

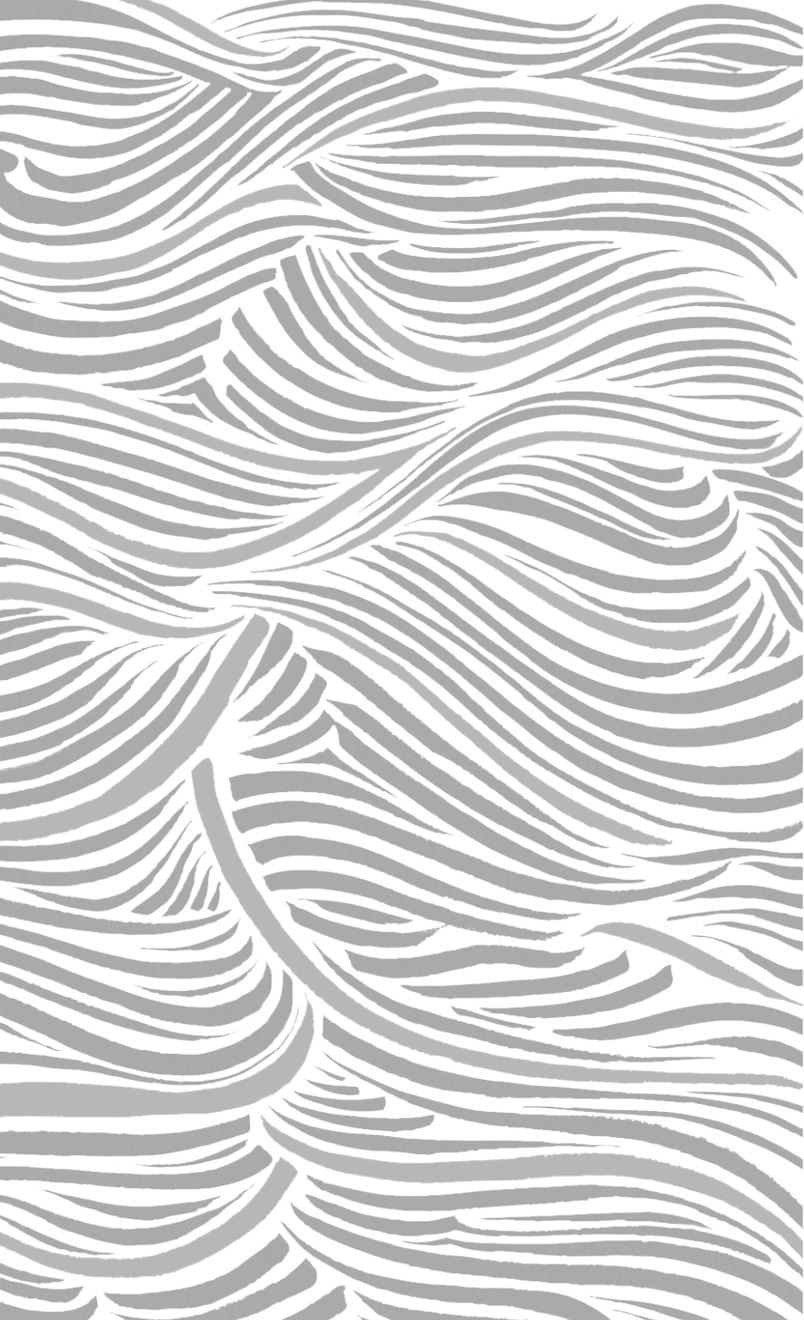
Newborn

Your New Life with Christ



JACK HAYFORD

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CHAPTER ONE

The Family's Welcome

Welcome, friend!

You're the reason this little book was written, to welcome you into the family of God. So, welcome!

Because you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, a new relationship with God and with his family is now open to you. And as a newborn family member, I want to tell you about us—that is you and me—all of us who have become members of the family.

