



COMING HOME:

An Invitation to Join God's Family



Helping Families Thrive™

*Rushing off to work. Coming home tired. Paying the bills.
Fixing the car. Raising the kids. Doing your taxes.*

*Have you ever wondered, “Is that all there is? Is life just an
endless cycle of eating, sleeping, buying, selling, getting, losing,
and growing older?” Does your heart ever long for something
more?*

*If so, we’re here to help. We want to show you how a personal
relationship with Jesus Christ can lead you home, bring you
into God’s eternal family, and introduce you to life on a whole
new level.*

Sound interesting? Then read on ...

Tom was headed home. He’d been away nearly three years, and it had been a very long drive—almost two days and nights behind the wheel. Now, with just a mile left to go, he could already hear the squeak of Dad’s chair, the clang of pots and pans in the kitchen, and the voice of his Mother calling him to dinner. He could smell the sweet aroma of hot food on the table.

Home. It was where he came from. It was where he wanted to be. And yet, somehow, Tom couldn’t help feeling anxious. Had things changed? Was he still wanted? Would they smile when they saw him? Would he still belong?

Familiar sights and sounds greeted him as he turned into the lane. He parked in the driveway, stepped out of the car, and walked up the creaky old steps to the front door. Biting his lip and swallowing hard, he raised a hand to ring the bell.

And then, in an instant, all his doubts and fears melted away. The door swung open. Loving arms pulled him close. Caring voices called him by name.

“Tom! It’s Tom! Welcome home, son! Welcome home!”

Tom had come home at last.

LESS THAN PERFECT

Everyone longs for a place where they are welcomed, accepted, loved. Where they don’t have to pretend or be on their guard. Where just being there is reason enough to celebrate. But not all homecomings are as picture-perfect as Tom’s. Sometimes there are thorns among the roses.

Sometimes cousin Cheryl is late and the turkey dries out. Sometimes nephew Norbert gets sick at the table. Uncle Art and brother Bob argue about foreign policy. Sister Samantha hints that her kids are better behaved than yours. People disagree and get on each other’s nerves. And that’s how it is in the best of families.

It can be much worse, of course. In some households the imperfections are far more serious—even dangerous—in nature. As in the home where a frightened boy hides under the covers listening to the shouting of his angry parents. Or where a young girl returns from school only to find her mom drunk for the hundredth time. Or where a soldier, back in the States after a ten-month tour of duty, discovers that his wife has been unfaithful during his absence.

FAR FROM HOME

It may sound harsh, but it’s true. Under the best of circumstances, under the worst of circumstances, and everywhere in between, our human homes and families hardly ever live up to our dreams and expectations. They almost always let us down.

What happens then? What do we do when the relationships, connections, and understanding we long for simply aren't there? Everybody knows the answer. We lose hope. We feel isolated and lonely. We become restless. We go looking for something to fill the gap. And sometimes we go looking in all the wrong places.

Sound familiar? If so, you're not alone. A lot of people today feel far from home. They may be divorced or widowed. They may live hundreds of miles from parents, siblings, and cousins. They may be so busy working, commuting, and running errands that they have little time to spend with the people they love. They long for home and family, a place to be and become. But the kind of home they crave seems like an impossible dream—like something out of an episode of *Leave it to Beaver*.

RESTLESS HEARTS

St. Augustine, one of the early fathers of the Christian church, knew what it was like to feel this way. More than 1,500 years ago he summed up the situation of hurting and searching people in the words of a simple prayer. Speaking to God, he said, “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.”

Was Augustine right? If he was, we should sit up and take notice. Because if rest and satisfaction are found in God alone, then even the best of human homes can never bring peace to our restless hearts. The love of father, mother, brother, sister, husband or wife, wonderful as they are, can never completely fill the bill. We need something deeper, broader, and stronger—something perfect and unchanging. We need Someone who can provide for us, listen to us, care for us, counsel us, discipline us, protect us and enjoy us forever—Someone who knows us inside and out, who loves us all the same, who gives unselfishly, keeps all His promises, and never gets sick or dies.

THE IDEAL FATHER

Sound impossible? Humanly speaking, it is. But God can do all of this

and more. He strongly desires to make all people part of His family—a family that will one day be perfect and last forever.

In many respects, God is like a good human father. He loves His children and is pleased when they love Him in return. He provides for them and protects them. He gives them guidance and, when necessary, punishment. He understands their limitations and is quick to forgive. Above all, He is generous and kind. The Bible calls this kindness and 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. Because He is eternal, they never have to fear being abandoned.

WHY DO PEOPLE SUFFER?

At this point you may feel like asking, “If this perfect 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 kind, generous, and gracious Father? If He’s so powerful and loving, why doesn’t He do something about the mess on earth?”

As a matter of fact, He has done something: when the world was spinning out of control and the people in it were lost and dying as a result of their own sins and bad choices, He sent His only Son to save creation by suffering and dying in our place. “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17).

GOD, LOVE, AND RELATIONSHIP

The real question is not “Why doesn’t God do something?” It’s “How did the world get into such a mess in the first place?” The answer is that creation has fallen because of human sin. In other words, the world as we see it today is not the world as the Creator made it in the beginning. That’s because mankind has deliberately turned away from God (for more details, read Genesis Chapter 3). Ever since Adam and Eve made this terrible choice in the Garden of Eden, the world has existed in an abnormal state. That’s why we have disease and disasters, hatred and war, birth defects and broken relationships. It’s also the reason God had to send His Son into the world to save it. He has a better plan, and He’s in the process of working it out.

But why does the process have to be so slow? Why doesn’t God put a stop to all these problems now? One answer is that God is love and love pursues relationship. Relationship is central to all of His dealings with mankind. And real relationship is impossible unless both parties enter into it freely and willingly. It implies the possibility of brokenness and pain. As in any meaningful human relationship, so in our relationship with the Creator, genuine love takes time and can’t be forced.

