

REALITY QUEST

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WHY I BELIEVE

The following is the first of the two experiences which have been catalyst in propelling me forward in my search for what is real, and what is truth:

On December 23, 1981, I was serving a religious mission for the Mormon church in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I had just been made a senior companion to a new missionary.

David Luke was tall, handsome, and obviously the delight of his Mormon family who supported him on his mission. He was energetic and eager to learn the ropes of missionary work as I was expected to teach him. We got along great- much better than most missionary companionships do.

This particular Christmas Eve eve was no different than most holidays for Mormon missionaries separated from their families by their desire to serve their religious duty. It was a day full of recollecting Christmas memories and wondering what our loved ones were doing back home.

That Christmas would have passed as most do, enjoyed, but soon forgotten by the activities of our daily pursuits, had it not been for an experience which left its imprint on my soul for the rest of my life:

Late that night, (which in reality was early in the morning of the 24th), I was awaken by the terrible screams of my junior companion.

I immediately sat up in bed and turned toward my screaming comrade. My sleepy, but very scared and alert eyes focused on my companion. He had his right arm in front of him in a position as if he was attempting to shield his face from something. He was not in an upright position, yet he was visually locked on something in front of his bed which seemed to be the reason he had taken up such a defensive position with his arm.

I looked toward the foot of his bed. (Our beds were single beds, perpendicular to each other, about five feet apart.) I couldn't believe, (and still find it hard to today), what I saw.

I saw what appeared to be an apparition of sorts. It wasn't like any type of ghost that I was used to seeing in story books and in the movies, but a shadowy figure of a person about five feet high and quite thin. I could not distinguish any features at all because the room was very dark, and the being was standing in front of a small bedroom window which let in just enough moon light to make the outline of the being stand out prominently.

Instantly I felt a chill go up my back that stood every hair on end. I was too scared and amazed to rationally analyze what I was looking at; and being on a religious mission thinking I was doing God's work, I automatically thought that the being was an evil spirit sent there to try to stop me and my companion from furthering the Lord's work.

I had been taught that the name of the Jesus Christ would send any evil spirit scampering back to hell where they belong. Therefore, raising my right arm to the square, I commanded that being to depart in the name of Jesus Christ. Well, I guess my "priesthood" was a little rusty, because the being turned its head toward me and did nothing. It just stood there watching me, as if it were trying to figure out why and what I had just yelled at it.

I tried once again to command the thing to leave, but to no avail. The next thing I remember is my companion jumping the five feet distance to my bed and hugging me like a scared child. I can't remember noticing what the being did at this time, but I jumped toward the light switch and turned it on to find the room quite empty.

There were four other missionaries in the same house with us, and it wasn't long before they were all at our door wondering what all the screaming was about. After we told them what had happened, we

spent most of the night talking about what we thought was one of the most exciting, faith promoting experiences we have ever had.

I had seen something. What it was, I do not know. However, I will die knowing that I saw something that night at the foot of my companion's bed. Something that was aware of us as much as we were aware of it.

I have left the beliefs of the Mormon faith knowing that it's just that- another faith. I know my mind is as sound as any, and more intelligent than most, yet I can not deny the fact that I saw a being that I did not recognize as anything that I have witnessed before in mortality.

Why would the Devil have sent one of his servants to a couple of impressionable, young missionaries? He should have known that any experience like that would enhance our faith in God and not deter us from battling his evil forces. Nevertheless, my much more mature conscience tells me that what I saw is more than likely an intelligent being from another world, rather than a servant of the mythical evil one people call the devil.

However, I must concede that I do not know what I saw that night, only that I saw it. I saw it, my companion saw it, and neither of us can ever deny what occurred. I have tried to find David Luke since then, but have been unsuccessful in my attempts. I want to find him so that he, too, can give a testimony of what he saw. If he hasn't matured much, and is still believing in Mormon myths, he will have no choice but to testify that it was an evil spirit we saw that night. But no matter what it was that he thinks he saw, the fact will always remain that we both witnessed an apparition of something.

Because of this experience, I have held on to a strong belief, yea, a knowledge, that there are dimensions, beings, and powers which we have yet to uncover and understand as human beings. This knowledge, (I say knowledge because I know I saw that being like I know it takes oxygen to breath), has helped me to maintain a hope that perhaps this life is not as useless as it sometimes seems; that perhaps our intelligence today, is nothing like it will evolve into in some future time; and far more important, that perhaps what we sometimes perceive as reality, could very much be an illusion.

