

THREE TIMES INTO THE LIGHT —

Mark Giordani's Journey

Mark Giordani was a 19-year old business student when an infection following oral surgery sent his health into a slow, long, bewildering decline, which culminated in three near-death experiences. The following narrative is taken from two talks Mr. Giordani recently presented at churches near his home in eastern Massachusetts, plus two interviews he gave to Vital Signs' editor.

By the time I was 28, I had spent over \$150,000 trying to find a resolution to my medical condition. My body had become hypersensitive to sounds, bright light, common household cleaning chemicals, and an increasing number of foods. If I ate the wrong thing, I'd have to spend as much as seven days in bed to recover my strength. To find out how to stop this decline, I visited doctors in Ohio, Arizona, Alabama, New York, Washington, and Florida. I communicated by phone with doctors in Canada, and by email and phone with doctors in Italy and Germany. I was determined to discover whatever was needed to get my health back.

Eventually, one specialist labeled my condition Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Unfortunately, that label does about as much to describe this illness as saying there's "a bit of a water spill" when a dam bursts and destroys an entire town. People sometimes hear the term Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and they say, "Oh, I have that; I get tired also." But CFS doesn't simply mean being tired. It is a life-altering, disabling condition that is not mitigated, repaired, solved, nor healed by sleep. I slept 18 hours a day for almost 5 years. I slept away almost entire summers. Many times I'd simply go to bed on a Friday night and not get up, except for the bathroom, until Monday. Life turned into an endless battle of sleep and struggle.

After several years, the medical community renamed the condition Chronic Fatigue *Immune Dysfunction* Syndrome (CFIDS), reflecting the discovery that parts of the immune system aren't working as they should while other parts are hyperactive, causing persistent infections and numerous hypersensitivities. For someone who hasn't had this condition, imagine being injected, without your knowing it, with an anesthetic that makes you half-asleep but not fully asleep, and then try to go about your normal activities—drive your car, go to work, live your life. No matter what you do, even an activity that used to give you joy, you feel drugged, heavy, even confused. After ten years of that, I felt as if my life had been slowly taken away.

So when I lay down on an operating table in Nevada for a fifth surgery to clean out the infection in my jaw, I didn't really care what happened. I was not assuming it would make me better. I was there because I had no other options. I'd already done all of what I thought could help. When preparing for each of the previous four surgeries, I actually had some hope. Then I had told myself, "I'll subject my self to the knife, the

anesthetic, the sutures and the pain, but in the end I'll be healthy and strong and will be able to return to a normal life." This time I had no such hope. I had kept up with the literature on CFIDS and there had been nothing new in six years. I laid down for this surgery in absolute raw submission. I'd given up.

But once I was given the anesthetic to go to sleep, I sensed that this surgery was not like the previous ones. Generally when you have an anesthetic, you quickly fall asleep, and that's it—later you simply wake up. This time, my body was falling asleep but I wasn't losing consciousness. Instead, I found myself traveling in my mind, being moved toward a "place".

I found myself in the biggest, largest, most vast pit of grayness that one could experience. It wasn't a dream—the feelings were too powerful, and unlike anything I've ever dreamed before or since. Also unlike anything I've ever felt in waking life. Something inside said, "Mark, if you have a negative thought now, no matter how small, things could get a lot worse." Actually, I had no idea that things could turn out *well*. I had no idea at all where it could go. But I deeply felt and told myself, "Mark, this is not a place you mess around in." I knew to be scared; it was instinctive.

So I decided to quiet myself down, to draw upon my few experiences of meditation. And with great effort, I somehow managed to do that.

In the process of quieting myself down, the place changed slightly, from grayness to a very rich dark purple. I could talk for an hour and a half about the significance of that slight color change, because it wasn't merely a visual experience, it was accompanied by deep feelings. I felt as though a moment ago I'd been faced with someone holding a gun barrel to my head. When the color changed, it was as though he then said, "Ok, we're not really interested in you," and took the gun away. I changed from feeling sheer terror, to letting myself think, "Maybe this won't be so bad."

