



A Gift for You



Giving Light to Our World

The phone call—the call everyone hoped for, and everyone dreaded—came at 2:00 a.m. “We have a heart for Jacob*,” the voice said. Everyone hoped for the call because twelve-year-old Jacob had been on the heart transplant list for many days, and soon his condition would deteriorate to the point where he would no longer be considered a good candidate for a heart transplant. Then his name would be removed from the list, taking with it his last hope. But on this day, Jacob and his family were about to receive an incredible gift—the gift of a new heart, the gift of a new life.

The Bible tells us that we are all in a situation more desperate than Jacob’s. More than this life is at stake. We have earned eternal death, because the “wages of sin is death” (**Romans 6:23**), and we “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (**Romans 3:23**). When we understand the original language in the previous verse, we realize how desperate our situation is. The words translated “fall short” indicate a continuing action—we continue to fall short.

In good times, it’s easy to convince ourselves that we are really good people—not perfect,

mind you—but not really evil. Then the neighbor gets a promotion and a raise we had hoped for, or he buys a new car, and we discover envy in our hearts. We see a glamorous model or actress and lust makes its presence known. Perhaps a car cuts in front of us in traffic, and we feel a level of anger that surprises us. The more we honestly examine our lives, the more we see our sinfulness.

AN HONEST LOOK

A young atheist and professor at Oxford took a hard look at himself, and felt amazed at what he discovered. He wrote, “there I found what appalled me; a zoo of lusts, a bedlam of ambitions, a nursery of fears, a harem of fondled hatreds. My name was legion” (C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*). Sin, we are told, comes from our sinful hearts. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil” (Luke 6:45). Indeed, our sinful hearts hide our true sinfulness from us, because the “heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9).

We find that, like Jacob, our hearts are the source of our problem. We are not going to get better. No regimen or treatment will help us. Our defective hearts must be replaced or we will die. Jacob had to put his name on a list and wait. No amount of money could purchase what he needed. If no one would give him a heart, he would die.

Our case is similar, but the Bible has wonderful news for all of us in this desperate situation. It assures us that such a gift is available: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)).

Even better, there's no waiting list. This replacement heart is available immediately. Once it replaces our own heart, we will not only continue to live, but we will also enjoy a superior quality of life.

Jacob's family dreaded the call because the procedure involved serious risks. Before the healthy heart could be implanted, Jacob's own heart would need to be removed. Once surgery began, there would be no turning back. With all these thoughts in the back of their minds,

his parents roused themselves in the predawn dark, and prepared themselves and Jacob for the fateful journey to the hospital. Once there, they saw their son wheeled off on a gurney.

We also must go through a kind of death. Just as Jacob had to allow surgeons to remove his own heart before a transplant, so we must give up our natural hearts. We must recognize that we need more than a touch-up here and there, more than a minor adjustment or correction. We need radical surgery. Nothing less will do.

AN EXPENSIVE GIFT

This frightening risk provided one reason Jacob and his parents dreaded the call that a heart had become available. Although Jacob's parents rejoiced at the opportunity for a better life for their son, another, more somber reality intruded. They recognized that the same event that gave them new hope had dashed the hopes of some other family. Jacob's chance at life came at the cost of someone else's death.

Our opportunity for a spiritual heart transplant, for salvation from sin, for a better life here and now, and eternal life hereafter, also comes at the cost of a life. "But God demonstrates

His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (**Romans 5:8**). Notice, Christ died for us not "when we were worthy," or "when we obeyed God's law perfectly," or even "when we became aware of our need," but "while we were still sinners."

Jacob's heart would only get worse without a transplant. His desperate need made him eligible. And he was forced to depend on someone, somewhere, to give him a healthy heart. No hearts were available for purchase, and if they were, he and his family could not afford one. Again, the same holds true for salvation: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (**Romans 6:23**). So we find that the very verse warning us that we have earned death, also announces the remedy as a gift.

IMMEDIATE AVAILABILITY

This new heart, the greatest, most valuable gift in all eternity, can be yours. You need not get on a list. You need not wait. You can have it here and now, simply for the asking. You have seen the steps. Simply recognize your need, confess that you need this new heart, and ask

God to give it to you. There is no magic formula, no set words. Just ask.

Jacob came through his transplant operation in high spirits. He not only had a new heart, he had a new life. But he had to learn how to live that new life. When you receive your new heart, you also will need to learn how to live a new life. God has supplied the church, a community of others who have received new hearts, to help you learn to live that new life. Enjoy the gift!

*Name has been changed.

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TO OUR WORLD**

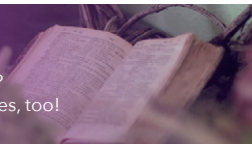


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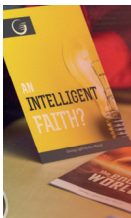
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