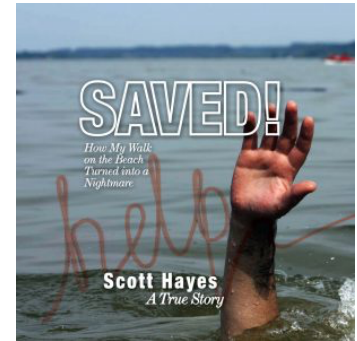


Real Life Stories
Saved! A Nightmare Walk On The Beach by Scott Hayes

It is June of 1965. I am a 9 year old boy, who is not doing too well in his swimming lessons, but it's not a big deal. I can remember the last day walking flat footed across the pool with my face in the water while pretending to swim. I am sure the instructor knew, but nobody really cared. Swimming just wasn't that big of a deal on a farm in Iowa. I faked it.

It is January 19th, 2015. It's the day I take the real test. My wife and I are casually walking the beach in Mexico, an area where the Ameca River runs into the ocean. It is low tide and the river has divided into smaller streams cutting through the huge exposed sandbar. We stop and visit with a couple of ladies who have just crossed a stream and have returned with some interesting shells. My wife, Kim, encourages me to go across and get her a few. The water is running quite rapidly but appears to be only about knee deep. I take three steps and it feels like I'm stepping onto a landslide. The ocean had been eroding the sand bar and when I stepped on it, the sand slid into the ocean and I along with it. I am immediately over my head in the Pacific Ocean, caught in the power of a rip tide and river current combination. My body panics as I take the first big gulp of salt water. But as my head surfaces, I see my wife on the sand bar and my mind seems relatively calm. I inform her that I am in trouble and I am going to drown. She pleads with me to swim to her, but I know 50 years of faking is never going to overcome this current. My eyes scan the beach and confirm what I already know. There are only a few others on this end of the beach and none appear capable of saving me. Another wave goes over my head. I remember thinking very clearly, "this is where it all ends." Dying, especially drowning, was a lot easier than I thought it would be. I had been doing what many referred to as "living the life". I thought I had plenty saved up to enjoy my early retirement with my wife. I had five fun grand kids. I was physically fit but it was over. It was Jesus himself who asked the question, "what shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). I had lived my life like most of us, with a sense of immortality. There was always going to be tomorrow, but instead there was another wave, another gulp, and I was unconscious.



I have had a favorite word for years. It's a word that is very simple but carries a lot of meaning. The word is **SAVED**. I have always used the word to describe what took place when I became a Christian. I knew I was separated from God, lost in my sins, and not capable, in myself, to ever earn God's salvation and the word that best describes what took place when I put my trust in The Lord Jesus Christ was that I was **SAVED!**

To be saved you must have a savior. Back at the resort pool, two young families were hanging out. Someone had told them that they should take their three boys down by the river where they might see stingrays. Although they were all good swimmers, they decided the boys should take their life preservers. They arrived to hear my wife pleading for someone to help me. The first father, Pat, jumped in only to find the current much stronger than anticipated and had to struggle to get himself out of the water. Unaware of my predicament, 50 yards away the other father had entered the water. He too was surprised at the sudden drop-off and the strength of the current. He then heard the two mothers, Tina and Andrea, calling for help. As he approached the scene, he first thought it was one of the boys who was in the water. Andrea insisted that he take his son's life preserver with him. By the time he reached me, I had been in the water for about five minutes.

It's five minutes I can't explain. I was unconscious all of that time and have no recollection of it. Those watching said I bobbed up and down, the top of my head at about water level. It was at this point when I had what seemed like a dream. It was like I was sleeping and having a terrible nightmare. I was fighting for all I was worth trying to force myself up and away and out of the darkness. It was like forcing myself to wake up, and I did. Then I got my first look at my hero, the man I know now as Stuart Swenson. I immediately checked out again mentally and have no recollection of the next 15 minutes. Meanwhile Stuart's mind was racing. I was full of water and much heavier than he anticipated. His first impression was that I was already dead. We were still relatively close, but getting to shore felt impossible. He considered his wife and son and was not prepared to leave them, to perhaps die trying to save a total stranger, but how could he ever go back to them and explain how he abandoned a man to die? So by using the child's life preserver to help hold me up, he grabbed me by the waistband of my swimming trunks and we drifted away with the current.

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I still find it incredible that Stuart was the man that was there when I needed him. Although unaware of it, he had been training for this moment for a year. He had been training intensely, especially swimming, with the hope of doing an Ironman triathlon in the future, but first he was going to have to pass this test. On shore, our wives were left to watch, eventually not even able to distinguish whether there were two heads, or just one, or were there any? Stuart's wife, Andrea, held onto my wife and kept encouraging her by talking about the confidence she had in her husband's ability and strength. Pat, meanwhile, was tracking us along the shore. He was waving his arms trying to attract the attention of a small fishing boat which was far off in the distance. The three boys, ages 8 to 10, were down in the sand praying. In their words, "we filled that boat up with prayers." Although moving painfully slow, the boat eventually turned and started coming toward us. At about this time I regain some memory. I had apparently been at least somewhat conscious before, as Stuart had me counting and answering questions. My first clear memory is seeing the side of the boat about two feet in front of my face. I was so weak I could not lift a finger to save myself. Then my mind drifted again, and I have no idea how they got me into the boat. It reminds me of the helpless condition in which I found myself on the day of my soul's salvation, February 2 of 1974. How true I found the words of Romans 5:6 which tell us, "for when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly."

I can vaguely remember my discomfort lying on the bottom of the hard boat as it smacked the waves as we headed for the dock at full speed. I can remember the coughing fits when out came blood and water. Mostly I remember Stuart telling me, or more like demanding of me, that "I was not going to die today!" By the time we met the ambulance, I was believing him. The emergency room doctor however, informed me I was still in very critical condition. For most of the next 10 hours, I was in a coma. I was hooked up to a BiPAP machine to force air into my lungs to help expel the water. Surprisingly, in the morning I felt quite normal and ate a good breakfast. I asked the doctor how soon he thought I might be able to get out. He looked at me sternly and said, "I want you to know that although you have made a very dramatic recovery, you were extremely, and I mean extremely, close to death. Now just relax," and so I did. Two days in ICU, over and over in my mind I replayed the incident. Where I was didn't really matter much. I was just incredibly happy and thankful. I WAS ALIVE! I felt great when I left the hospital on Thursday, the only evidence remaining of the accident being a little water in one lung. In the words of my doctor, a miracle! In my words, I had been saved twice, and both only by the grace of God.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8)

I wonder if I have been left in this world to ask you a simple question. Have you ever had a day of salvation? Are you prepared to meet God? or are you pretending to be a Christian, or ignoring the matter altogether? The Bible tells of One who went beneath all the waves and billows of the wrath of God. There was no savior for Him, and it was my sins and yours that bore Him down. It happened at the place called Calvary where the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. The debt of MY sins was paid for when He made provision for the whosoever by the sacrifice of Himself. Now I can say I have been saved twice, once from the sea, and once from my sins, once for this lifetime, and once for eternity.

Are you saved?

. . . Gleaned from Cedar Falls Gospel Hall