

**Summary:**

*90 Minutes in Heaven: A True Story of Death and Life* by  
Don Piper and Cecil Murphey

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## INTRODUCTION

In *90 Minutes in Heaven*, the author Don Piper, describes how as a 38-year-old pastor he died in a horrible car accident while traveling from a church convention back to his hometown of Houston, Texas. Piper came back to life 90 minutes later after a preacher came to the accident site and prayed for him. This was astounding given that medical professionals on the scene had already pronounced him dead.

Piper invites the reader to share in the lows and highs of his remarkable experience and offers a profound sense of hope and comfort to those living through grief of their own.

He includes deeply personal accounts of what he thought, felt, saw and lived in the days following his car accident. He also shares glimpses of the inexpressible awe and wonder in heaven that await those who follow Jesus here on earth.

In this summary, you'll read how the author describes:

- what he saw and heard in heaven
- the undeniable role of prayer in saving his

life

- the difficult journey of recovering from a fatal car crash with many physical injuries to living a life of victory and fulfillment in Jesus.

### **About the Authors of *90 Minutes in Heaven***

**Don Piper** is a bestselling author and speaker. In 1985, he was ordained as a minister and has served as a senior pastor for six years. Originally published in 2004, *90 Minutes in Heaven* appeared on the New York Times bestseller list for over five years, selling over six million copies. A film based on Piper's story was released in 2015 and has been seen by many.

**Cecil Murphey** is a notable and acclaimed author who has written or co-written over 140 books. He has traveled extensively to speak on many topics including matters related to his Christian faith. Prior to devoting himself full-time to writing and speaking, he was a pastor, a part-time volunteer hospital chaplain and a missionary in Kenya.

## ***LIST OF KEY INSIGHTS***

### **Insight #1:**

Heaven is a place of great joy and beauty.

### **Insight #2:**

The splendor of heaven is unlike anything on earth.

### **Insight #3:**

Prompt obedience can produce amazing results.

### **Insight #4:**

Fervent, effectual prayers of righteous men & women avail much.

### **Insight #5:**

Sincere acts of kindness can make a big difference.

### **Insight #6:**

Praise unto God is a powerful weapon.

**Insight #7:**

During difficulties, we can see the hand of God at work.

**Insight #8:**

Tragedies can turn into testimonies of healing and hope.

***INSIGHT #1: HEAVEN  
IS A PLACE OF GREAT  
JOY AND BEAUTY***

Don Piper experienced the unthinkable in the blink of an eye. On January 19, 1989, while driving his car on a Texas freeway amid heavy rain, an oncoming eighteen-wheeler truck that had crossed the center line collided head-on with his vehicle. The accident was horrific as the wheels of the truck—being driven by a prison inmate not licensed to drive the truck—rolled over Piper's car and smashed it and him.

Piper died.

He found himself standing in heaven surrounded by light. He felt a deep sense of joy and saw a large group of people standing in front of an immaculately decorated gate. He recognized people he had known while on earth and they were approaching him in the very first seconds of his arrival, greeting him with hugs and kisses. The first person that embraced him was his grandpa. They hugged and as they did, Piper realized that his grandpa was strong again.

He also saw his great-grandfather, childhood friend, two teachers and others who had shared Jesus with him. Each person greeting him had positively impacted his life as a believer. Because of their spiritual contributions, he made it to heaven.

There was great joy in heaven. All negative thoughts and anxiety were pushed out of his mind. The people Piper saw looked like the happiest and most peaceful people he had ever seen. They were laughing and praising God. Everyone was full of life.

Piper also saw his great-grandmother. Before she died, she had osteoporosis and had developed a body that was bent over. She also had many wrinkles in her face and on occasion would wear false teeth. In heaven, she no longer had wrinkles and had no need for false teeth. Instead, she had a beautiful smile with teeth that were her own. Piper noticed that those in heaven do not have physical defects or any of the strains and stresses often accompanying those here on earth. Instead, in heaven, everyone's features and form are beautiful and perfect.

