



# *COMING HOME:*

An Invitation to Join God's Family



*Helping Families Thrive™*

*Rushing off to work ... coming home weary ... paying the bills ... raising the kids. It often seems like an endless cycle. But during the quiet moments, do you dare to be honest with yourself? Have you ever wondered, “Is this all there is to life? Is it merely a 70-year cycle of eating and sleeping, of getting and spending, of growing older and older?”*

*If your heart longs for something or someone that will give meaning to your existence, this article can help. We'll take a straightforward look at the things people value in this world and show that there is much more to life.*

*There is a way to live that brings genuine satisfaction. You'll learn that nothing is more valuable than a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And by joining God's family, you can have a first-class, quality life—a winning life.*

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IT HAS BEEN NEARLY TWO YEARS, BUT IN JUST MINUTES HE'D BE BACK, and he wondered what it would be like. He had written ahead—they knew he was coming. In his memory, he heard the squeak of Dad's chair, the metal clang of spoon and pan in the kitchen, the crackle and thump as a log slipped in the fireplace. He could almost smell the sweet aroma of dinner nearly done. Then Mom would call, and everyone would scramble to the table.

It was good then. He belonged. But now?

Tom's sigh broke the daydream as he turned into the lane. Familiar sights and sounds engulfed him. Ten strides ... three stairs ... warped wooden porch floor stretching to the white clapboard walls ... and the creaky swing.

He rang the bell. The door swung open, and loving arms pulled him in and close. Then with his tears soaking into her white sweater, from beneath gray hair and wrinkled brow came the words he longed to hear.

“Welcome home, son. Welcome home!”

All people long for a place where they are welcome, accepted, loved. Where they don't have to pretend or be on their guard. Where just being there is a cause for celebration. Warm, relaxing, open—that's home. Or at least that's the Norman Rockwell portrayal of it.

## LESS THAN PERFECT

But not all homecomings evoke such memories. And while coming home often brings high expectations, it rarely lives up to its advertising. Cousin Cheryl is late and the turkey dries out. Nephew Norbert gets violently ill at the table. Uncle Arthur and Brother Bob argue about foreign policy. A giant dust ball rolls out from under the sofa at Aunt Agatha's feet, and Sister Samantha points out to Mom that her children are more polite than yours.

Much worse, of course, are homes that do not provide the loving support they should. A frightened boy listens from beneath his bed covers as the shouting of his angry parents shatters the night air. A young girl dreads the end of the school day because Mom will almost certainly be drunk again. A soldier or prisoner fears that during his absence his wife has been unfaithful and will not take him back. A single mother tries to shut out the department store Christmas music this first December since her divorce and her mother's death. And a bag lady has no place, not even a hotel room, to call home.

**When home does not live up to our dreams or expectations, we grow restless.** We long for relationships, connections, continuity, understanding, communication—things we imagine people had in abundance a hundred years ago before big corporations, automobiles and housing developments made it easy for extended families to fragment and scatter across the country. We feel isolated and alone.

## A LONG WAY FROM HOME

We may be lonely, but we are not alone. A lot of people today feel far from home. Perhaps they are divorced or widowed. Maybe they live

hundreds of miles from their parents, siblings and cousins. Even if they love their families dearly, they are often so busy working, commuting and running errands that they have little time to spend with the people closest to them. They long for home and family, a place to be and become. But the kind of home they crave seems as improbable as a 1945 *Saturday Evening Post* cover.

It's harsh, but true: Nobody ever finds, inherits or lives in a perfect home where the people always listen to and understand each other, take care of each other or even like each other. And yet most of us keep looking for just that—a place where we are appreciated, where we can be comfortable, where we can truly be ourselves.

Are we doomed to a lifetime of searching without finding? Must we become disillusioned and cynical? Or are we perhaps, in words of the song, “looking for love in all the wrong places”?