As the color got brighter, I started moving, in a progressive way, toward the color. When I say "I" moved toward it, it was not Mark Giordani in his body walking toward the color. My mind was all there; it was the same me that I'd always known. But I had no awareness of a body. (I never even looked to see if I had a body.) I was *being moved* by some type of locomotion, as if strapped into something, and I had no control over the speed or direction. And along with the motion, I heard a zoom-

I got really comfortable with how I was feeling, but extremely uncomfortable with the fact that I was dying.

THREE TIMES INTO THE LIGHT

Continued from page 5

ing sound in my head: ZZZZZZZZ.

Now as I'm being moved forward, I'm surprised to be feeling more and more comfortable: pains that I'd had continuously for ten years are beginning to lift—my jaw pain is diminishing, my abdominal pain is disappearing. And most welcome of all, I'm beginning to feel warmth, warmth throughout all parts of (what would have been) my body. And I have mental clarity. I can think!—gone are the obstructions, fatigue, and memory problems I'd been living with for so many years. Soon I had *no* emotional or physical pain whatsoever.

Which made me wonder, "How can this be? I'm in this weird place, but I'm feeling so much better than ever." And that's when it occurs to me: "*I'm dying!*"

Now how can a person be so certain about such a thing as death if you've never experienced it before? It almost gives credence to the concept of reincarnation—something I still have questions about. Here I am in this very strange place that allegedly I'd never been to before, and yet, I'm having this awareness that, yes, I'm definitely dying. I don't know how you know that. You just do.

And it's not the same feeling you have when you're alive, here, and very ill, when you ask your doctor, "Am I dying?" This feeling was entirely different. It wasn't just a thought or a question, it was a profound *knowing*.

It entranced me. I felt myself flowing into it, without objection.

Suddenly, I react to the knowledge that I'm dying with the thought, "Absolutely NOT!" Even though when I'd lain down for this surgery I hadn't cared whether I lived or died, now something in my mind yells, "Hold everything!—I can't die now!" The doctor who's been trying for six months to help me will really be upset! My friend from home who'd stayed with me in Nevada all this time—he can't see me croak right here. That would be a terrible end to this journey! My Mom and Dad back home, my sisters and nieces and nephews, will all be upset,

thinking: "Mark's too young to die." I can't die *now!*

What embarrasses me as I tell you this is that I thought of no reason for staying alive that had anything to do with *me*. I didn't think, "I can't die yet because I want to get married and have children." Or, "I can't die because I want to travel around the world." In truth, after ten discouraging years of illness, I'd already given up on all of my own dreams. At that moment I only thought I shouldn't die because of what it might mean to *other* people.

Meanwhile, as I'm absorbed in these considerations, I'm still being moved forward: ZZZZZZZZ. And I'm continuing to feel even better physically—I'm feeling good, and strong, and alive. So even though I don't want to die, I say to myself, "The truth is, there's very little likelihood that you're ever going to feel this good again." And instinctively, I weigh the trade-off: "Go forward into death, where things feel really good. Or go backwards into life, so the people I care about won't be upset; yet face the physical and emotional turmoil all over again."

And then an insight comes to me, "Even though my Mom is going to miss me when I die, she'll one day get over it. Because I've just learned that it doesn't matter how much pain you have in this life. The moment you move on, the pain is gone!" So I realized that ultimately it wasn't going to matter to my family and friends if I died. And at that point I gave myself permission to go, to die.

As soon as I made that decision, I was moved further forward and a scene opened up. It was my own wake, and I was looking up from within the open casket. I saw my parents' faces above me, but I couldn't move. I wanted to communicate to them, but I couldn't. I noticed the strong smell of lilies in the funeral parlor. I was able to see many of my friends

and family who had come to say good-bye. And as I watched my mother cry, the remarkable thing was that I was feeling a great peace inside. In my own mind I'm thinking, "Don't cry, Mom, it's gonna be okay." I'm saying to myself, "One day they'll really understand."

I accepted the wake, and that I was going to die. I accepted that everyone who was here that I loved, and who loved me, would ultimately understand someday. After I made that acceptance, the wake scene and everything of my earthly life—just vanished. All of my earthly life closed.

