

## PREFACE

I want this book to be a finger pointing, a voice speaking, a pen writing, and a life reflecting the glory of our great God. But where do I begin? How do I start telling the story?

Back in the late eighties, God gave me many opportunities to preach in rural Tennessee churches. On a few occasions, people came forward to entrust their lives to Christ or renew their commitments to Him. After the church services concluded, I always made an effort to help these people understand their decisions, providing encouragement and a few helpful hints for their Christian journeys. I wanted to give them some material to point them in the right direction, but never took the time to purchase some literature to pass on to them.

When I moved to Dallas in the early nineties, I frequently spoke with strangers on the street about Jesus. During a rare moment, God allowed me to help someone accept Christ. We knelt and prayed right there at the bus stop. Actually, the kneeling was the young man's idea; he didn't fear what people thought. After we finished praying, I asked him a few questions to make sure he understood what following Christ really meant. I then encouraged him to read his Bible, pray, and get involved in a church. We swapped phone numbers and went our separate ways. After several days passed, I called him to discuss his new faith. We arranged a time and place to meet so I could get to know him and informally teach him some basic biblical principles.

I drove to the agreed upon meeting place but couldn't find him. Later, over the phone, we planned another meeting. Yet again, we failed to meet. Eventually, we lost contact. Unfortunately, not only did I fail to build a relationship with him, but I never gave him reading material to help him grow spiritually. I didn't know if he owned a Bible either. Upon realizing this, I determined to buy some biblical material that I could carry with me when sharing my faith. As I browsed Christian bookstores, I found plenty of material but nothing that suited what I wanted to read through with new believers.

Therefore, in the latter part of 1990, I seriously considered writing my own material, and in the summer of 1993, I put my thoughts on paper. I never dreamed that more than a decade would pass before I considered my work complete.

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This book seeks to explain and apply spiritual principles to the reader's life so he or she can fellowship with the Lord and live out truths presented in the Bible. In this volume, I attempt to discuss major biblical doctrines in a concise manner, explaining issues in a way that new believers with little or no background in Christianity can understand. In addition, mature Christians can find it a useful reminder of the things they hold dear. Hopefully it will also serve as a valuable reference work for later consultation after the first reading.

This is not a book on *how to teach* believers, but a book *to teach* believers, either in a one-on-one situation or a group setting. This material, however, is not a substitute for a personal mentor and should only serve as a supplement to discipleship (helping people follow Christ). Nevertheless, life offers occasions in which one leads another to Christ and, because of uncontrolled circumstances (i.e., time or distance), cannot disciple him or her. In these cases, this material would be ideal to give to that person.

This book contains purposeful limits. Since a volume this short could never adequately deal with all of the critical aspects surrounding major doctrinal issues, I include a suggested-reading bibliography for further research. Each chapter concludes with a summary, assignments, and a few questions for thought and discussion.

With a work like *Growing Up in Christ*, the reader's head might be filled while his heart remains empty. More than anything, I hope this book stirs passion in the heart of the reader for God's glory, a passion which results in a global vision for spreading the message of God's redeeming love among all the world. May God accomplish this in our generation.

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***To God alone be the glory!***

KLH

"God is the highest good of the reasonable creature; and the enjoyment of Him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. . . . Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows; but the enjoyment of God is the substance."

Jonathan Edwards

(1703-1758)

*The Christian Pilgrim*

"Grant, O Jesus, that I may love You more than I love my relatives and friends. That all my efforts be centered in knowing You, loving You and imitating You. O God of love, grant that I may love You as I should; that is, with a love which surpasses all other love. Amen."

Thomas à Kempis

(1380-1471)

*The Imitation of Christ*

"Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

Apostle Paul

(First century A.D.)

Ephesians 4:15-16, New International Version