rescue effort. In time, He would reunite my heart with its traveling companion.

Near to Heaven's Backyard

My soul cried out from a distant shore where, since the birth of my flesh, it had been marooned. Somewhere between the Heavens and where Heavenly shadows fall, there is a place where, for many seasons, my soul did linger.

I am not referring to the Apocryphal Purgatory or a mythological otherworld. The noumenal expanse of my illustration is my own concoction to best serve my purpose here. Indeed, there is a state of being like no other that I would struggle to describe without beginning with such a rendering of my imagination. To that plane beyond the veil, God whisked me far from the reality that I knew as a child.

God surely saw that I was not whole in spirit. He knew that my heart would perish, and I with it, if my soul was to remain so lost.

Although my soul could not really be separate from me until death, I have wondered if, throughout my early childhood, I would have felt different . . . had we actually been so far removed from one another. I just felt so out of place and alone under circumstances that, by my ninth year, had crushed my sense of belonging. Night after night, before bedtime, I could barely think of one reason to wake up the next morning until, the eve of a most dreaded school day, when my faint desire to live fizzled out like the flickering candle that would surely succumb to a raging hurricane.

I was “dead on arrival” at the hospital; understand that, on this point, I am not writing figuratively! **I was revived after five minutes but remained unconscious and vitally unstable for two days** until God, with a spark of His perfect peace, answered the prayers of saints by kindling a new flame in my soul that would not be snuffed out by pestilent winds of personal apocalypse. This fire in me has since burned ever so brightly.

Safe Passage to Gates of Pearl

Near to Heaven's Backyard includes a full account of my near-death experience and so much more . . . as I bear witness to God's love and mercy.

Truly, God loves us! Though we might be driven to doubt Him in times of suffering, He understands and is faithful to not forsake us. You could be stranded on a remote uninhabited island but, know this: God would find and be there with you. Even if you knew nothing of Him, He would enlighten you . . . just as His Spirit has filled voids in my understanding of His love and grace; He was my great helper when no one else was there to guide me. Whether you would curse or cry

Introduction to NTHB

out for Him in misery, trust that He would listen and patiently reveal to you His love; for I have come to know our Heavenly Father who would not abandon and forget His children.

I know that I am not the only one who has felt “out of place” since the day he was born, where doors – as the cliché says, “*are closed for other doors to open*” – do not seem to even exist; these wandering souls learn all too well the meaning of insecurity. Yet, if they would come to know my Savior who was born, who lived, and then who died out of place, they would then find the peace that I found in knowing that His path is the secure way to gates of pearl.

Lord, I thank You for the Holy Spirit who finds and provides safe passage for lost souls who come to rely on You and, in so doing, ushers them to the home that You made for Your children. And I shall rejoice, O God, on the day when You “*wipe away every tear from [our] eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain.*” (see **Revelation 21:4 NASB**) May Your Holy Spirit guide all who are seeking to discover the hope upon which they can faithfully stand, and may You rejoice with them upon the one refuge that is beyond the reach of insecurity.

God supernaturally treated me for my childhood ills with the one remedy that would heal and strengthen the heart to survive the natural world and that, surely, only He – the greatest physician of them all – would know to prescribe and could fill for all who, otherwise, would be hopeless. Without God, I could not have mustered the hope of which I wrote in my first book, *The Hope in Personal Apocalypse* (THIPA), where I shared backstories that are key to my understanding. I am ever so thankful to my Lord and Savior, for He intervened and has carried me to this day. Because of Him, it is well with my soul.

Near to Heaven's Backyard

Something Special Awaits You

To be saved, one's heart need not stop beating. *"If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9 KJV) *"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."* (see James 4:7-10 NKJV)

I pray that you accept, from God's realm of possibility, His gift of hope for the weary soul; for He has performed great miracles to fulfill *"the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life."* (see 1 John 2:25 NASB) And only God is able to transform life and death into life eternal.



"Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."
(John 12:25 ESV) | ***"Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together."***
(John 4:36 ESV)



Let us ascend out of our personal apocalypses with our souls intact and readied for our faith to become sight. Though, for a while, we must endure in this condemned world, we may rejoice for, at hand, the realm of possibility to behold. Join me as I explore this place where, in my heart, God's love now reigns and has opened my eyes to the blessings that, even when they might seem insignificant they, are nonetheless as miracles. You would be amazed by the wonders of such a land that could adjoin Heaven's own backyard; although I am quite metaphorical in how I write, my meaning is that something special awaits you if, in your heart, you would seek it. Let us journey together.

Chapter 1

Near to Heaven's Backyard

Enter a Realm of
Possibility

Near to Heaven's Backyard

Enter a Realm of Possibility



Unseen Beauty

In 1966, I was born without my sense of sight.

I surely was but a speck on the horizon of my mother's womb whence I first beheld the world of unseen beauty. In the distance, I could have heard her beckon me to that place where vivid whispers from sources of light and shadow are like paint on canvas. The sophistication of artwork in such an acoustic gallery is beyond the spectrum of perfect eyes.

I had entered the realm of such possibility.

While I have since lived most of my years with partial sight, my overall gifts of other acuities have made possible my exceeding life experience and, thus, has heightened my hindsight perspective.

I am confident that I would not have come so far had God not once advantaged me with the full handicap of total blindness. I pray that, by my true story, you would be so inspired to such faith in the One who touched me and made me whole.

Near to Heaven's Backyard

“What’s That Noise?”

To the day when I captured my parents’ remembrances of my birth and infancy, their accounts had been consistent and, in and of themselves, corroborative of each other. During and after their marriage that bitterly ended in my twenties, they had otherwise been quite disagreeable toward one another. But their collective memory of my first year – presented in large part by my father in a letter that he wrote in 2012 – had clearly endured with details that ring true with accounts of old acquaintances as well as lend explanation for aspects of my capability.

At birth, I appeared to be a healthy 7.69 lb. baby boy.

After a normal stay at the hospital, my parents and much-older brother brought me home to commence with their adjustment to me as a baby and newfound family member. But they began to wonder, within a few days, if I could see them.

When they would quietly walk into my room and approach my crib, my eyes would be open and fixed. When they would make a noise or speak my name, I would jerk as though they had surprised me. My eyesight problem became so evident that, after four months, our family doctor referred us to a specialist.

After an extensive examination, the Ophthalmologist advised that my retina had not developed properly. He concluded that I could do no better than to distinguish daylight from darkness and that I could only detect shadows. When we returned two months later and, as I sat on my father’s lap, the doctor tested my response by waving a toy light pen near to my face and by toggling a small light in a far corner of the room . . . but to no avail. The doctor had confirmed that, in fact, I had been blind since my birth and, after his genetic analysis, he explained that my condition is maternally hereditary, suffered only by male offspring, and had been passed down to me after four generations.



“My retinas were so underdeveloped and deformed” at birth that, until I was almost one year old, “I could only distinguish between light and darkness.”

~ THIPA, Chapter 2 ~



Enter a Realm of Possibility

My doctor then recommended that, when I would turn four years of age, I should be admitted to a school for the blind where, away from my home and family, I would reside in its institutional care for months at a time.

Although I had more than three years before my parents would send me away for special schooling, I would already well apply my functional means to interact and develop. The guiding hand of my mother had been orienting my reach and made proper my handling of bottles, pacifiers, toys, and – of course I could never forget – my childhood dog

who, as my little playmate, would unwittingly boost my listening and mobility skills when he would entice me to pursue him, squeeze myself behind furniture, and persist until I could anticipate and duck unscathed beneath surfaces throughout the

house during high-speed chases. And my hearing

became so acute that, at nearly six months, I once did notice the subtle sound of a mechanical problem in our car and had already the language skills to more than beg the question, “What’s that noise?” But I was so alert and sensitive that I would be troubled and, hence, cry if for too long during the day I could not hear familiar voices or movement in the house; a world to me without such ambience would have felt cold as isolation of pitch-black solitariness.