At that point I saw the entrance to a tunnel. And right above the entrance was—weird as it may sound—a television set, mounted above the upper left corner of the entrance. As I looked up at the TV, I realized that what was on it, the knowledge that was contained within the show that was playing, was being *infused into* me. As I accepted each 'delivery' of knowl-

edge, still more would pass into me. I'd expand again, and it would fill me up with even more.

That's so different from how we learn down here. If you want to learn something here, you pick up a book, you read, you struggle, and hopefully you assimilate and learn

some of its information. There, I didn't have to struggle at all. Simply by the TV being there, its knowledge was becoming part of me—or I was becoming part of it, it's hard to say.

On the TV there seemed to be a million channels, and it was as if someone had their hand on the dial and was flicking through all the channels as quickly as possible. And remarkably, I took in the entire content of each channel, even though I saw it for only a fraction of a second. It was coming at me energetically, at the speed of light. The process of learning didn't occur at the slow, mental level

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THREE TIMES INTO THE LIGHT

Continued from page 6

I'd been used to down here. And it was ALL knowledge that I was being given—all that ever was, is, and ever could be, from the beginning of time to the end of time. It was exhilarating and incredible.

I've tried to come up with some ideas about why NDErs get all this knowledge when they move on to this different realm. One idea is simply that one of the most generous gifts within our earthly life is that here we are granted the opportunity to explore and ask questions. Every day of our lives down here is spent trying to figure things out—it can be mundane things like how to fix a leaky faucet, or important things like why do we wage war. I think that we're here to ask questions, and to participate in the joy of gaining knowledge. In a fantastic way, it seems that our "mind-slate" gets wiped clean when we are born into this life, and we get to learn, by our full participation in life, *all over again*. It's a wonderful opportunity and a generous gift to us. It's as if life is a giant sandbox, and we get to build new structures and have different experiences each day.

But, by not having complete knowledge while we are here, we may also experience pain, in the form of the many unanswered questions we hold, and the grander inexplicable mysteries of life. When you move on to the next realm and gain all knowledge, you no longer have any desire. You're at peace. There's no more mystery. You have the meaning of everything.

Yet there you don't even take pride in the fact that you have it all, because you've lost any sense of *need*—and pride is connected with need. You've become *completely full*. So there the content of the knowledge you have doesn't feel so important; the peace does.

After I gained that knowledge, I was moved into the white tunnel. I still had no power over the speed or direction of my movement. And I had no idea where this tunnel was going; all I knew was that it was the path before me. The tunnel turned left and higher, forming a continuous square-shaped upward spiral; so now the motion occurred in pulses, taking me up to and around each corner: *ZZZZZ, ZZZZZ, ZZZZZ*. And I was moving faster and faster. It was an experience of physics more than spirituality: it was all about motion, sound and energy, even the knowledge was energy.

The further I moved up this brightening tunnel, the better I felt—hotter and happier and more energized. It was unbelievable to me. I felt joyful and abundant beyond words. There's no way I can even come up with that emotion down here. Think of the most ecstatic you've ever been—that would be depression by comparison. The euphoria was that incredible. And paradoxically, though I understood this experience to be my death, I had never felt more *alive*. It makes me wonder if death really doesn't happen at all.

Then in the wall of the tunnel I saw a large opening, like a window without any glass, through which I saw the most magnificent, breath-taking beauty—flowers, rivers, lakes, clouds, rolling hills, all emanating their own light. They were *energized* with life, so unlike anything I'd seen here. You didn't just observe their color, their color *came to you*. Like the knowledge that had been pushed into me by the television set, these flowers radiated their beauty *into* me. I became a part of the beauty and it became part of me. As someone suggested to me recently, it was as if everything in the landscape was making love to me. Imagine every cell in your body experiencing an orgasmic connection to the beauty that surrounds you. The all of you, undulating, in perfect time with the all of what you see. That's how spectacular the beauty is there.

Looking back on that moment now, I think the reason for the vista being visible from within the tunnel was to make sure that I knew I was in a really good place. It was such wonderful eye-candy. The beauty was not there for itself; it seems like it was there for me, to say "You're okay"; to say, "Welcome!" Like when you go to someone's house and they offer you a bowl of deliciously ripe fresh fruit.

