

The background of the book cover is a photograph of a person with long, light-colored hair, seen from the back and side, reaching their arms up towards a bright, glowing light source. The light creates several distinct rays that fan out across the frame. The overall color palette is dominated by cool blues and greens, with the intense white and yellow of the light source at the top.

Embraced *By The Light*

B E T T Y J. E A D I E

"The Most Profound and Complete Near-Death Experience Ever"

*With a forward by
the New York Times best-selling author,
Melvin Morse, M.D.*

Foreword

I learned more about near-death experiences from reading *Embraced By The Light* than from any other experience in my life, including ten years of studying near-death experiences and interviewing children and adults who have survived clinical death. *Embraced By The Light* is not just Betty Eadie's story of dying during surgery and coming back to life; it is actually a journey into the meaning of this life. I remember a young boy who said to his parents after surviving cardiac arrest: "I have a wonderful secret to tell you—I have been climbing a staircase to heaven." That young man was too young to explain what he meant. This book contains that same wonderful secret. It is not a secret about life after death; it is a secret about life.

A near-death experience is in fact the dying experience. We will all have one when we die—rich or poor, murderer or saint. I used to think that when we die, we simply enter into darkness and end our lives. As a critical care physician I had seen many children and adults die and never had any reason to think otherwise. It was only after I took the

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time to ask those who survived clinical death what the experience was like did I learn that the process of dying is often joyous and spiritual. Darkness does not await us at the end of life, but rather a loving light—a light, one child said, that “has a lot of good things in it.”

Near-death experiences are not caused by a lack of oxygen to the brain, or drugs, or psychological stresses evoked by the fear of dying. Almost twenty years of scientific research has documented that these experiences are a natural and normal process. We have even documented an area in the brain which allows us to have the experience. That means that near-death experiences are absolutely real and not hallucinations of the mind. They are as real as any other human capability; they are as real as math, as real as language.

It has only been eight years since my research group at the University of Washington and Seattle Children's Hospital published this information in the American Medical Association's Pediatric journals. Although this research has been replicated by researchers throughout the world, including by the University of Florida, Boston Children's Hospital, and by the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands, it is not yet widely understood by the general population. Unfortunately, our society has not yet accepted the scientific advances in understanding the dying process which have occurred in the past two decades. We desperately need to reeducate ourselves that we are spiritual beings as well as biological machines. So many of our society's problems, including the crisis in health care, death with dignity, the cult of greed which has bankrupted our economy, the national shame of homeless women and

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children, all stem from a lack of understanding that we are spiritual beings who are mutually dependent upon each other.

Embraced By The Light teaches us that our own individual lives are important and filled with meaning. I am struck again and again that those who have entered into God's light at the end of life return with a simple and beautiful message: "Love is supreme. . . . Love must govern. . . . We create our own surroundings by the thoughts we think. . . . We are sent here to live life fully, to live it abundantly, to find joy in our own creations, to experience both failure and success, to use free will to expand and magnify our lives." Betty does not return from clinical death with grandiose claims of establishing a new church or of producing miracle cures for diseases, but rather with a simple message of love. The meaning of the near-death experience is one that we all know is true, but one that we have forgotten: "We are to love one another. We are to be kind, to be tolerant, to give generous service."

This book is really a textbook of the near-death experience, written as a simple and wonderful story that we can all understand. I have never had a near-death experience, or even a spiritual experience that I can identify, and I was somewhat skeptical of what many people were sharing with me. Certainly the hardest part for the skeptic who wants to understand is comprehending what it is like to be out of the physical body or how death can be a pleasant experience. Betty Eadie's book illustrates the stages of the experience with superb writing that bridges this gap; she makes the unknowable comprehensible.

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As she started to die, she felt her body become weaker and weaker. Then "I felt a surge of energy, a pop or release inside me. My first impression was that I was free. There was nothing unnatural about the experience." She then met guardian spirits who helped her to understand important things about her life and then to comprehend her relationship with her family. They assisted her in her transition into death. She entered into darkness and traveled in a dark tunnel. "I thought this must be where the valley of the shadow of death is," she says. "I had never felt greater tranquility in my life."

Her experience answers questions that people have had for me for years about near-death experiences—questions I have never been able to answer. She describes her life review on the other side and how she was not judged by others, but rather by herself. She explains the meaning and causes of some negative near-death experiences and why some people are deeply troubled by their experience. She explains why life is often difficult and why bad things often happen to good people. She explains why people who have died are often reluctant to return to the body. "The body's cumbersome weight and coldness were abhorrent," she says. "After the joy of spiritual freedom, I had become a prisoner of the flesh again."

Betty not only had a near-death experience as an adult, but she was prepared for it by having a near-death experience as a child. Children have simple and pure near-death experiences, untroubled by religious or cultural expectations. They do not suppress the experience as adults often do and have no trouble accepting the spiritual implications of seeing God. I will never forget a five year

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old girl who shyly told me: "I talked to Jesus and he was nice. He told me that it wasn't my time to die." Children remember their near-death experiences far more often than adults do, and as a result of their experience they seem to have an easier time accepting and understanding their own spirituality as adults. If they have another near-death experience as an adult, it is usually exceptionally powerful and complete.

Betty Eadie reminds us that the importance of near-death experiences is what they teach us about living. It has only been in the past few hundred years that we have decided that there is no spirit in man—and therefore no life after death. This has led directly to an unnatural fear of dying which permeates our lives and prevents us from living life to its fullest. Betty teaches us that the knowledge that dying is spiritual leads not to a desire to die, but rather to a desire to live life more completely. "Now I knew that there actually was a God," she says. "No longer did I believe in just a Universal Power. . . . I saw a loving being who created the universe. . . ."

One little girl told me that when she died, she learned "I had a new life." She told me that although she had heard about heaven in Sunday School, she really didn't believe it. After she died and came back to life, she felt, "I am not afraid to die anymore, because I kind of know a little more about it now." She did not want to die again, but rather, she learned that "life is for living and light is for later." I asked her how she was different because of her experience, and she paused for a long time and said: "It's nice to be nice."

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Embraced By The Light teaches us the same lesson: "If we are kind, we will have joy." Betty asked Jesus, "Why didn't I know this before?" And she was told, "Before you can feel joy, you must know sorrow." This simple statement has changed the way I understand life. It is something that I did know "before"; in fact, I had heard it all my life. I realize, after reading Betty's book, that my own life has been changed by it, that I need to reconnect with simple truths that I have always known but have ignored.

As a Native American Indian, Betty attended a boarding school as a child. In front of the school was a large sign which said: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Our society has lost understanding of its own spiritual beliefs and visions. This has directly led to the ghoulish mess we have made of dying, where patients die hidden away in hospitals in the cold company of machines, not in the company of relatives and friends. We have forgotten how to die, as it is no longer a part of our ordinary lives. At the same time, we have forgotten how to live. Joseph Campbell, the great mythologist, stated that many of our modern problems, from drug addiction to the violence in our inner cities come directly from our collective lack of spiritual vision. We have forgotten that our ordinary lives are spiritually important.

There is a great secret contained in *Embraced By The Light*. It is a secret that you already know. It is something that the great prophets and spiritual leaders have tried to tell us for thousands of years. Betty Eadie learned it by nearly dying. It has the power to change your life.

MELVIN MORSE, M.D.