“I learned how to crawl, walk, and run without my sense of sight.”

~ THIPA, Chapter 2 ~



Sweet Hour of Prayer

There was a house of possibility where my parents would enter with their utmost disappointments in and concerns for my well-being. In the weeks that followed my diagnosis and prognosis, the righteous-seeking people of that sacred abode would together bear the burden of prayerfully lifting my need before God.

Near to Heaven's Backyard

A small Wesleyan Church was the house of worship where a true servant of the Lord ministered to my parents with fellow congregants who embraced the entirety of God's Word and who sincerely believed in the power of genuine prayer. And the Pastor would be quick to say in response to prayers and faith that, not he but, God is the One who answers and does the good work.



"...your faith has made you well."
(see Luke 18:42 NKJV)



I was nearly a year old when, as Dad settled with Mom in a pew to hear the Pastor's Sunday sermon, a call "*like an audible voice*" but supernatural and apparent to only him – or so he thought at first – urged him to "*have Jeff [me] anointed for healing.*" Dad was moved to interrupt and request my anointing of the Pastor once, to his surprise, Mom, who was not yet aware of his experience, whispered to him that such a mysterious beckoning for the sacrament had just been spoken to her heart.

Upon the altar I was then laid as people of the Church gathered around me.

My parents had not forgotten and, as my father wrote, "*...would never forget the hush that came over the congregation*" when I crossed my eyes as would eyes naturally cross that are not yet conditioned to focus. They could all see me squint in wonder at my hands and their faces as, in awe, they stood of the event that they had just witnessed. The faith of prayer warriors had become evident because of the miracle of my sight.

The Pastor put away his sermon that day to yield to the spirit of "*a holy quietness*" that had captivated the hearts of all who were present. All one could occasionally hear was a whisper of praise or subtle weep of joy, for my gestures were of someone who had first-ever glimpsed the visible world of discovery where, at the feet of Jesus, such miracles are possible. The atmosphere of reverent stillness nonetheless sustained after we and the saints around us had, eventually, retired to the pews to bask in the light of that sweet hour of answered prayer.

Enter a Realm of Possibility

“I Believe That Boy Sees!”

Imagine the added amazement of my folks who, at home after my anointing, marveled when my curiosity peaked at the first sight of pictures on the wall. The thermostat dial especially sparked my interest as an object that would hearken to the playful desire of any tot who would treat an HVAC central control as a toy.

My parents were not certain of how well I could then see but, undoubtedly, the instant improvement had been drastic. So, they immediately scheduled an appointment for me to again be seen by the same professional who, only several weeks prior, had declared my condition of blindness as permanent.

When I was seen a few days later by my eye doctor, he had not yet been made aware of the gift that I had received. As before, he waved his light pen in front of me – but I snatched it this time which, of course, was not the reaction that he had come to expect. Puzzled by my response, he repeated the test. Once again, I intrigued him when I reached for his pen and, to his amusement, engaged him in a grab game. He then toggled the small corner light that, previously, I had failed to see illuminate from across the room; but I slightly turned my head to look on that attempt and, furthermore, I tried to push the doctor aside as I leaned to see better where the lit bulb was positioned behind and above him. He had seen enough to smile, shake his head, and express with astonishment, “*I believe that boy sees!*” And after my parents then shared with him that I had recently been anointed, he disclosed his firm belief in a higher power and attributed my remarkable change to healing that only the divine could accomplish.

Upon a closer examination, the doctor observed that my retinas had developed more than should have been possible in the state of their deformity and, especially, so many months after my birth. Yet, he advised that, while I would not need the services of the blind school, my eyes would still be so poor that I would struggle in the mainstream but, unpampered in that environment, I would adapt and endure to achieve some success. He prescribed only my wits and a soft pair of shaded plastic glasses to navigate on my journey and, at that very early age when I was still learning to walk, I certainly put all of my faculties and resources to good use.