The preceding experience was the first of two experiences which I have had which have helped formed my "religious" beliefs. As mentioned, it has been a catalyst for me to keep trying to find the truth of reality. However, the following experience, though I can not rationally explain as real with the same fervor as the previous, has affected me more in my thinking and understanding than any other single event:

Every quest has a goal, and eventually, an end. Does reality end? If it does, my quest has an end. My goal: to find out if reality has an end, and if it does, what is the reality of this end.

I believe I know more about the relationships between the opposite sexes than most humans will ever understand; and why do I believe I have this knowledge? Because I have experienced many different types of these relationships, many more than most individuals. Thus, by this experience I have gained much knowledge.

To know if reality ends, or better said, if death is the final reality, then I must experience death in order to truly say that my quest has ended and I have found out what reality really is. If death is the end, then I will never know what reality is, because I will cease to exist, and all my experiences which helped me gain my knowledge of reality will be lost in oblivion.

Having been taught as a child that there is life after death, I continued with this hope letting religion guide my thoughts and form my beliefs of what it might be like. As I began to search for reality, having learned that I was taught by religious leaders who made up their truths as they went along, I found that my inculcated traditions and teachings of life after death were the illusions of those who formed the church to which I belonged. This knowledge came from experience. Well was it said, "Ignorance is bliss." For had I remained ignorant of the truth about my religion, I would never have experienced the pain and sorrow that I have.

Nevertheless, I would have never gained the knowledge that I now have about reality, nor would I have had the following experience which had more influence on me to continue my quest than any other:

Finding out that I had been deceived by the religion, god, and traditions that I had trusted in for the better part of 26 years, I became disillusioned about life and its meaning. Nothing made sense anymore. I decided that if there was a god that cared anything about me, he, she, or it would tell me by some miraculous act, or teach me when I died. I also concluded at this time that if there was any such thing as a spirit, or spiritual being, and that if death was a release of the spirit from the body, then if I died, I would enter this spirit world and there find the answers to all the questions that have ever plagued my mind.

Having no hope or faith in spiritual things and no cause to believe that there was any decency among the human race to which I belonged, I decided to end my quest, or proceed with it with a hope that I would finally understand reality. In other words, I wanted to die and see for myself what it's all about. If I was no longer conscience when I died, then I wouldn't have to worry if my suicide hurt my loved ones, or caused others pain. (I knew that very few people cared if I lived or died anyway.) And if I my "spirit" lived on, my quest would continue.

I chose a secluded spot in the foothills outside of Salt Lake City, Utah. It was a cool, fall evening, so I knew there would be very few people wandering about that could stop me from doing what I had set out to do.

Aspirin is a miracle drug. I had found great relief from much pain and headaches by taking this drug. I figured the easiest way to end my life, was to do so feeling good. *Extra Strength Excedrin* is the best stuff I have ever taken. I usually took two pills which almost always left me light-headed, but relieved of any stress I was feeling at the time.

I stopped at a 7-11 convenience store near the entrance to the mountain pass that I had chosen to hike up. I bought a bottle of 100 pills with a twenty dollar bill, and gave the cashier a great "keep the change" tip. I didn't bother leaving any suicide note, or anything else explaining my actions to my relatives, which except for a few, would probably feel relieved at what I was about to do. Why leave a note? If death was it, I didn't have to worry about a thing. If I entered a spiritual realm, I would surely be happy that I was continuing my quest, but now, without the frailties of a mortal body.

Anyway, I did not concern myself with what my death might do to others, only with what I would gain from the experience. Yes, suicide is a very selfish act.

I hiked about one mile up the canyon road before I came to a path off the main road, which, believe it or not, I felt "inspired" to take. I hiked up this path for about an hour before I felt totally alone and ready to proceed with my plan. I made one mistake- I didn't bring anything with me to wash the pills down.

Well, being determined to take this unknown step which very few, if any, have returned from, I swallowed almost the entire 100 pills, one or two at a time with no liquid to help them down.

I had selected a rather large tree stump to sit down against, and the cold, autumn breeze had my knees knocking unconsciously against each other, as I sat quietly still waiting for what ever was going to happen to take place.

I looked up at the sky, but saw no stars, just clouds covering the world's ceiling like the cloud covering my desire to live as a mortal. I was not crazy. I was totally aware of what I was doing, and even joked with myself about the whole ordeal.

I can't remember how long it took for the aspirin to take its effect on my body. I do remember feeling very warm and peaceful as I sat there. I remembered thinking about my children and what they would think of their dad taking his own life for selfish reasons. I know people take their life, because they are depressed, or insane, (what ever this means), but I was doing it to gain more knowledge- I convinced myself that they would understand.

