

CONVERSATIONS WITH
BROTHER LAWRENCE
THE AFTERLIFE
PART 1



LARRY SLATER

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[Larry Slater.Com](http://LarrySlater.Com)

Christian Author

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The Afterlife – Part 1

Every so often Brother Prior will provide for us a spiritual program that he finds “most intriguing.” Now it isn't because of some rule that we here at the monastery don't watch TV. In the meeting room we have a very nice TV donated by one of our loving patrons. It's just that we have so much more important things to do with our limited time here on earth than to waste it on mindless TV programs. Please forgive me if I hurt anybody's feelings with my judgmental attitude. I know there are many good people who work very hard trying to create good entertainment for the television industry and one should respect all honest work. But as Brother Lawrence says; “When you can enjoy eternity, why bother with television?” As you can see, Brother Lawrence has some particular viewpoints on eternity, but I better just let him explain them himself. He does it so much more clearly than I can.

We found ourselves in the meeting one evening, before our prayer time, and Brother was in the midst of a discussion with several of the Brothers about...I forget now but it was of a normal nature. Brother Prior was there and he suggested we view a television special that had been recommended by one of our benefactors. This saint had even gone so far as to record the special, carefully editing out all the commercials that cause us the most problems with viewing television. All too often in their efforts to grab our attentions, advertisers bombard us with “questionable” content that is not

appropriate for the contemplative life. However, in this recording we were able to view only the special. It was on the afterlife and hosted by a reporter who had one of those so-called “near death experiences.” In an effort to understand it he went out and found and interviewed several different people who had a more extended experience than he. But enough of my ramblings. Let's join the Brothers.

“Brother Prior, I think it would be a most appropriate special to view and I for one am most anxious to learn a little more about these people's experiences as I seem to be nearing the time when I shall be experiencing them first-hand, as I believe you shall too.” He said this with his wry smile and I knew Brother Prior had a little chuckle himself over it. So off went Brother Prior to his office and shortly he returned with the recording.

“I do hope they have done us the blessing of editing out the commercials although I sometimes wonder about the legalities of recording these programs without the commercials. I know they have to make money but I just don't want to have songs about toilet paper bouncing around in my head all day while I work in the garden.”

“Why Bother? Do you think you might have an uncontrollable notion to squeeze it; the toilet paper I mean.” We all gave a chuckle at the thought. This came from Brother Stan who had a knack for this type of humor.

“Please Brothers. Let's view this in silence and then discuss it amongst ourselves. Our dear benefactor is very concerned about this having a niece that had a similar experience and they want to know how to answer her questions.”

The reporter began by telling of his own brief “out-of-body” experience while interviewing a woman who also had one of these experiences. Then he began interviewing others starting with a Protestant pastor who had been clinically dead for 90 minutes. He described in great detail his

experience meeting loved ones “there” and as he was just beginning to enter great “gates” he was called back to this existence by another Christian man praying over him and singing a Christian hymn. That man said he came upon the wreck and being told the pastor was dead, heard God telling him to pray for the pastor. He instinctively started singing a hymn. The pastor later recalled hearing the hymn just before he was to enter the great gate and reluctantly returned to his body. Even though he described the experience as extremely personal, he felt he needed to relate it to others. He said that while he enjoys living here now, he looks forward to that other experience even more.

Then there was the atheist who said her experience was like a returning to the “womb,” a journey into nothingness. She also saw a person close to her, an atheist teacher who told her to return and continue teaching. She had such an air of peace about her but I thought a bit too much so, even bordering on smugness but that may be my own prejudice speaking.

So far everyone had said during their “out-of-body” experiences there was no pain or worries, only a sense of peace.

Then a young boy told of his experience of coming before God. He described him as big, tall and very bright. His story was more about this world than the next although his matter-of-fact attitude was engaging. The reporter said his parents were Catholic and they were convinced about the after-life but thought that everyone's experience may be different than their boy's.

The reporter then included several medical people trying to explain these experiences with the tools of science. They did scans of the brain to see if a religious woman, during a session of “speaking in tongues,” showed had different brain imaginings than a non-religious person had. The reporter and researcher said there were some differences but I couldn't see

much of a difference. But then I'm not doctor. This researcher even went so far as to place pictures in operating rooms where only those who were above the ceiling could see them. Then if someone “came back” from one of the out-of-body experiences, they could question them if they saw these pictures. A small proof but one that is better than simply relying on their testimony.

Then the special was over but for a brief summation. With no commercials it only lasted about 40 minutes so we had little time before prayers to discuss it. However, we all agreed to wait until tomorrow so as to leave us a number of hours to contemplate its message. Then we were off to our “out-of-body” experience of praying before all-mighty God and his heavenly creation for us who inhabit these mortal bonds.

I better watch it or I just might sound like a poet. :-)

Fat chance of that.

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