## *INSIGHT #2: THE SPLENDOR OF HEAVEN IS UNLIKE ANYTHING ON EARTH*

There is no sense of the passage of time in heaven. The happiness and peace there is unimaginable and unending.

The light of heaven was so powerful and radiant to Piper. It was truly beyond words. The bright and vivid colors in heaven were beyond anything anyone on earth could imagine. Piper saw different hues and shades he never knew existed. In heaven, a person's senses are heightened to take in sights no human eye could behold. Piper felt like he was in another world...and he was.

Piper's most cherished experience was not the people he saw or the colors he observed but the sounds and music of heaven that echoed in his ears. He heard the angels' wings as they moved. He heard shouts of adoration and praise to God but did not know if they were coming from the people in heaven or the angels. To him it felt as though the many melodies in heaven infused every part of his body.

The music in heaven was glorious. He heard many old hymns he was familiar with but never heard any sad songs. There were hundreds of songs of worship and praise to God being sung all at the same time. Thousands of songs in perfect harmony. The music was perfect. All of heaven is gloriously perfect.

Everyone was full of joy and praise. Human words cannot adequately express the awesomeness Piper saw and felt. He reached the gate but did not enter through it. Had he done so he may not have returned to earth at all.

### *INSIGHT #3: PROMPT OBEDIENCE CAN PRODUCE AMAZING RESULTS*

Piper's car accident was horrific. After an eighteen-wheeler collided with his vehicle and smashed its ceiling, the dashboard of the car crushed his right leg and his left leg was shattered in two pieces. His left arm was also dislocated and he later discovered that the major bones were no longer there. The shattered glass that pierced his body left small holes in his face. Blood came from his eyes, ears and nose.

After the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) checked Piper's body and felt no pulse, they covered him with a tarp. Since he was pronounced dead, they did not try to move him or take him to a hospital. Meanwhile, the prisoner who drove the eighteen-wheeler had no injuries and was taken back to the prison by the EMTs.

While all of this was going on, a Baptist preacher and his wife named Dick and Anita Onerecker were among those approaching the stalled traffic. They got out of their car to see what had occurred and walked

about half a mile to the wreckage. Dick spotted a police officer and told him that he was a minister. He asked if they needed any help or if there was anyone he could pray for. The police officer pointed Dick to two other cars impacted by the crash with drivers who were shaken but still alive. Dick was told that the guy with the tarp over his vehicle (Piper) is dead.

Next Dick heard God tell him so clearly that he needed to pray for the dead man in the car. As a Baptist preacher, Dick initially thought to himself that he could not go over and pray for a dead man. Realizing that the Holy Spirit was speaking to him, he told the police officer that he wanted to pray for Piper. The officer stared at him for a while and then gave him the green light, warning him that things looked bad.

Dick made his way into the back seat of Piper's mangled vehicle. Placing his hand on Piper's shoulder, he began to pray for him. Going back and forth between praying and singing, Dick sang and prayed over Piper. Dick recalls praying very specific prayers that Piper would be saved from unforeseen injuries. For several minutes, he prayed the most fervent prayer of his life.

As Dick began to sing, What a Friend We Have in Jesus, Piper miraculously began to sing with him. Ninety minutes after his death, Piper was now

showing signs of life! Dick in amazement rushed out of the car and told the EMT that the dead man is not dead. He is alive!

## *INSIGHT #4: FERVENT, EFFECTUAL PRAYERS OF RIGHTEOUS MEN & WOMEN AVAIL MUCH*

The EMT and other medical professionals on the scene did not believe Dick's astonishing announcement that Piper was alive. Dick pleaded with them to go over to where Piper was and to check for a pulse. They begrudgingly did so. To their surprise they felt a pulse! They immediately began to try to figure out what to do. How would they get Piper out of his crushed and mangled vehicle without leaving parts of him inside? They waited for a device called the "Jaws of Life" (a tool used to help people break free from trapped vehicles) to arrive from a city thirty miles away.

