

MAGNOLIA MINDS: 'Is this the end?'

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Daniels

I have been a volunteer firefighter for 25 years. It's the fulfillment of a childhood dream of mine and has brought a whole host of experiences into my life, experiences that run the gamut of emotions.

I have seen things that are unforgettable and experienced trauma in some of the deepest ways imaginable, with total strangers and with good friends alike. There have been times when I have had fun, times when I have been grief-stricken, and times when I have been more afraid than at any other time in my life. One of those times of fear happened in the winter of 2007.

Losing my way

I was serving with the Monticello Fire Department during the time that I was the pastor of Monticello Church. Our department was dispatched to a house fire out in the county. When we arrived on scene, we found a small, metal-roofed house with heavy, grayish-black smoke pushing from the windows and front door.

My partner and I put on our air packs, grabbed the firehose,

and advanced into the house through the front door. Since my partner was on the nozzle, it was my responsibility to watch out for dangerous conditions that may develop.

As we turned left and started down the hallway, a flashover happened around us and we suddenly found ourselves in an extremely dangerous situation with the conditions rapidly deteriorating around us.

I told my partner that we needed to exit the house, and as we began trying to get out of the house I lost my grip on the firehose and quickly became disoriented as the heat and smoke continued building up.

I could feel the fear beginning to rise up inside of me as I realized that I had lost my partner, lost my lifeline (the firehose will always lead you out of the house), and had lost my direction. I needed to be rescued from a dangerous, potentially deadly situation.

As I continued to try to find my way out of the house, I heard someone calling my name. As I turned toward the direction of the voice, I saw a beam of light piercing through the smoke. It was a flashlight shining toward me from an open window. I lunged toward the light where one of my fellow firefighters, nicknamed "Wild Bill," was waiting to pull me to safety.

What a sense of relief and joy to be rescued that night! For a brief time inside of that house, the question crossed my mind, "Is this the end?" Was this how my earthly life was going to end? Thankfully, a rescuer was there to pull me out and my life continues on.

Everyone needs to be rescued

Reflecting on that scary firefighting moment has made me realize that, truthfully, everyone needs to be rescued. The Word of God reminds us with those stark words: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). There is no way around that truth

and no way we can get out of that deadly situation on our own.

In the fire, I did not have my partner, my lifeline, or the directions I needed to get out. *Is that not the truth of those who are lost without Christ?* They have no resources or means to get themselves out of the deadly situation in which they find themselves.

As much as I needed Wild Bill to pull me out of that window to safety, how much more do lost people need the Rescuer, the Redeemer, the Righteous Savior of the world to pull them out of their desperate situation!

If I had died in the fire that cold, winter night, I would have found myself in the presence of the Lord for all eternity – but when those who have not placed their faith in the Rescuer die in their sins, they find themselves in a fiery place that is infinitely worse than any inferno I have ever battled as a firefighter!

Responding

I'm still a firefighter, serving now with the Flora Fire Department while I pastor First Church, Flora. I'm still responding to those calls for help. The question for every Christian is this: *Will we respond to the call to go and tell the billions who are lost and dying that there is One who will rescue them and deliver them, One who will save them and save them forever?*

Will you respond to that call?

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