

iChoose His Way

Connecting with
Christ in Our Youth

Hannah Rayne

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Foreword

From time to time, a book emerges that helps unlock the secret of successful living. *iChoose His Way* is a key in your hand to open the door to life abundant—a life of power and peace that was promised us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

I first met this young author, Hannah Rayne, when she was a shy, nine-year-old girl. This occurred six years ago when I interviewed her parents at Three Angels Broadcasting Network. Knowing the grueling travel routine they maintained for ministry, I wondered how Hannah would fare growing up in this environment. Would she be resentful? Would she rebel? Or would she fall in love with Jesus?

This book reveals how she opened her heart and allowed God to draw her into an intimate love relationship with Him. How did the Lord become her source of strength, joy, and fulfillment? He revealed to her His love and taught her the value of absolute surrender—of letting go of the reins of control and allowing Him to direct her life. God taught Hannah the secret of His plan, which is total dependence upon His love and power.

Perhaps you don't live in a similarly nurturing environment with Christian parents as Hannah does. From personal experience, I know how much more difficult that makes understanding God's way. Do you long for life to make sense? Would you like to silence the enemy of your soul who strives to bring you down? Are you looking for purpose, for power, for direction, and peace of mind? I promise you God has a plan for your life, and it is better than the one you are living. Through the insight of this book, you can find His path for life—the path where you find joy in His presence.

Hannah has written with uncommon wisdom. *iChoose His Way* functions as a testimony to the glory of God's grace. I wish this wonderful resource had been available to me when I was a teenager. It took me nearly fifty years to learn the life-changing lessons that are revealed in these pages. I pray you will, like Hannah, choose God's

way so that you can avoid the many pitfalls and heartaches that result from walking in the ways of the world.

It is evident that wisdom is not a matter of age, but rather of experiencing a relationship with the God of infinite love. The next generation is in good hands—the hands of the almighty God of heaven.

—Shelley Quinn

*Christian Author and Co-Director, Word Warrior Ministries
Program Development Manager, Three Angels Broadcasting Network*

The Answer to All Our Longings

I am come that they may have life and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

All of us have a longing for fulfillment and real happiness. Each of us wants a friend who is always there, who truly loves us, someone we can call our best friend. But is this possible?

I have good news for you! It is possible for us to find real fulfillment. We *can* be truly happy. There *is* someone who wants to be our best Friend. There *is* an answer to all our longings.

A living relationship with Jesus is the answer. He is able to fulfill us, like no one else. Our relationship with Him will grow, as we learn to love Him more. He will be a best friend to each of us. Through Jesus we *will* be satisfied.

From my own experience I have found this to be true. My relationship with Jesus is the most valuable relationship in my life. Jesus brings me joy unlimited. He brings me true contentment. He is truly my very best Friend. Yes, I have found that Jesus gives me more happiness than I find anywhere else.

Are you wondering how a relationship with Jesus can produce such joy? Let me explain. True friends bring us great joy, and I have found in Jesus a true Friend. When I need someone to talk to, I talk to Him. When I am disappointed, I tell Him all about it. When troubles arise, He is my comforter. As a young person, I am finding that though I have many wonderful friends that give me great happiness, Jesus gives me the highest form of joy. Only Jesus can remove our burdens, but please don't think that I am any different from you. I have many of the same struggles you have.

When I was younger, I didn't recognize how much joy this relationship would bring me or how much I would need it. I thought that it would be too hard. If you are feeling that way, I understand.

Yet, as I have grown older, I have begun to recognize that I will not be truly happy unless I choose to have a deeper relationship with Jesus. I saw that when I did what I felt like, and not what He wanted me to do, I was not satisfied. I had many friends who had a close relationship with Jesus, and they seemed so happy. I wanted the peace and

happiness that I saw in them. Even though I loved Jesus, I recognized that my relationship with Him was not deep enough.

When I came to the realization that I really did need a deeper relationship with Him, and that it would give me joy and fulfillment, I began to seek for that relationship. I greatly wanted to please my Savior, and in so doing I would please my parents, and my brother. I found it to be the answer that has filled me with love for Him and great happiness.

To illustrate the way the Lord fulfills our desires, let me share with you an experience I had. Ever since a very young age, I wanted a kitten—one of my very own. I prayed about it for years. For me at that age, it was my longing. My parents had promised me that when I finished fourth grade, we would look for a kitten. So I worked quickly to get that grade done.

One day my mother and I went to the feed store in our town. While there, one of the employees told us about a friend of hers that had kittens that she was giving away. I started getting excited. When we got home and called the lady, she sent us some pictures of the sweet little gray kittens. We quickly called her back and “reserved” one of the kittens as we were due to travel the next day and would not be back for ten days. I was thrilled.

