

WAVE

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About the Book

A few years ago, I sensed a hopelessness in my heart that I didn't know how to cope with. It nearly took me under. The pages in this book are the simple lessons the Lord has taught me since then about how to find "My Hope" in Him.

Here are a few creative ways for you to make the best use of this book:

1. As a Jump-Starter - read it in one sitting to help you get out of the 'funk' of discouragement
2. As a Daily Devotional - the 'chapters' are short... meditate on the truths that will transform your life!
3. As a Weekly Group Study - tackle a section a week - for 4 weeks - in your small group

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Left Behind

My father was a Christian – an exceptional one. He was saved by grace over 30+ years ago. A few years later, he was ordained as a Deacon to serve in three churches. Boldly and sacrificially, he invested his money and time into the church. He loved teaching the Word of God (as a Sunday School teacher for 20+ years), but he especially loved witnessing to the lost about the power of the gospel to change a life! (This was his life's mission.)

He was a tradesman and a man's man. His love for fishing and hunting created a unique bond with many men but especially with me. He was a great friend and the best father a boy could ask for.

But on July 9, 2012, for no apparent reason, my father chose to end this life and enter the next. These are some thoughts I wrote that summer about how I dealt with my dad's suicide while they were fresh on my heart.

Suicide & the Christian

Since suicide is indeed a sinful act, and that is how my dad's life ended, how do we reconcile that with his eternal state? Can a person who commits suicide go to Heaven? The answer is simple: Yes, if a person is truly saved, then he will go to Heaven. Our eternity is not dependent upon what sins you do or do not commit.

Think about this: *God knew how my dad's life would end – and He still chose to save him and use him – in spite of it.* God's grace is so overwhelmingly good like that! God saves us even though He knows that we will never be perfect (Jesus called Peter, who would deny Him three times).

My salvation doesn't depend on
which note my life ends on...
it depends on
Who wrote the song.

The moment after he pulled the trigger, how did my Dad enter Heaven? Did he regret his decision? Was God surprised or displeased?

The answers here aren't easy – but I find them in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The son came home to his father because sin had left its mark and caused many scars. The father didn't care. The son came home dirty... filthy and stinky. The father didn't care. The son's return was mistimed, but the father didn't care!

In the moment when our life (so-called) is swallowed up by the reality of eternal, abundant life, all else falls short. Nothing else matters. God's grace has overcome and won – in spite of our sin and failures. He wore the royal robe and the ring. They ate and sang and danced together. And best of all: he melted into the Father's warm embrace. 'Welcome home, son. I love you!'

For the Christian, nothing can separate us from the love of God.²⁷ Absolutely nothing.

²⁷ Romans 8:38-39

Grace wins. Every time.

God is good like that.²⁸

Looking for Answers...

Answers slip through my fingers faster than sand. I don't understand. I know he suffered physically with chronic pain. I know he was on numerous medications – most of which still left him in overwhelming agony. Was it that he was tired of the pain? Did the medicine cause him to 'snap'? Was there something else? Was he worried about his life insurance running out too soon? Did retirement get to him? Was he disappointed in his relationships? Did he know something we didn't?

It's hard because there's no place to put the blame. I've got a set of crosshairs ready to aim at the reason, but it's so elusive that I can't find the cause to place the blame. That makes it doubly-bad because now everyone close to

²⁸ Luke 15:11-32

him asks if the crosshairs belong on them. Was it 'my' fault? Could I have done something? Why didn't I see it coming?

I believe it was the medicine. I truly do. I believe Satan saw an advantage of the crossed wires of too much of the wrong meds and presented him with the craziest escape plan ever. He didn't plan it. He wasn't rational about it; he didn't even leave a note.

I am telling you all this because I believe hopelessness is deadly. It is a thief and a murderer. It is life-threatening. It can endanger a good marriage and steal a person's rational mind. The fastest growing suicide statistic is among retired men. Why is that? Is it because they have lost their identity as a wage-earner? Is it because they get in a rut and look back without the power to change their past? Is it because the reality of the rut ahead overwhelms them? Yes, yes, and yes... hopelessness is deadly!

Comfort in Grief

Grief is a tricky thing. It randomly rolls in like waves over my soul. Sometimes it comes alone – sadness only – but sometimes it brings a partner... Regret. Blame. Anger. Without warning and for no apparent reason, the sadness creeps in and opens the flood-gate of tears.

I have many great memories. My dad was a top-shelf kind of man; he had great character and a hard work ethic. He was a tradesman who excelled in everything he ever put his mind to do. He was a faithful man, a servant of God. He loved his family and took good care of us. He left us a legacy of faith. I owe him a debt of gratitude and I know that, even though I wear size 15, I'll never fill his shoes. I just miss him and wish for more time. I'm thankful that my last memory with him is a happy one of him smiling and laughing with all of us.

I can't even think about the fact that our littlest girl, Azlyn, will not get to meet him — not on

this side anyway. One of the worst things is knowing that I'll live the rest of my life without hearing him say that he loved me or how proud he is of me. That's been one of the hardest pains to bear.

Sometimes, I feel deep pity for dad's pain; many times, a song will carry me through it. Most times, I find an inexplicable peace in God's sovereign control. (I know that no one can enter eternity without His permission – in Him alone is the power of life and death.) Sometimes, I feel orphaned and abandoned; many times, I sense a greater Presence – One of comfort and peace. Most times, God buoys me up with His Word; every time (so far), my heart has somehow found refuge in the hope and expectation of the Resurrection.

*It's the moment when humanity
Is overcome by majesty,
When grace is ushered in for good
And all the scars are understood,
When mercy takes its rightful place
And all these questions fade away,*

*When out of the weakness we must bow
And hear You say, "It's over now."*

I'm alive!

*Even though a part of me has died,
You take my heart and breathe it back to life.*

I've fallen into your arms open wide

When the hurt and the Healer collide.

-Bart Millard,

The Hurt & the Healer

My father's death was a dark moment of hopelessness in my life, but I made it through; because of the truths found in the following pages, I was able to do more than just cope.

You might be facing bankruptcy, divorce, cancer, loss, loneliness, betrayal — but you can overcome! It doesn't have to own you. I believe that these principles will help you do more than simply survive; with God's help, you will thrive!