CHOOSE LIFE

The Bible tells this story of God’s love for His children. In the New Testament—especially in the four Gospel narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—we read that 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.

If you aren’t familiar with this story, its outline is pretty simple. Jesus, who was at the same time completely God and man, was born to the virgin Mary, worked quietly in a carpenter’s shop until He turned thirty, 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. As a result, they conspired to have Him executed and Jesus died one Friday afternoon on a cross just outside the

city of Jerusalem.

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 and walked out of the tomb, right past the soldiers posted by the entrance to prevent His 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 us. Jesus died the death that Adam and Eve and all of their descendants deserve. And when He rose from the dead, He broke the power of sin and brought us life. He offers that life 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).

“Eternal life”—that means two things: 1) life in all its fullness here and now (John 10:10); and 2) the unending joy of life in direct, personal fellowship with our Savior and Creator in the world to come. “As it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him’” (1 Corinthians 2:9). That's what we have to look forward to if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

BELIEVE

What does it mean to “believe” or to have this kind of “faith?” Stated simply, it means reaching out to Jesus. It means trusting in His love. It means making a decision to follow in His footsteps and to love other people through the power of His love.

It's important to add that faith isn't just something that exists in your mind. To believe is to embrace the truth with mind, heart, and will. You express this faith both by what you do (James 2:17, 18) and by what you say: "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10: 9).

In 1892 a daredevil named Clifford Calverly astounded his audience by pushing a wheelbarrow over a tightrope stretched across Niagara Falls. After performing this feat, he turned to the people and asked, "Now that you've seen what I can do, do you believe I can repeat the stunt, this time with a person in the wheelbarrow?" "Yes!" answered the enthusiastic crowd. "Well, then," said Calverly, "who wants to climb in?" Genuine biblical faith means getting in the wheelbarrow and letting Jesus push you across the tightrope—not just standing on the sidelines and saying, "I believe."

WHAT MUST I DO?

A person who has this kind of faith in Jesus is a Christian. And a Christian is simply an individual who has felt the need to come home. You can come home, too, if you're ready to make that commitment. You can become a Christ follower right now simply by opening the door to Jesus and trusting Him as Lord and Savior. It's so easy a child can do it. But it's also hard because we first have to realize that we cannot do it on our own.

Once you've counted the cost and decided that you're ready to give your heart to Jesus, you can do so by following these three simple steps:

Admit you're a helpless sinner (a person who has chosen his own way rather than God's) and that you can't come home without God's gracious help. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Believe that Jesus Christ has come to be your Savior—in other words,

that He died on the cross for your sins and wants to take you home to be part of God's family. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "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).

Receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and ask Him to come into your heart. Turn from self to God (repentance) and trust Christ to come into your life and make you the kind of person He wants you to be. You can receive Jesus by faith through prayer, as an act of the will. God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart; but if you honestly don't know what to say, you might try praying 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.

If this prayer expresses the desire of your heart, pray it right now, and Christ will come into your life, just as He promised:

"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).

WHAT NEXT?

The Bible uses two terms to describe what happens when people say yes to God and join His family. The first is rebirth. New Christians become part of God's family in the same way they became part of their earthly parents' family – they're born into it. God is their Father, and they are His children (see John 3:3-8).

The other term used to describe this relationship is adoption. 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 also rise again. Because they are now officially part of God's family, they can feel completely secure. Their Father 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. They also have hope, confidence, and freedom from fear. They know that death can never ruin their plans or destroy their relationships.

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. Here are a few suggestions that will help you get the care and guidance you need as you begin to grow in your faith:

Tell a friend. Do you know someone who might get excited about the decision you've made—a pastor, maybe, or Christian friend? Tell him or her. Share the joy of your new commitment with someone else!

Read the Bible. Baby Christians need rich nourishment, and no source is better than God's Word. The Bible is God's message to mankind, so it's vital for young believers to know what it says. You can get started by looking up and reading the verses listed in this article. After that, we'd suggest that you make a habit of reading a chapter a day, beginning with the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—they'll help you get better acquainted with Jesus). Next you could take a look at Paul's letter to the Philippians and the letters of James and I John. To understand more about how Jesus' death means life for you, read Paul's letter to the Romans. If you have questions, a pastor or Christian friend will be able to help you

in your Bible study. If you don't have a Bible, please contact us and we'll be happy to send you one.

Talk to God regularly. Make prayer a daily habit. This means talking to God about anything, at any time of the day or night. It can also mean spending a special "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.

Get involved in a church. When you open the door to Christ and come home to God, you acquire a new set of spiritual brothers and sisters. God has many other children on the earth, and it's important that they meet together regularly as a family. That's what church is all about. The church is the best place for infant Christians to find the support they need to grow strong. Churches are where God's people gather to worship, 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 you've already taken the most important step toward getting them resolved – you've met the One who has all the answers. Meanwhile, we hope you'll feel free to call and discuss any concerns you may have with a member of the Focus team. Our staff chaplains would consider it a privilege to speak with you over the phone. You can contact them Monday through Friday between 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Mountain Time at 855-771-HELP (4357). They'll be happy to assist you in any way they can.

THE IDEAL FAMILY

Homecoming can be a joyous time, even if the pumpkin pie crust is soggy and Uncle Joe 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's 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.

We've tried to explain why people need God's love. We've told you how to respond to His invitation and become part of His family. But there's one thing we can't do for you – we can't say yes to God on your behalf.

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.



**WOULD YOU LIKE SOMEONE
TO PRAY WITH YOU?**

CALL | 800-A-FAMILY (232-6459)
MONDAY TO FRIDAY, 6 A.M. TO 8 P.M.