When we refer to people who've accepted Christ as their Lord as family, we aren't being either sentimental or exclusive. In this case, "family" is more than just a figure of speech—it's an expression taken from the Bible. It is how the Word of God

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describes those of us who have been “born again” into God’s family:

Now you are no longer strangers to God and foreigners to heaven, but you are members of God’s very own family, citizens of God’s country, and you belong in God’s household with every other Christian.
(Ephesians 2:19)

And so I’m welcoming you to new relationships.

Through this booklet, I hope to help acquaint you with the dimensions, values, meanings, and possibilities that are open to you as a “new-born” member of God’s family. So, welcome to the family of God, where you will discover both a new quantity of life—eternal life—and new qualities of life.

What Jesus Brings to Your Life

Regardless of our individual stories, we all share in the common experience of sin. When we sin, we miss a mark or fall short of a goal or standard. And sin shows up in all of us, at our best and at our worst.

At best, our lives are finite and limited, cluttered with failure and the underlying feeling that life is not all that it should be. Few people seem to taste of what God really intended us to know in terms of life’s purpose and fulfillment. At worst,

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we spend too much time in pursuit of blurred or deceptive goals, resulting in disappointment, sin, and personal bondage. In either case, sin and its consequences afflict every one of us.

But God's Son, Jesus Christ, stepped into this human dilemma telling us that he came to open up life in all of its abundance and meaning: "My purpose is to give life in all its fullness" (John 10:10). This abundant, full life Christ offers us has a double dimension.

First, it addresses the endless future. It brings the hope of an eternal, unlimited experience in the fullness of God's joy. The Bible describes heaven as a "prepared place," promising us that God will ultimately gather us, his family, there. On the basis of Christ's promise in John 14:2-3, we know we will be in heaven forever with our Lord (see also 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Second, it addresses the present. We are given the promise of abundant life here and now. Some people mistakenly think that life with Christ will only take place in heaven and that this present life is just something to be endured. Their false assumptions cause them to offer the philosophical advice to "Cheer up! Slog on through life as best you can. Someday in heaven, it'll all be better." I want you to know, Newborn, that while our "someday" in heaven will be great, we are also promised a great life right now! If we follow Christ's instructions to live daily with him, then we will discover the triumph and joy there is in being a part of God's family, today.

What It Means to be Newborn

Being newborn, or “born again,” means that your inner spirit has been brought into a new relationship with God through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ.

When God first designed you, he intended you to be in close fellowship and friendship with him. But when you fell into disobedience and sin, as all of us have done, the contact with God was broken.

You should not condemn yourself for your failure, but you do need to be honest and acknowledge the truth of Romans 3:12, 17, 23: “Everyone has turned away; all have gone wrong. No one anywhere has kept on doing what is right; not one . . . and they have never known what it is to feel secure or enjoy God’s blessing. . . . Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious ideal.”

Simply stated, God’s Word is saying that none of us lives up to what God created us to be. When we understand and acknowledge that fact, we are ready to respond to the reason Jesus came. Christ’s redemptive life, death, and resurrection were specifically provided so that we could return to the Father’s original plans for us—plans that had us in vital, restoring, creative touch with him.

Now that you’ve decided to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, your relationship with God is established. The moment you made that decision and believed in and committed your life to Christ, God accomplished several things for you:

1. *Redemption: You are forgiven of sin.* “So

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overflowing is his kindness toward us that he took away all our sins through the blood of his Son, by whom we are saved" (Ephesians 1:7).

2. *Cleansing: You are washed from your sin.* "He saved us—not because we were good enough to be saved, but because of his kindness and pity—by washing away our sins and giving us the new joy of the indwelling Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

3. *Regeneration: You are born anew.* "Jesus replied, 'What I am telling you so earnestly is this: Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God'" (John 3:5).

4. *Justification: You have peace with God.* "So now, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith in his promises, we can have real peace with him because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us" (Romans 5:1).

5. *Adoption: You become one of God's children.* "And so we should not be like cringing, fearful slaves, but we should behave like God's very own children, adopted into the bosom of his family, and calling to him, 'Father, Father'" (Romans 8:15).