Near to Heaven's Backyard



"...a miracle occurred – my retinas further developed. Thus, my vision improved."

"The scope of my legal blindness is acute near-sightedness accompanied by light sensitivity and involuntary rapid-eye movement; my vision is effectively distorted."

~ THIPA, Chapter 2 ~



I came to rely so much on my glasses that, when I knocked them out of place in collisions with walls or furniture, I would pause to jam them back on my face with the palm of my tiny hand. My thick eyewear augmented my means to independently find my way including where, on my mother's lap, a universe of books had been revealed for me to explore. But my hearing and "other acuities" were no less honed than while my vision was not in sight.

My first love is the music of sound. As soon as I could prop myself against the piano bench, I would stretch to peck a single ivory and would listen until the resonance of, not just the string but, the entire instrument could not be heard over the sound of a pin drop. My lack of complete vision necessitated that, to enhance my mental conception of tangible dimensions, I listen with such attentiveness but also, as keenly, compensate with all my senses and my mind's eye.



"I am ever thankful for this gift of sight – partial though it may be."

"...my eyes are sufficient..."

~ THIPA, Chapter 2 ~



Enter a Realm of Possibility

My first book, *The Hope in Personal Apocalypse* (THIPA), includes many examples of how well my adaptiveness has equipped me to do all sorts of things that you might not expect of someone who does not see well enough to qualify for a driver's license.

I have grown accustomed to focusing my “mind's eye” to safely walk among you. I could not have gracefully lived for so long without this gift of discernment that God has granted me for when all else would fail.

The Blessings

As someone who was born and has lived with the challenges that come with forms of blindness, I have been blessed to feel the enlightening touch of God's unseen hand when He has reached out to direct me. To me, faith is as sight. I shall evermore be thankful for such hyperacuity of God-given “discernment” that has often kept me from harm and distress.

I have also come to appreciatively trust that, sometimes, I must take a hit or go through something. When I have later reflected on such painful experiences, there were the eureka moments when I could see how God had worked to strengthen me for my own good and for a higher purpose.

Deep in my heart, I know this truth: I could not have survived without the interventions by God who saved me, nor could I have come this far without His divine guidance that led me through the darkest valleys.

Many people are blind to blessings that are not visually perceivable. Their view is, perhaps, obscured by their dependence on vision.

Let not your heart be blinded to the often-overlooked blessings of hope and insight that God has bestowed to the innocent and has extended to lost souls who had sought to see His face.

Near to Heaven's Backyard



“My son, do not lose sight of these — keep sound wisdom and discretion, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble. If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.”

(Proverbs 3:21-24 ESV)



The Hope in Personal Apocalypse

In View of Heaven's Backyard

*"Hope holds sanctuary in the midst of darkness,
and it brings confidence to light."*

Content:

An overcomer preserved his spirit in this book for all who are in search of the hope that brought him from the darkness of complete blindness, overwhelming grief, and even near-death. This inspired message of his unique perspective is of his remarkable journey from supernatural miracles, through brokenness, to this place where he could make good of his blessings by leaving the richness of his experience as an inheritance to sustain anyone who would desire a hope like no other.



About the Author:

Jeff is a husband, father, technologist, musician, and a certified Chaplain who established a ministry in 2011 that grew to 1.3 million followers by 2014 - all to perpetuate the message of hope that is the inspiration for this book. Jeff's passion is to further the good news of what God, by His love and mercy, has done for him and would, nonetheless, do for all who are in need of the assuring hope that saved him.



Included are the author's entire first book, "The Hope in Personal Apocalypse," and the introduction through chapter two of his second book, "Near to Heaven's Backyard."

May your heart be strengthened to persevere as you come to know the power of "Our One True Hope," and may you then be inspired to have faith in its source by two extraordinary accounts of true life-changing miracles.



Learn more!
Watch the video!
Follow Jeff!

<http://JeffUlrichLegacies.com>