Dick went back into Piper's car and continued praying while waiting for Piper to be taken out of the car and placed into an ambulance. It took about 6 or 7 men to pry Piper out.

Piper was initially taken to two hospitals. At the first hospital, he was told there was nothing they could do for him. The doctor at the second hospital did not

expect Piper to survive.

Piper was greatly injured. The loss of his blood and his bones was very severe. The hospital wanted to carry him by helicopter to a trauma center 80 miles away in Houston, Texas but the weather was not good. They ended up driving the 80 miles although the medical team saw his condition worsening and did not know if he would die that afternoon.

Piper went from not being able to feel anything (including the pain) to his body aching so intensely that every part of him seemed to be in pain. His chest had turned purple, his body was covered with bandages and tiny shards of glass were in his face, chest and head. Outwardly he looked unrecognizable.

A little more than 6 hours after the time of the accident, Piper finally reached Houston and there were hundreds of churches and thousands of people praying for his recovery, asking God to spare his life. As more people learned about his injuries in the coming days, more people prayed.

God heard and answered their prayers.

Miraculously, in spite of the severe injuries Piper sustained, the doctors told him that he had no brain damage or internal injuries. This was a miracle.



Two weeks after the incident, Dick visited Piper in the hospital and said that God specifically told him to pray that Piper would not have any head or internal injuries. Dick said he believed that God would answer that prayer. And God did.

Later along in Piper's recovery journey, he contracted pneumonia in both lungs while in the hospital and almost died (again). Again, people prayed for his recovery—all night—at the request of his best friend, David. There was a marked positive change in Piper's physical condition including no more pneumonia, the very next day. The staff at the hospital also found and corrected a mistake, which helped with Piper's breathing.

## *INSIGHT #5: SINCERE ACTS OF KINDNESS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE*

There were many things Piper could do before his accident that he could no longer do after his accident. He needed a lot of assistance but often had a hard time allowing people to help him. Friends would offer him food from a nearby restaurant or something to read. No matter the offer, he always refused. Finally, a mentor who visited Piper often, noticed how unresponsive he was to loved ones and rebuked him. He told Piper that he should let people show kindness to him and do what they can, so that they could have the chance to bless him.

Piper began to realize that refusing help from others could actually be a form of pride rather than an outward display of humility. He decided to listen to his friend. Once Piper started saying yes to people's offers to help, he saw how happy they were. He witnessed a positive change in their faces plus their help was often a blessing to him as well.

Family and friends assisted Piper and his wife, Eva, in many ways. Eva, who was a teacher, had co-workers

who graded papers and did lesson plans for her while she tended to her husband. Members of their church helped clean the house and prepare meals. A few close companions and relatives even opened their homes to host the Piper's kids for months during his recovery.

Friends also helped Piper with such essential daily activities as brushing his teeth, washing up, and cleaning up after him when he found that he need to *answer the call of nature*. On several occasions at no charge, the person who cut Piper's hair for years traveled 60 miles round trip to cut his hair for him. There were so many acts of kindness by church members and friends. Without such help, the recovery process would have been much more difficult for Piper and his family.

A week after leaving the hospital, Piper wanted to go back to church on Sunday morning and was greeted with immense love by his congregation. The members praised God and applauded for what the Lord had miraculously done in his life. Piper responded with 4 simple words: "You prayed, I'm here."

## ***INSIGHT #6: PRAISE UNTO GOD IS A POWERFUL WEAPON***

Piper's journey of recovery from a fatal car crash was not an easy one, physically or mentally. He sustained many physical injuries and had metal plates in both of his forearms. When flying in airplanes, the metal detectors would go off due to the metal plates. He also almost lost his left leg and the doctors thought he would never be able to walk again. Thank God that he did learn to walk. A novel medical device that was used, called the Ilizarov frame, was taken off of his leg nearly a year after his accident. From there he went from a walker to a cane and then to needing neither.