6. *Acceptance: You are received by the Father.* "His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by sending Jesus Christ to die for us. And he did this because he wanted to! Now all praise to God for his wonderful kindness to us and his favor that he has poured out upon us, because we belong to his dearly loved Son" (Ephesians 1:5-6).

7. *Eternal Life: You have an endless hope.* "I say

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emphatically that anyone who listens to my message and believes in God who sent me has eternal life, and will never be damned for his sins, but has already passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

All these things are yours now, for you have received Jesus Christ, acknowledging him as God's Son who died on the cross for our sins and who has risen from the dead. These are the beginnings of the blessings included in the gift of salvation. They comprise what it basically means when we use the expression "I'm saved!"

So now that you are beginning your new life through Christ, you will find God's Holy Spirit continually helping you increase your understanding of your new Father and family. The Spirit will widen your viewpoint on the greatness of our heavenly Father's love and grace.

It was through the Holy Spirit that God first spoke to your heart and called you to life with him. When you responded, you said in essence, "I want the Lord Jesus Christ in my life. I want to know God's love and forgiveness." This decision was the first step that you and millions of others have taken, a step of faith into a family of brothers and sisters who have come to know the heavenly Father in a personal, powerful way.

And, since you are being introduced to a new family, I thought it might be helpful for you to learn some of the household principles, some of the ways we in the family of God live "around the house." You can use this booklet as a basic guide into a whole new dimension of life where the goals

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are growth in Christ and further discovery of the kind of life we share in the family of God. And, you can use it as a pointer to God's Word, for it is his Word that opens new dimensions of meaning and heights of purpose in life, all of which you were given the right to explore when you received Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

The Gospel of John

1 Before anything else existed, there was Christ, with God. He has always been alive and is himself God. ³ He created everything there is—nothing exists that he didn't make. ⁴ Eternal life is in him, and this life gives light to all mankind. ⁵ His life is the light that shines through the darkness—and the darkness can never extinguish it.

^{6, 7} God sent John the Baptist as a witness to the fact that Jesus Christ is the true Light. ⁸ John himself was not the Light; he was only a witness to identify it. ⁹ Later on, the one who is the true Light arrived to shine on everyone coming into the world.

¹⁰ But although he made the world, the world didn't recognize him when he came. ^{11, 12} Even in his own land and among his own people, the Jews,

he was not accepted. Only a few would welcome and receive him. But to all who received him, he gave the right to become children of God. All they needed to do was to trust him to save them. ¹³ All those who believe this are reborn!—not a physical rebirth resulting from human passion or plan—but from the will of God.

¹⁴ And Christ became a human being and lived here on earth among us and was full of loving forgiveness and truth. And some of us have seen his glory—the glory of the only Son of the heavenly Father!

¹⁵ John pointed him out to the people, telling the crowds, “This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘Someone is coming who is greater by far than I am—for he existed long before I did!’”

¹⁶ We have all benefited from the rich blessings he brought to us—blessing upon blessing heaped upon us! ¹⁷ For Moses gave us only the Law with its rigid demands and merciless justice, while Jesus Christ brought us loving forgiveness as well. ¹⁸ No one has ever actually seen God, but, of course, his only Son has, for he is the companion of the Father and has told us all about him.

¹⁹ The Jewish leaders sent priests and assistant priests from Jerusalem to ask John whether he claimed to be the Messiah.

²⁰ He denied it flatly. “I am not the Christ,” he said.

²¹ “Well then, who are you?” they asked. “Are you Elijah?”

“No,” he replied.

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“Are you the Prophet?”

“No.”

²² “Then who are you? Tell us, so we can give an answer to those who sent us. What do you have to say for yourself?”

²³ He replied, “I am a voice from the barren wilderness, shouting as Isaiah prophesied, ‘Get ready for the coming of the Lord!’”

^{24, 25} Then those who were sent by the Pharisees asked him, “If you aren’t the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?”

²⁶ John told them, “I merely baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you have never met, ²⁷ who will soon begin his ministry among you, and I am not even fit to be his slave.”