I've come to think of this scene as just an energetic construction. I sometimes wonder, if I were able to go back, would I be able to play with that energy, to create different versions of that beauty by waving what might have been my hand?—like the childhood "Etch-a-Sketch" toy. I'd love to try *willing* different versions of that ecstatic beauty with my mind. When you pass into the other realm, it is an energy realm—incredibly beautiful energy, bright energy.

I passed four of these vista-openings as I traveled higher up the squared-spiral tunnel.

Then I came into a resting point, a way-station. This was the only time that I saw other beings. There were five of them—clear, translucent beings of energy. Their heads were shaped like a large contact lens. So now I refer to them as "lenticular" beings. Their heads had no eyes, mouth or nose. The magnificent light coming into this space from further along the tunnel refracted through their bodies, bending the light. They had no mass to them. And though I never had the presence to look down and check my own body, I realized that I might also be one of these translucent beings. That made six of us, a significant number to me because my immediate family is six: my two parents, my three sisters and me.

We were arranged around a conference table—even though I suspect it was not solid but only made of energy. There was no conversation. Yet communication took place. All of us already had gone through the stage of gaining all knowledge, so all our questions were already answered, and we felt like we

One of the things we're down here to do, is to have questions. ...When you move on to the next realm and gain all knowledge, that puts you into a state of having no more questions, no desire.

THREE TIMES INTO THE LIGHT

Continued from page 17

were one with everything. So the dialog required was really quite minimal. You're just *there*. They were all the same, but appeared to have different personalities, simply by the way they refracted or bent the light. They all seemed playful and light, happy and warm. I remember feeling at comfort because I was not alone. But the truth is, had I been alone I wouldn't have felt uncomfortable. So the beings were there for me as a bonus—like when you have a full belly and someone gives you an extra bite. It was just a confirmation that other beings came to rest here too. I had no longing to see anyone at all. There was simply a confirmed “knowing” that all beings rest here in the light.

After we had our little visitation, I was lifted upward and forward into the tunnel—only now it was straight, not spiral. The tunnel rose steadily and its distance was wonderfully illuminated. I was truly being beckoned by the light. There are no words to give justice to this light. It is brighter than a thousand suns, and won't harm you in any way. As it starts to come directly into view, it's the most magnificent sunrise occurring right before you. The light is moving toward you as you move towards it. It starts to penetrate you, to infuse you. You already have the knowledge—that was the easy part. Now you're being bathed, you're starting to become expanded, by this light.

Soon you're not any smaller than the light. You expand into the entirety of the magnificence of this field. You become the light.

You are *completely* satisfied, you have no desires, nothing is unknown to you. You are fulfilled. You come to know just how perfect you are. You are perfection.

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That light, source, and power is only one thing: unconditional love. And you are *it*. Though I still had my own consciousness, I was no longer a separate entity. Time is still. I hover. Bliss. Being. Love.

I want you to know that when you, yourself, will get to this light, when you are bathed in the most spellbinding unconditional love, you will know—there will be no doubt—that you are home. It doesn't matter what you call home today: your house, your apartment, even this planet. Whatever you have as home now is not truly your home. When you go, and become part of this light, any lingering doubt, any lingering question, any possibility of error in your own mind will be waived. You'll know that you are home. And home is in the glory of this unconditional love.

I cannot convey to you in human words how incredibly majestic and wonderful this experience is. If you have lost someone recently, or you're losing them now, please do know they are, or soon will be, *soooo* okay. My experience strongly suggests that death is not an end. It appears to be the beginning of a most extraordinary experience of peace, unity, acceptance, ecstatic bliss, and Unconditional Love.

Of course, no human being has ever passed beyond the “point of no return” and been able to come back to tell us about it. My experience of “the other side” offered me just one glimpse into the possibilities that lie beyond our place of conventional life. Yet there is nothing in my experience to suggest that this different level of existence is anything short of absolute, divine perfection. And the good news is this – we don't know for sure what comes *after* this level. Does it just keep getting better?