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Alive Again

Lorenzo L. Kelly
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Bishop Lorenzo L. Kelly's memoir, Alive Again! celebrates his miraculous survival after an aneurysm of the thoracic aorta and complications from multiple surgeries and related infections nearly left him dead. Aneurysms such as the one suffered by Kelly have only a ten percent survival rate, but he is now fully recovered and again praising the Lord as Bishop of the Faith Temple Church of God in Christ in Rapid City, South Dakota.

On the morning of January 28, 2006, Kelly experienced severe pain from his upper chest down to his lower stomach and radiating into the lower back. His wife immediately called 911. "I could have and would have died right there in my bedroom had it not been for the power and pleading of the Holy Ghost as my life hung in the balance," Kelly writes.

During a ten-hour surgery that required bringing his body temperature down to thirty-six degrees, eighteen inches of his aorta were replaced, and he died and was resuscitated five times. In order to raise his body temperature, heat was applied, leading to what he calls "accidental" fourth degree burns to the front of both his legs; these later required multiple surgeries and skin grafts to repair. After receiving huge amounts of fluids because of his burns and to prevent infection, Kelly required dialysis to reduce the resulting swelling so that his chest cavity, which had remained open for three days, could be closed. Kelly details the out-of-the-body experiences he had while on dialysis and shares the suffering he endured while in the hospital.

Seeing photographs of Kelly in the hospital, and then, four years later, in Hawaii celebrating his forty-fifth wedding anniversary, readers may be inclined to believe that his recovery was indeed a miracle. "The Lord has blessed me to be almost completely restored at this time," writes Kelly. "I can see, walk, talk, sing, and praise the Lord. All of my normal body functions returned, and I am not a patient of any kind…I am pleased to be God's Miracle!"

Readers will learn, as Kelly did, just how fragile human life can be, and how unexpected events can teach much-needed lessons about the value of each moment. The author presents his ordeal with humility and is not ashamed to admit his own personal weaknesses and failings in the face of his suffering; he fully credits God and the faithful support of his family and friends for his recovery.

The book will appeal mainly to those who share the author's religious beliefs. Because it is a personal recounting of his medical emergency and the life-threatening consequences of what appear to have been mistakes on the part of medical staff, the book's readership might be limited to family and friends of the Bishop. Additionally, many of the photographs are quite small and dark, and some readers may be disturbed by the graphic images of Bishop Kelly's burns. Nevertheless, readers who follow Kelly through his illness and recovery will rejoice with him at the care and support he received and in his miraculous return to health.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July 1, 2010)

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