
A GIFT
FOR You

The phone call—the call everyone had hoped for—came at 2 a.m. "We have a heart for Jacob[1]," the voice said. Everyone had hoped for the call because 12-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 the procedure. 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, and with it a new life.

The Bible tells us that we are all in a situation more desperate than Jacob's. There is more at stake than this life. 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). The *glory of God* refers to His character, and *fall short* in the original Greek indicates a continuing action. In other words, we continue to fall short of God's ways of selflessness and love (1 John 4:8). This means our situation is truly desperate.

At times, it's easy to convince ourselves that we are good people—not perfect, mind you,

but not really evil either. Then our neighbor gets a promotion and the 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 become aware of our sinfulness.

An Honest Look

C.S. Lewis, reflecting on his years as a young atheist 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."[2] 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 the young man in our story, our heart is 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. God promises us: "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 also enjoy a superior quality of life. Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The joy Jacob's family felt when they got that phone call was tempered with some dread, 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 these thoughts in the back of their minds, his parents roused themselves in the predawn darkness and prepared themselves and Jacob for the fateful journey to the hospital. Once there, they saw their son wheeled off to surgery.

In a similar way, before we can experience life, we also must go through a kind of death. Just as Jacob had to allow surgeons to remove his own heart before he could receive the transplant, so we must give up our sinful heart. 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. We need a new spiritual heart. Nothing less will do.

An Expensive Gift

While Jacob's parents rejoiced at the opportunity for the better life this transplant would give 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 life.

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 someone else's 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 would never have been able to afford one. So again, the same holds true for salvation: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). The very verse warning us that we have earned death also announces the remedy. The difference is that the gift is absolutely free!

Immediate Availability

This new heart—the greatest, most valuable gift in all eternity—can be yours. You don't need to get on a list. You don't have to 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 also 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. That's why God established His church—a community of people who have received new hearts—in order to help those of us newly come to the faith to live that new life. Experience and enjoy His immeasurable gift!

Endnotes

[1] Name has been changed.

[2] C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (Harcourt Brace & Company, 1955), p. 219.

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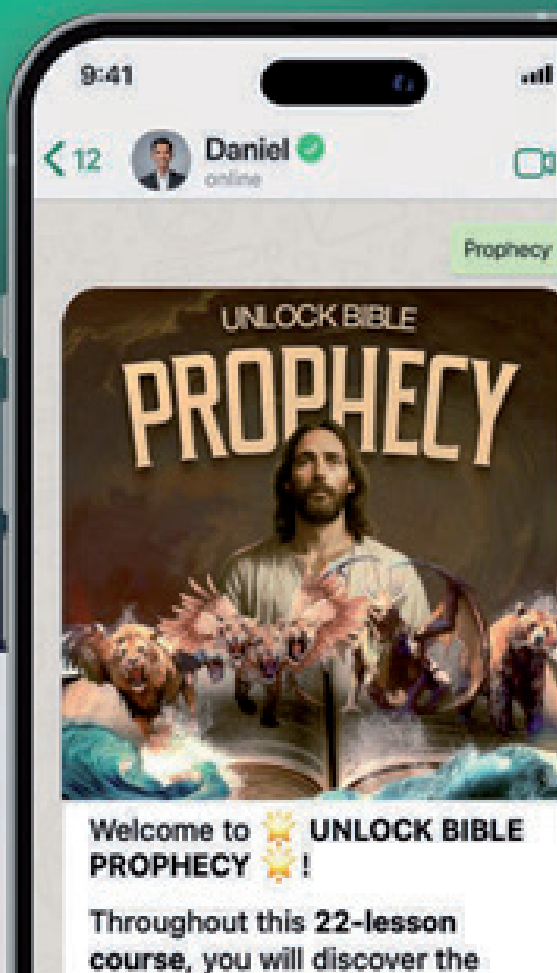

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