## RESTLESS HEARTS

More than 1,500 years ago, St. Augustine diagnosed the situation of many searching people. He knew from personal experience what it meant to be far from family, to try—and fail—to find love in a chain of short relationships, to feel as if nobody really cared. Speaking to God, he said, *“You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.”*

If St. Augustine was right, our unfulfilled longings might not be satisfied even if we were able to stage a whole succession of perfect homecomings, flawless Thanksgiving dinners and harmonious family reunions. As wonderful as home can be, even the best of homes cannot bring peace to our restless hearts. We always need something deeper and broader than the love of a father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife.

We would like to have parents, siblings and spouses who are always there for us and who are able to meet all our needs: provide for us, listen to us, care for us, counsel us, discipline us, protect us and enjoy us. We'd like these “super people” to know us inside and out, to love us all the same,

to give to us generously and to keep all their promises. We don't want these people to ever grow old or get sick or die. We want them to share our experiences, stick up for us, teach us what they know and never say "I told you so."

Impossible? It sounds like it. But God has all these characteristics. What is more, He strongly desires to make all people part of His family—a family that will one day be perfect and last forever.

## THE IDEAL FATHER

Let's back up for a minute. To understand God's invitation to join His family, it's important to know who God is. The Bible paints this picture of Him:

In many ways, God is like an excellent human father. He loves His children and is pleased when they love Him in return. He provides for them and protects them. He gives guidance and, when necessary, punishment. He understands their limitations, though, and is quick to forgive. Above all, He is generous (the Bible calls His generosity grace).

In other ways, God is far greater than any human father could ever be. For one thing, He is all-powerful. Nothing can keep Him from helping His children. For another, He is all-loving. In God there is no selfishness or pride to interfere with His relationship with His children. God is also all-knowing, so His guidance is completely worthy of trust. Since God is present everywhere at once, His children never have to strike out on their own, and since He is eternal, they never fear being abandoned.

## WHY DO PEOPLE SUFFER?

The Bible's description of God the Father is most attractive, but it raises some very difficult questions. If a heavenly Father really exists, and if He really satisfies people's deepest longings, why is the world full of unhappy people? What kind of father would let his children get hurt, suffer and die? How can anyone watch the evening news and seriously say that the universe is run by a loving Father?

God is the Supreme Ruler, but He is not the only supernatural power in the universe. Many millennia ago, one of His angels rebelled against Him. The rebel, often called Satan (“the accuser”), wanted to be king of the universe himself. To limit Satan’s destruction, God banished him from heaven, but He allowed him to try ruling one little corner of the universe—a planet God created called earth. God didn’t give Satan complete control of earth, however. People would be allowed to choose whether to follow Satan or to follow God.

One of the first stories in the Bible tells about mankind’s choice to follow Satan. Through Adam and Eve’s choice to believe Satan instead of God, earth gained some new experiences that God never intended for it: Pain. Illness. Famine. War. Oppression. Perversion. Murder. These are Satan’s contributions, not God’s.

## LOVE VERSUS TYRANNY

If God is a powerful and loving Father, why doesn’t He do something about the mess on earth?

Actually, He has already done something amazing. God has always ruled the universe through love; Satan has tried to rule through tyranny. God had no intention of using Satan’s methods. He would not force people to follow Him. Instead, God would offer them a way of escape from Satan’s clutches, and to make their escape possible, He would sacrifice Himself.

Once the first humans chose Satan instead of God, there was no turning back. They would have to die, because death is always the result of choosing Satan. God is a life-giver, but Satan can neither create life nor sustain it. Sadly, Adam and Eve’s choice was passed on to everything and everyone else on earth. From their day to ours, death has touched the entire human race.

But God stepped in to deliver the human race from the effects of sin and death.

## CHOOSE LIFE

The Bible’s New Testament tells the story of God’s love for His children:

God sent His Son to earth as a human being to undo Adam's tragic mistake, to choose life for the human race where Adam chose death!

Jesus, who was at the same time completely man and entirely God, was born to the virgin Mary, worked quietly in a carpenter's shop until He turned 30 and then began a three-year career of teaching and healing. The crowds loved Him, but the religious and political leaders were afraid of His growing influence. They conspired to have Him executed one Friday afternoon in the spring, and Jesus died on a cross just outside the capital city limits.

