



Science, the Soul, and Near-Death Experiences: A Christian Analysis

by Jeffrey Breshears

To paraphrase a famous quote by the renowned English essayist, Dr. Samuel Johnson: “The realization that one is scheduled to hang in the immediate future has a wonderful effect in terms of focusing one’s mind.” I feel somewhat the same way when attending a memorial service: it’s a stark and vivid reminder of just how ephemeral and transitory this life is, as well as a very poignant opportunity to focus on what really matters.

Thanatology is the study of the phenomenon of death and dying, including the scientific, philosophical, theological and psychological factors that contribute to this fascinating field of research. Over the past forty-five years numerous books have been written on Near-Death Experiences (NDE’s) and what awaits us when we die – everything from Raymond Moody’s *Life After Life* and Elisabeth Kubler-Ross’s *On Death and Dying* to the recent emergence of “Heaven Tourism” books (and films).

Most of this literature is based exclusively on anecdotal testimonies and interpreted through a non-Christian worldview. Even more troubling, much of the recent “Heaven Tourism” accounts by Christians are full of sensationalistic claims that have been thoroughly debunked.

The Bible says surprisingly little about physical death and what awaits us beyond the veil of this life, and few Christian philosophers and theologians throughout history have written much on the subject. While living with the prospect that we could be called into God’s presence at any moment, apparently our time, energy and priorities are to be focused on the development of our faith and character in

this life rather than fixated on the next dimension of reality.

Nonetheless, there is much to gain from ruminating on the issue from time to time, and for those interested in a thoughtful approach to the subject, there are three books that I highly recommend: Gary Habermas and J. P. Moreland’s *Beyond Death: Exploring the Evidence for Immortality* (1998); Dinesh D’Souza’s *Life After Death: The Evidence* (2009); and Michael Sabom’s *Light and Death* (1998).

There is no better authority on the subject than Dr. Michael Sabom, our



Areopagus Forum speaker in October. Beginning in the late 1970s Dr. Sabom, a Christian cardiologist, began collecting and analyzing the

testimonies of medical patients who experienced the phenomena associated with Near-Death Experiences. The results of his research were published in 1983 in

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The Areopagus Calendar

Areopagus Forums

Science, the Soul, and Near-Death Experiences: A Christian Analysis Dr. Michael Sabom

Wednesday, October 16
7:00 PM
Johnson Ferry Baptist Church
The Chapel
— and —

Thursday, October 17
7:30 PM
Perimeter Church
Uptown Auditorium

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Reconciling the Reality of God and Evil: What Are the Options?

Dr. Paul Copan

Professor of analytic philosophy, and author/editor of more than 25 books in the philosophy of religion, apologetics, theology, science & religion, and the historicity of Jesus



Thursday, November 14
7:30 PM
Perimeter Church
Midtown Auditorium

Science, the Soul, and Near-Death Experiences

(Continued)

his ground-breaking book, *Recollections of Death*, the first scientifically-documented analysis of the evidence. Fifteen years later, after considerably more research, analysis and reflection, Dr. Sabom summarized his findings in *Light and Death* (1998). In our upcoming Areopagus Forum, Dr. Sabom will correlate and summarize some forty years of scientific research with biblical insights

into the mysteries of dying and the afterlife.

Since the reality of death awaits us all, there is no topic more relevant than this, and we are honored to have with us one of the world's experts on this vital topic. Join us for this Areopagus Forum with Dr. Sabom as this is truly knowledge that every Christian needs to know.



★ ★ ★ TOP 10 CLASSIC FILMS ★ ★ ★ PART 4: 1990 - 1999

Significant movies related to the arts, history, politics, society and culture that every Christian should know

As the movie industry continues to produce more films that dumb-down and degrade our society intellectually, morally and spiritually, here are some films worth seeing (or seeing again) that were produced between 1992-2000. Like the lists published in previous Areopagus newsletters this year, these movies are recommended based either on their artistic merits, their social, political or religious messages, their historical or cultural value, or purely for entertainment purposes.

1. Crimes and Misdemeanors (Martin Landau, Woody Allen, Mia Farrow, 1990)
2. Dances With Wolves (Kevin Costner, Mary McDonnell, 1990)
3. Fried Green Tomatoes (Kathy Bates, Jessica Tandy, Mary Stuart Masterson, 1991)
4. Shadowlands (Anthony Hopkins, Debra Winger, 1993)
5. Gettysburg (Jeff Daniels, Tom Berenger, Martin Sheen, 1993)
6. Forrest Gump (Tom Hanks, Robin Wright, 1994)
7. The Crucible (Daniel Day-Lewis, Winona Ryder, 1996)
8. The Apostle (Robert Duvall, 1997)
9. Saving Private Ryan (Tom Hanks, 1998)
10. Schindler's List (Liam Neeson, 1998)

Building a Core Library: 50 Recommended Books

With so much to read and learn but so little time, it is imperative that we prioritize our reading.

Check out our Areopagus website (www.TheAreopagus.org) for the article,

“Building a Core Library: 50 Recommended Books”

for an annotated reading list that covers many of the best books of the past century – from G. K. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* (1925) and C. S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man* (1944) to Rod Dreher's *The Benedict Option* (2017) and Nancy Pearcey's *Love Thy Body: Hard Questions About Life and Sexuality* (2018) – in five key areas of study:

- (1) Biblical studies and bibliography;
- (2) Christian history;
- (3) Christian apologetics;
- (4) Cultural apologetics; and
- (5) Christian spiritual formation.

How many of the books on this list have you read, and are there books that you would add (or delete!) from the list?