²⁸ This incident took place at Bethany, a village on the other side of the Jordan River where John was baptizing.

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the world’s sin! ³⁰ He is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘Soon a man far greater than I am is coming, who existed long before me!’ ³¹ I didn’t know he was the one, but I am here baptizing with water in order to point him out to the nation of Israel.”

³² Then John told about seeing the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending from heaven and resting upon Jesus.

³³ “I didn’t know he was the one,” John said again, “but at the time God sent me to baptize he told me, ‘When you see the Holy Spirit descending

and resting upon someone—he is the one you are looking for. He is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’³⁴ I saw it happen to this man, and I therefore testify that he is the Son of God.”

³⁵ The following day as John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ Jesus walked by. John looked at him intently and then declared, “See! There is the Lamb of God!”

³⁷ Then John’s two disciples turned and followed Jesus.

³⁸ Jesus looked around and saw them following. “What do you want?” he asked them.

“Sir,” they replied, “where do you live?”

³⁹ “Come and see,” he said. So they went with him to the place where he was staying and were with him from about four o’clock that afternoon until the evening. ⁴⁰ (One of these men was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.)

⁴¹ Andrew then went to find his brother Peter and told him, “We have found the Messiah!” ⁴² And he brought Peter to meet Jesus.

Jesus looked intently at Peter for a moment and then said, “You are Simon, John’s son—but you shall be called Peter, the rock!”

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and told him, “Come with me.”

⁴⁴ (Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter’s home town.)

⁴⁵ Philip now went off to look for Nathanael and told him, “We have found the Messiah!—the very person Moses and the prophets told about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth!”

⁴⁶ “Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael. “Can anything good come from there?”

“Just come and see for yourself,” Philip declared.

⁴⁷ As they approached, Jesus said, “Here comes an honest man—a true son of Israel.”

⁴⁸ “How do you know what I am like?” Nathanael demanded.

And Jesus replied, “I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you.”

⁴⁹ Nathanael replied, “Sir, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!”

⁵⁰ Jesus asked him, “Do you believe all this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater proofs than this. ⁵¹ You will even see heaven open and the angels of God coming back and forth to me, the Messiah.”

2 Two days later Jesus’ mother was a guest at a wedding in the village of Cana in Galilee, ² and Jesus and his disciples were invited too.

³ The wine supply ran out during the festivities, and Jesus’ mother came to him with the problem.

⁴ “I can’t help you now,” he said. “It isn’t yet my time for miracles.”

⁵ But his mother told the servants, “Do whatever he tells you to.”

⁶ Six stone waterpots were standing there; they were used for Jewish ceremonial purposes and held perhaps twenty to thirty gallons each. ^{7,8} Then Jesus told the servants to fill them to the brim with

Other Books by Jack Hayford

Along with *Newborn* there are several other booklets in this series by Jack Hayford available from Tyndale House Publishers.

Daybreak

A handbook on daily prayer that directs the reader to present all of his life and self to God. Jack Hayford discusses how believers can establish daily time with God, and he gives guidelines for preparing one's heart and day so that it becomes a daily habit to have a daybreak meeting with God.

Prayerpath

A new call has gone out around the world—a call to believers to unite in concerts of prayer, joining in faith for spiritual breakthrough on a global dimension. In *Prayerpath*, Jack Hayford takes readers step by step along the pathway of prayer, showing what Jesus taught about how to pray and how to live and grow in vital faith.

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Practical instruction on the person and power of the Spirit, teaching how, when, and where to put the spiritual gifts and graces to use in your life. Encourages the reader to open to the fullness of the Spirit of Christ and shows how to maintain wisdom and balance in daily Spirit-filled living.

The following book by Jack Hayford is also available from Tyndale House Publishers:

The Visitor

A study of the suffering of Christ that gives the reader an uncluttered insight into the reasons for and results of Christ's visit to mankind. A perceptive, on-target treatment that enables readers to meet the Visitor face to face, recognizing his endless love and accepting his purpose and plan in their lives.