The next thing I remembered as a competent, mortal human being was coughing up more vomit, which joined the stench all ready covering my upper chest. My throat burned like I had just swallowed a lit torch. I felt dizzy and disoriented. But as I sat there for a moment putting my thoughts together, I realized that what had just happened to me would change my life, and perhaps many others, forever.

I had died and came back.

The first thing I remembered after taking the pills and feeling warm and peaceful is waking up in total darkness. For a moment I thought I was waking up in the woods under the cloud covered sky which would not allow the light from the moon or the stars to shine through. This I assumed because I remember seeing the same trees and mountain sides which I had seen hiking up the trail. Looking back on the situation and what I perceived at the time, I realize that I was somehow flying through the trees and the scenery that had become familiar to me by my short hike. However, it wasn't long before I realized that I couldn't perceive anything but thick darkness.

Then I began to move. I can not say for sure that I was moving, or if everything else around me was moving, but I perceived motion taking place. I then thought about other near death experiences in which others had mentioned a black tunnel that they were traveling through. There is no way I could honestly call this darkness a tunnel. A tunnel has sides; whether rounded or square, it still has sides; and this dark abyss had no perceivable formation at all.

At this point I began to think that I had done it. I had died. I began to get excited and anxious for anything to happen. That's when I noticed a light in the distance. Now I could see why this darkness was described as a tunnel, because the light appeared rounded in appearance, and seemed to grow bigger and brighter. I could still not tell whether I was moving toward it, or it was moving toward me. Nevertheless, it wasn't long before I was totally surrounded by light as intensely bright as the darkness had been dark.

It was as if I had just entered a large, glorious room. I immediately could sense others in the room with me. Though I couldn't see them at first, I could sense them somehow. Then one of the most wonderful feelings I have ever felt in my life totally engulfed every part of my being, which at the time, I didn't know what kind of being I was. If you have ever walked into a room where there were many people expecting you and waiting to congratulate you for some well done effort, you can comprehend the feeling, intensified a zillion times, that I felt. The source of this feeling seemed to emanate from the light, yet the light was not the source. The source seemed to be a being, which I am sure to everyone that has died and will die hereafter, is God, the Lord, Allah, Buddha, or whatever deity, or belief the individual acquired in mortality.

Once I was greeted with this light, I soon noticed individual beings there to greet me. I immediately recognized my grandfather, two of my uncles, and my cousin who had died years before. I can't say I actually saw them, but I perceived them as the beings that I knew as my relatives in mortality.

My grandfather appeared as I remembered him. My uncle Duane looked as much like my father as I remembered him as a youth. My uncle Carl and my cousin John, were just as I remembered them. I knew them not from sight, but from my own memories. There were other beings there also, but my focus was on those I have just mentioned.

I realized that a spiritual being does not see as a mortal sees, but perceives the thoughts and memories of others. I could perceive that the being in front of me had a memory of being called grandpa by me at some previous time. That's how I knew he was my grandfather- from his memories which spawned mine.

I then turned my focus momentarily to an entity that I did not recognize at first. It took me just a moment before his memories of dealing with me told me that he was a friend I had in the 8th grade in Kalispell, Montana, who had died in a fatal car wreck while in High School. Randy Heaton was his name. I knew so much about him by focusing on his memories and thoughts. When our memories of each other came to mind, I recognized when and where I knew him.

I turned back to my grandfather and perceived his warm, loving smile, or so it seemed. "I'm dead, ain't I grandpa?" I somehow felt myself communicating to him. "Well," he said, "It depends on how you look at it."

Spiritual communication is like mortal talk except there is no need for the secondary function of mortal communication- my brain had no need to tell my voice box to form the words, because I had no voice box. Therefore, communication was much easier, much faster and understandable. If one's vocabulary is not proficient enough to communicate exactly what they are trying to say to another human being, no need to worry about this in the spiritual realm, your thoughts say what you mean, and mean what you say every time.

"Am I in some sort of trouble for killing myself?" I went on to ask my grandpa. "How can you be in trouble for killing yourself when you're still alive?" he responded. "Think about your life for a moment, Chris." "Figure out for yourself if you've done something wrong."

I thought about my life. What a rush! I could remember anything I wanted to. (Many things I didn't want to.) My memories flashed through my perception like a picture screen. I could go to any period in my life and recall any instance. It was totally amazing. The bad part about it was that so could anyone else who concentrated and focused on my being. There are no "skeletons in the closet" in the spiritual realm.

At the conclusion of my life review, I concluded that I had made the right choice in ending my mortal life as I did, but more importantly, for the reason I did.

I felt as if every being in that place where I found myself was applauding the life I had lived. Though I couldn't actually perceive a clapping sound, I knew that if all these beings had bodies again, they would be clapping and cheering for me. ...continued...