What Dr. Luke Says About Dental Emergencies

Tom had a dark hole in one of his lower back teeth that used to bother him, but then the pain went away so he stopped thinking about it. Well, he thought, if it gets bad enough, I’ll just have the tooth pulled.

One morning, Tom woke up and noticed the side of his face was swollen, and slightly warm and painful. He looked in a mirror and thought he saw his gums completely swollen around the tooth that had the hole in it.

As the day went on, the swelling seemed to get larger, and people at work asked him what happened to his face. That night, he noticed it was getting harder to open his mouth and the pain was getting worse, so he took a few pain pills and went straight to bed.

Tom woke up at 4 in the morning. His wife told him the swelling in his face had gotten larger, and she was very concerned. By this time he was in a lot of pain and was feeling a little sick. He was also feeling a little worried and afraid, but he tried not to show it so his wife wouldn’t worry even more.

He took a few more pain pills but couldn’t get back to sleep. As he laid there in bed, the pain began to throb. He had never experienced anything like this before. Tom just hoped he could make it until morning and get to a doctor or the pharmacy.

Those few hours lying in bed were some of the worst Tom had ever experienced. He didn’t really have any religious beliefs, but through all that pain, something told Tom that he needed to seek the help of a higher spiritual power to help him get through the night.

Later that morning, he went to the pharmacy and asked if they had any medicine for his swollen jaw and toothache. The clerk there gave him an herbal paste he could put directly on the tooth to sooth the pain, and told him he should go to a dentist right away.

There was a dental clinic further down the street. Tom walked in and was told he could be seen if he would wait a little while.

There were some pamphlets at the front counter where Tom checked in, and the title caught his eye: “Are You Missing Something In Your Life?”

As Tom waited, he read the pamphlet. It seemed to be describing Tom. Many people, it said, go through life without knowing the one true God and His Son, Jesus Christ. They think everything’s fine and “normal” until a crisis occurs, and then their lives become filled with fear and emptiness.

There was a quote from the Bible: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.” (Proverbs 3: 5-8)

It went on to say that sickness, pain and death are the result of sin that came into the world when the first man, Adam was disobedient and rebellious towards God. But hope and life returned when God’s Son, Jesus, died for us. And through His death He made things right between God and man for those who believe in Him.

The pamphlet said that all men, rich or poor, good or bad, fall short of God’s holiness. But through the death of Christ, any person can be saved from eternal separation from God, and look forward to glorious, eternal life with Him. First, the pamphlet said, you must believe.

“That if you confess with your mouth ‘Jesus is Lord’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)

This seemed almost too wonderful for Tom to believe, but he felt in his heart that it must be true.

As Tom waited for the dentist, he felt real hope and the pain didn’t seem as important. Maybe the herbal paste from the pharmacy was helping.

The dentist asked him some questions. Several important questions to determine the cause of a dental emergency, and how to treat it, include:

1. How long has it hurt? This can reveal if the infection is long-standing or superficial
2. Does it hurt when you drink hot or cold things? This can tell the dentist if the nerve of the tooth is still alive.
3. How long has your face been swollen? If it’s been several days, it can be more difficult to treat.
4. Are you allergic to any medications? This is important because antibiotics are often used to treat dental emergencies.

The dentist then examined him, took some x-rays, and told him he had a severe dental infection, or “abscess,” from a cavity in his tooth.

Dental emergencies like Tom’s can have several causes, but the most common is a cavity in a tooth. A cavity, or tooth decay, or dental caries, is caused by a bacteria that eats away the tooth until it hits the nerve of the tooth.

The infection starts in the tooth, which can cause severe pain. Eventually, the infection leaks out of the tooth and into the jaw, and this is when swelling of the gums or the jaw can occur.

Any kind of pain or swelling in your teeth or jaw is a warning sign, and the best course of action is to have a dentist check it before it gets worse. Swelling of your gums or your face can indicate a serious dental infection and is not something to take lightly. It can be life threatening!

