

UNITED STATES

Max, the baby held by Jesus after drowning

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Light at the end of a tunnel, out-of-body experiences, indescribable feelings of joy and peace. According to **numerous accounts** from people who claim to have had a glimpse of the beyond and miraculously returned to tell the tale, this is what lies beyond life's threshold in that enigmatic realm of near-death experiences (NDEs).

But, the story of Max McKee and his family is even more extraordinary: Max

McKee was two and half, when, exactly four years ago, he had a **near-fatal drowning accident** and woke up the next day with a miraculous memory: being cradled by Jesus after falling in the water. After leaving hospital, Max asked his parents why Jesus has “bobos [wounds] and scratches on his hands and feet?” Considering his youth and innocence, that question for his parents was proof that their son had had a mystical experience: a personal encounter Jesus. They recently posted their son’s NDE on the internet so that as many people as possible can know what happened and find hope in his testimony.

Max, the youngest of Brandon and Courtney McKee’s two sons, was found unconscious in his grandmother’s swimming pool on July 11, 2019. Brandon and Courtney McKee, had dropped the boys off for a short stay with their gran. Courtney, a Registered nurse, explained afterwards, “My mother has a big farm and a pool and Max and his older brother, Brody, just wanted to spend a few days with her while we both worked.”

Max, was still learning to swim and wore floats in the pool. On that sultry afternoon, when he left the pool to play in the garden, his grandma remembers helping him remove the floats. At some point, he returned to the pool, probably to fill his bucket with water, and fell in. No one knows how long he was down there. But, it was long enough for Courtney’s sister-in-law to find Max later, lifeless at the bottom.

Courtney knew immediately something serious had happened when she received a panicked call at work with sirens blaring in the background. Although Max was unconscious, the ambulance crew revived him and then rushed Max to Rapides Regional Medical Center in Louisiana. The doctors found his lungs swollen and full of fluid. He was placed in the hospital’s paediatric intensive care unit on high-flow oxygen. Everyone waited to see if Max would recover or if the accident had left him brain damaged. Courtney and Brandon began to pray for their son’s recovery and contacted family and friends for support.

As word spread, hundreds of people from their Protestant church and community began to pray for Max. “Our pastor came - said Courtney - tons of friends came, and began praying incessantly surrounding his bed”. The next morning, “Max showed signs that he was Max again”, Courtney recalled.

A few days later, after returning home from hospital, Max talked about his near death experience: “When I was in the pool, I wasn’t scared, when I was in the pool, Jesus held me.” Then he asked, “Why does He have bobos [wounds] and scratches

on His hands and feet?" "We were completely stunned, recalls Courtney. "We had never spoken to him about God's hands and feet, ever; and the way he described Jesus was just chilling."

The particularity of his age, his description of Jesus before knowing what he looked like, made Max's story absolutely credible. Initially, the parents told their story to their church and local community. But, when messages poured in from families who had tragically lost a child telling them Max's story had brought them peace and comfort, it convinced them to share their experience even abroad through the internet.

A few months ago they began to accept interviews from a variety of international media websites. "More than anything, I think I want people to know that there's power in prayer, that God exists," Courtney said. Interestingly, the vast majority of people who have had a NDE have had the same conviction. There is a growing body of research around near-death experience (NDE), and peer-reviewed scientific journals have published a number of medical studies on the subject. [A recent study](#) that analysed participants from 35 countries found that one in ten people testify to having had a NDE and the majority say it gave their lives renewed purpose including a sense of mission.

Two years after his accident, Max McKee, drew a picture showing himself in Jesus's arms in the pool in collaboration with artist Anna Dieter Rachal at an art camp. "It's Me and Jesus, and Jesus is holding me like he did in that pool, he said. When his mother pinned it on the fridge door, Max suddenly remembered another detail of his experience he hadn't told anyone, "Mommy, Jesus holds ALL the kids that fall in the water." No one is left alone in their hour of need.