The religious and political leaders would have been happy if the story had ended there, but it didn't. Early Sunday morning, Jesus burst back into life again and walked out of the tomb, right past the soldiers posted by the entrance to prevent Jesus' friends from stealing His body. (See Matthew 28:1-7.)

He appeared to His closest friends, to His family, to several groups of awestruck followers—in all, to hundreds of people who were well aware that He had died a horrible death only days before.

Christians understand that Jesus died in their place, that in some indescribable way, He took the sins of the world on His shoulders and suffered for them as if He, not Adam, had chosen to follow Satan.

**Jesus died the death that Adam, and all the rest of us, deserve.**

When Jesus rose from the dead, He broke Satan's powers over the human race. No longer were people forced to choose death. No longer was the planet certain to decay and die. Jesus brought life, and He offered it—in fact, He still offers it—to anyone who has faith in Him: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

## COMING HOME

What is faith? It is knowing that things are not as they seem, that God has won the war with Satan, that it is now possible to choose life instead

of death, that God is indeed a loving Father who plans to gather His family around Him one day.

Even more, [faith is a willingness to take the first step toward Jesus](#), to trust that His love is an accurate reflection of God's love, to begin following in His footsteps and loving other people with a love like His.

[A Christian is simply a person who has felt a need to come home](#), who has seen the loving Father through Jesus, who has said NO to Satan and death, and YES to Jesus' invitation to choose life—unending life that begins now and continues forever with God. The Bible teaches that we are present—alive—spiritually with God at the moment we die, and that one day we will be alive in body again, as well. That is why we say Christians have unending life.

## WHAT MUST I DO?

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

You can become a Christian right now—you can come home—by opening the door to Christ and trusting Him as Lord and Savior. It is so easy a child can do it; yet, at the same time, it is hard because we first have to realize that we cannot do it on our own. Jesus said that to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, a person must be willing to humble himself as a child, and only then will God receive him.

[How about you? Are you ready to make this commitment?](#) All it takes are three simple steps. But first, you should stop and think about the cost

of serving Christ and consider these steps very carefully.

**Acknowledge that you are a helpless sinner separated from God.** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). All of us were created to have fellowship with God, but, because of humankind’s stubborn self-will, we have chosen to go our own independent way. No amount of good deeds on our part can win God’s favor. Agree with God that you are a lost sinner unable to save yourself. You need a Savior to bring yourself back to God. Understand that God is holy. No sin will ever enter His presence, for “righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne” (Psalm 97:2).

**Agree that Jesus Christ is the only provision for your salvation.** Through the Lord, you can know and experience God’s love and plan for your life. You must believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins, and know that He wants to be your Lord as well as your Savior. He wants to take possession of your heart and rule in it so that from now on, His Word is law to you. “As many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12).

**Truly desire to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and ask Him to come into your heart.** You should understand that when you receive Christ, you experience a new birth. You do this by turning from self to God (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into your life to forgive your sins and to make you the kind of person He wants you to be. You receive the Lord by faith through prayer, as an act of the will. You must also confess that Jesus Christ is Lord before men. “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).

**God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart.** If you clearly understand what Christ accomplished on the cross and have considered carefully the demands He makes, there is nothing to stop you from becoming a Christian. Now you should go where you can be alone or in the presence of another

Christian, get on your knees before God and pray a simple prayer such as this:

“Lord Jesus Christ, I need You. I agree that I am a sinner and have sinned in my thinking and speaking and acting. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I have counted the cost of following You. I repent and turn away from my past sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. Amen. “

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If it does, pray it right now, and Christ will come into your life, as He promised.

## WHAT NEXT?

The Bible uses two terms to describe what happens when people say YES to God and join His family. This experience, which was explained earlier, is being born again. New Christians are part of God’s family just as certainly as they are part of their earthly parents’ family. He is their Father, and they are His children (See John 3:3-8).