In some cases of a severe dental abscess, the dentist will prescribe antibiotics to stop the spread of the infection, and some strong pain medicine to help the patient get comfortable until the problem can be treated. If this occurs, it’s very important to keep taking the anitibiotic until it’s ALL used, usually for a week.

It’s also important to understand that the antibiotic will only be a temporary solution. The only way to get rid of the infection is to have the tooth treated, either with a root canal or removal of the tooth.

In Tom’s case, the cavity in the tooth was too large and the tooth had to be removed. Once the tooth is removed, the abscess usually drains out. But in this case, the dentist gave Tom an antibiotic after the procedure to make sure all the infection would be eliminated from his jaw. He told Tom to keep taking all the antibiotic, for one week, even if everything felt OK. He also told him to keep drinking fluids, because a dental infection can lead to fever and dehydration.

The apostle Paul, who was the first Christian preacher, tells followers of Jesus Christ that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit ([1 Corinthians 6:19-20](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Corinthians%206.19-20)), and as such we are to take care of our bodies and keep them as healthy as we can. The Lord wants His children to take excellent care of their bodies since they are the residence of the Holy Spirit. A strong, healthy body helps us stay in shape so we can better serve God each day and thus bring glory and honor to Him, our principal reason for living.

Medical research is showing that a healthy mouth is one of the keys to having a healthy body. Many of the diseases that affect the entire body, such as diabetes and heart disease, have been linked to oral diseases.

After his dental appointment, Tom went home and told his wife he wanted them both to start seeing the dentist for regular checkups. The dentist explained that this is the best way to prevent another bad dental infection. He never wanted to go through that again.

He also showed his wife the pamphlet about Jesus. There was an address where anyone could come one evening a week to meet other Christians and learn more about Jesus and His offer of salvation by grace. The pamphlet called it the Gospel, or “Good News.”

They attended one night, it was at the home of one of the Christians. They were amazed at the amount of care and love the people showed for each other, and how accepting they were of Tom and his wife.

The group sang songs of praise to the Lord, and some members gave testimonies about how God was working in their lives. They prayed for each other and for things going on in the community. Then one of the men read from the Bible, the words of Jesus: “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 8:28).

He told the group that this was Jesus’ offer of the gift of salvation by grace for those who would come to Him. The people Jesus was speaking to were God’s own people at that time, the Israelites, and many of them were weary of trying to please God by obeying the many rules and regulations given by their religious leaders. Jesus was offering them a new way, a way that would make their burden light, and a way to worship “in Spirit and in truth,” the way God had always intended.

But the offer is also for everyone and anyone today who will listen. People who are feeling downcast, suffering from pain or illness, hurt or disappointment in their lives. And especially anyone who was trying hard to be “religious” but still felt empty inside.

As he learned more about God’s word in the Bible, Tom found out even more good news. One day, God’s people will never again have to deal with sickness, pain or suffering.

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

Two thousand years ago, Christ Jesus died for all mankind, and three days later was raised by God from the dead, so that those who believe in Him will also be raised from the dead one day and enjoy eternal life.

In Paul’s letter to the Christians in Rome, he says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

After a few weeks, Tom and his wife were convinced that they needed God in their lives and wanted to let the other Christians in the group know they were ready to accept Christ as their savior. At the next meeting, Tom stood up to give his testimony, that he believed Jesus Christ was the Son of God and savior of the world, and wanted to follow Him the rest of his life. His wife also gave her testimony.

In the Bible, God’s Word promises us that those who accept Jesus as Lord and savior will receive His Spirit, which will live in the believer and be a guide. Believers in Christ are to live in a new way, by this Holy Spirit, and not in the old way of satisfying the sinful desires of the body.

Some day, Christ will return for His people. The most important questions all humans must ask are these: If Christ were to return today, would you be ready for Him? When you die, will you be able to look forward to eternal life with Christ? Or will you have to spend eternity separated from God in a place the Bible calls the eternal Lake of Fire?