Early on, Piper was in intense pain from his accident and became extremely depressed. He prayed for God to take his life but that did not happen. Thankfully, at some point, Piper began to consider how it is Satan, and not God, who wants to take away our joy.

God healed Piper of his depression in an unexpected way. His wife, Eva, had brought some Christian songs on cassette tapes to the hospital along with a tape player. He initially resisted listening to them

but finally decided to listen on one early morning at 3:00am.

Piper was healed of depression as he listened to two amazing songs. The first one was "Praise the Lord" by The Imperials. He listened of how they sang that people should praise God in the midst of what they are going through and that as they do, their chains will begin to fall off. The second song was "We Are the Reason" by David Meece. Here Piper heard of how Jesus died and suffered at Calvary for each of us and that if we fully surrender our lives to Christ, we will find purpose in living. The lyrics brought out that we need to give our pain, worries and fears completely to God. Praising God in the midst of the storm will help break us free from the things that try to hold us captive.

Neither song was new to Piper but as he listened this time, he began to cry like never before. Afterward, a calmness and peace settled upon him. God had taken away his depression and freed his mind. He also began to realize that although he had suffered a lot, it was not as horrible as what Jesus went through when He suffered and died on the cross for the whole world.

Piper also considered that there are people who are in a worst state than him. Some have breathed their last breath and lie in hell with no hope and with no

escape. After this life, there is another one to live in one of two places, heaven or hell. Living for God and knowing what awaits in heaven can help take away the fear of death.

## *INSIGHT #7: DURING DIFFICULTIES, WE CAN SEE THE HAND OF GOD AT WORK*

Though Piper's car accident was a tragedy, God worked many miracles before, during, and after this horrific event.

For years Piper did not wear his seat belt. Prior to his accident he had recently gotten a ticket. Amazingly, on the day of the accident he decided to wear a seat belt. Had he not done so, the extent of his physical injuries would likely have been much more severe.

The highway Piper was traveling down stretched many miles. At the precise time of the accident, he was on the bridge section of the highway and the rails kept him from going down into the lake below. He may have drowned if the accident happened before he got to the bridge where his vehicle could have fallen into the lake and drowned.

When Piper arrived at the hospital, the orthopedic surgeon on duty that day was one of the few doctors who dealt with trauma of the type that Piper

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suffered. The novel medical device the surgeon used, called the Ilizarov frame, and the surgery the doctor performed helped save Piper's left leg and restore his bone loss by four inches. The doctor told Piper that if he had not used the Ilizarov frame, he would have needed to amputate Piper's leg.

Piper did not suffer any head injuries and none of his internal organs were affected. Given the severe nature and extent of his accident, this was medically impossible and a miracle from God.

An angelic presence in the car with Piper was yet another miracle. Piper told his testimony in the church attended by his friend, Dick. As Piper recalled the moments after the accident, he mentioned that Dick held his hand. Later Dick's wife corrected Piper stating that given Piper's crushed car and Piper's position in the vehicle, there was no way that her husband could have reached his hand. It was not until this conversation that Piper realized that it must have been an angel holding his hand.

## *INSIGHT #8: TRAGEDIES CAN TURN INTO TESTIMONIES OF HEALING & HOPE*

At first it was hard for Piper to tell anyone of his heavenly encounter; he feared that they would think he was crazy. He also felt that he did not want to lessen the holiness of it by sharing too much.

Finally, approximately two years later, Piper shared with his best friend, David, a small hint of his heavenly journey. David then challenged him to tell just a bit of his story to a few choice people to gauge their responses. Their responses were enough to spur Piper to continue to share his experiences of his ninety minutes in heaven.

Since then Piper has met and encouraged many people, including at least two others whose injuries were so bad that they also used the Ilizarov device that was so novel at the time of Piper's accident. This device, which weighed approximately thirty pounds, produced excruciating pain. Encouragement coming from someone who has been in their shoes and who knew of their pain, made such a difference for

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these two individuals. Piper's story has also helped those contemplating suicide to hold onto life. Those experiencing grief over the death of a loved one have also found comfort in knowing that what awaits those who die in the Lord is an endless life of love, peace, and joy in heaven.