The other term used to describe this relationship is adoption. Even though all humans are born in a condition that inevitably leads to death, Christians are adopted into God’s family and given all the inheritance rights of God’s Son. Because Jesus rose from the dead, those who trust in Him will, too.

Because Christians are part of God’s family, they can feel completely secure. He will not disown them or rewrite His will. He has promised to be faithful to His children, and God always keeps His promises.

As children of God, Christians can have power—power to follow Jesus even when the way is hard, power to make Jesus known to others, power to love and to serve.

His children also have hope. No longer will they fear that death will ruin

their plans and destroy their relationships. Instead, they have confidence that God will raise them to life in a new world where all is life and peace and joy.

Since Christians have opened the door to Christ and have come home to God, they have acquired a new set of spiritual brothers and sisters—God’s other children on earth. It is important for God’s family to meet together regularly. As God’s church with God’s power, we can expect miracles.

## TIME TO GROW

People begin life in God’s family just as they began it in their parents’ family—as babies. Baby Christians need to be nurtured, protected, taught and loved, and the church is the best place for them to gain the support they need to grow tall and strong.

Baby Christians need rich nourishment, and no source is better than God’s Word. The Bible, a collection of 66 books, is a portable library that contains enough nourishment for several lifetimes of rapid growth.

To learn more about God’s love for His children, read the short book of I John, near the back.

To get better acquainted with Jesus, your Savior, read one of the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

To understand more about how Jesus’ death means life for you, read Romans.

To praise God for inviting you into His family, read some of the Psalms (start with Psalm 100).

## TO HELP YOU GROW

To help you grow in this new life, here are some suggestions.

**TELL A FRIEND.** Is there someone you know who would rejoice with you about what you just did—perhaps a pastor or Christian friend? Tell him

or her (through a visit, call or letter). Share the excitement of your new commitment with someone else!

**READ THE BIBLE.** Do you have a Bible or at least the New Testament part of the Bible? If not, buy one in a modern translation.

You can also receive a free Bible from Focus on the Family by writing, Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, CO 80995 or (in Canada) P.O. Box 9800, Stn Terminal, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 4G3.

The Bible is God's Word, His message to mankind, and so it is important to know what it says. Begin by looking up and reading the verses listed in this article. Then read a chapter a day beginning with the book of Mark. Next you could read Philippians, then James and I John. A pastor or Christian friend will be able to help you in your Bible study.

**TALK TO GOD REGULARLY.** Make prayer a habit. This means talking to God about anything, at any time of the day or night. It also means spending a "quiet" time with Him, where you meditate on His Word, tell Him of your love and devotion, and talk to Him about others and their needs. In any relationship, communication is vital.

**GET INVOLVED IN A CHURCH.** Churches are where God's people gather to worship Him together, learn from the Bible, encourage each other and welcome new believers into God's family. Find a church near you that does these things, and get involved. Your church should believe that the Bible is the accurate Word of God, that Jesus Christ is God's Son, that He is fully God and man, and that only through faith in Jesus Christ can a person have eternal life.

You will still have many questions as you begin your new life with God and His family of believers, but now you know the One who has the answers.

## THE IDEAL FAMILY

Homecoming can be a joyous time, even if the pumpkin pie crust is soggy and Great Uncle Herbert has forgotten his table manners. But no earthly homecoming, no matter how memorable, can compare with the

joy of coming home to God.

God's love, after all, is the source of all earthly love. It is stronger and more enduring than love between husband and wife, parent and child, brothers and sisters. At the same time, God's love strengthens our human ties and increases our love for those dear to us.

This article explains why all human beings need God's love. It explains how to respond to His invitation and become part of His family. But there is one thing it cannot do: IT cannot say "yes" to God for you.

If your heart is restless, if you find yourself longing for a home you've never known, if you would like eternal life with Jesus that begins now and continues in heaven where there is no suffering, sin, or death—say YES to Jesus. Join the family. Come home.

[There's no better time than now.](#)

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