Piper has traveled near two million miles to over three thousand live events sharing his story with many people around the world. He has conducted thousands of interviews via TV, radio and print media. Millions have heard and read about his story. Throughout the years, people from the east to the west coast have approached Piper and spoke of how they sought God earnestly and deeply in prayer pleading for him to live. He likewise has received thousands of cards, letters and other communications from those who prayed for him. People have said that their prayer lives—and their belief in the power of prayer—were forever changed.

One man sent from God, Dick Onereker, prayed for Piper and affected millions of people whom neither one may ever see here on earth but may someday meet in heaven.

## FINAL SUMMARY

Piper's story is truly remarkable. His death—for 90 minutes—allowed him to see the glorious splendor, beauty and joy in eternity that await those who place their faith in Jesus and live for Him. His life represents answered prayer and is a testimony of God's grace and power to heal the broken pieces in one's life and to work one miracle after another despite all odds.

Piper is a living, breathing miracle. Despite being told that he would never walk again, he learned to walk and even resumed driving a vehicle. He traveled. He preached in many cities and towns. He has encouraged millions with his testimony by radio, TV interviews, speaking engagements and through his book, *90 Minutes in Heaven*.

People allow setbacks to define who they are and what they can become. However, with God all things are possible. Learn to receive God-given help. Never stop praying. Allow praise and worship to bring you out of any pit of depression. Keep your faith in Jesus and He can do something remarkable with your life beyond your wildest expectations.

## 3 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. If you were to die tonight, do you know what would happen to you or where you would go?
2. Are there family members or friends to whom you could reach out and lend a helping hand or display the love of Christ in some way?
3. What are three things you can begin presenting to God in prayer today?

## *HAVE A TASTE FOR MORE?*

*Learn what else is in the book that might interest you:*

1. A sample of the thousands of letters and emails the author has received from people around the world who have read his book, including emails from those in the military, those considering taking their lives, and those recovering from near fatal injuries.
2. Pictures of the author before and after his near permanently fatal car accident including pictures of (1) his mangled vehicle and (2) the Ilizarov device that was used to lengthen the bones in his leg.
3. At the end of the book, the author lists his favorite Bible verses on essential topics such as prayer, God's comfort and heaven.

## *SCRIPTURES FOR FURTHER STUDY*

James 5:16 (KJV)

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Revelation 14:13 (KJV)

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

Revelation 19:1 (KJV)

And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

Luke 15:10 (KJV)

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

1 Corinthians 2:9 (KJV)

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Scriptures Regarding Salvation Through Jesus Christ:

John 3:16 (KJV)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:17 (KJV)

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

1 Timothy 1:15 (KJV)

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Acts 4:12 (KJV)

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is

none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

*\*Scriptures marked (KJV) are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.*



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### **Truthsips**

Formed in 2023, and founded by Lorna Henry, a Christian lawyer, Truthsips, LLC is designed to be more than just reading. You will gain key insights of Christian-themed books that are skillfully summarized to inform, enlighten and encourage you while saving you time, but not shortchanging you on substance.



At Truthsips, our mission is two-fold:

(1) Help the busy leader, the eager learner, the lifelong student, the curious observer and, yes, even the wary skeptic explore interesting concepts, gain new insights, and learn more about vital spiritual matters while saving time doing so.

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such as Prayer, Eternity, Revival History, Christian Biographies (and more), through captivating summaries of some of the most fascinating Christian-themed books of our day.

Writer:

Lorna M. Henry, Esq. is the founder and CEO of Truthsips. She is a lawyer based out of Maryland and practices law in the areas of religious freedoms, parental rights and other civil liberties. She has a desire to see people better understand the spiritual dynamics that can affect our world, and is presently pursuing a degree in theology.

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