Several weeks later we went to her house and picked up my little, five-week-old kitten. I was so thankful to the Lord for answering my prayer, even when my kitten woke me up at midnight and wanted to play. Jesus wanted me to know how much He loved me. He knew that I had prayed for this kitten for years, and He knew it was a big thing for a ten-year-old. He truly loves us so much.

Now that I am a bit older, it’s not a kitten I long for—it’s bigger things. For the longest time I wanted to learn to play the harp. This seemed quite impossible to me since I didn’t have enough money to buy one. I had a friend who played the harp, and I had shared with her my desire to play the harp. I didn’t know that she had a beautiful smaller harp that she wasn’t using since she had gotten a larger one.

A few weeks later she told me that she had been praying about it, and in talking with her parents and my parents about it, she had decided to loan me her harp. I was so excited. I had never thought this dream would come true until heaven. The harp, however, was back at their home 1,700 miles away. God had that figured out too.

The Answer to All Our Longings

One morning there was a knock at the door, and there was my friend, her family, and the harp. I was thrilled. How had my friend been able to travel 1,700 miles to bring me the harp? I was so surprised. God had worked it out that they needed to come to our area for some business, and they were able to bring the harp along. I was so encouraged at how God had answered two prayers that seemed impossible to me. He truly is a miracle-working God. It has since been my pleasure to seek to play my harp for His glory. God answered many of my prayers by giving me a harp—because He loves me and wants me to be happy!

Jesus loves you so much and wants to put real happiness into your life too. In case you are thinking that Jesus only supplies our material longings, let me assure you that He has answered to overflowing my longings for happiness, fulfillment, and friendship. He will do the same for you if you let Him.

Satan has tricked many of us into thinking that a relationship with Jesus will be too hard, and too many of us, including myself, have believed his lie. Yet I am learning day by day what a lie this is. Although there are conditions that we must follow to receive the fullness of God's promises, we will find that those promises are true.

Jesus longs for us to come to Him to find fulfillment. He knows our needs. He wants us to know of His love for us. He wants to satisfy our longings and give us joy. Yet He can only do this as we are willing to pursue a relationship with Him. He will be our tender, compassionate friend if we let Him. He loves us more than we could dream, and He knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows just how to make us happy and give us a life of accomplishment.

I have found in my relationship with Jesus that He will do more for me than I could ask. As I look back on the last few years that I have been seeking to honor the Lord, I see that He has always been there for me, planning my life so that I may be satisfied, fulfilled, and happy. He has given me more joy and peace of mind than I thought possible, and I know that living life with Him is the only real way to be truly happy, for I have found that when I leave Him behind and try to do things on my own, I lose all real happiness. Jesus said, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:19, author's paraphrase). If Jesus could do nothing on His own, how can we? If I had a hundred lives to live, I would want to live every one of those with Jesus. I want to see the new

ways He knows would make me satisfied and happy and the ways He provides for me to serve Him as long as I am willing.

Jesus wants to be the answer to all your longings. He wants to have a close relationship with you. He wants to be your best Friend. He gave His life to save you, so that you may be eternally fulfilled and happy. He is waiting for you to search for a relationship with Him so that He can manifest Himself through you. He wants to make you happy, exceedingly happy. He wants to do more for you than you could ever dream. He is waiting to bless you abundantly, above what you could ask or think (see Ephesians 3:20).

Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). He came to give you life, but not just an ordinary life, He wants you to have an abundant life—a life with abundant joy, love, peace, and fulfillment. He wants the best for you—the very best beyond what you can imagine.

I cannot promise that you will never face trials because you will. Jesus knows that we need trials to help us grow, so He allows them to come our way (see chapter 13). Therefore, in every trial you face, He will be right there with you to sustain you. He is the ultimate answer to all your longings. He has promised “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).

So right now, why don't you offer up a prayer to Him? Ask Him to show you His love for you and to give you a deeper desire to seek that relationship with Him.

In the next chapter we will be talking about *how* to develop a real relationship with Jesus, one that is truly fulfilling and that will satisfy your longings and mine.

Learning to Love Him

We love him, because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Jesus, our Savior, was willing to leave His heavenly home for you and me. The more I contemplate that love, the more I love Him, and want to thank Him for being so good to me. In this chapter we will look at God's amazing love for us and how that affects us all.

About two thousand years ago on an inky black night, something happened that began a chain of events, forever changing the history of all mankind. For many that night passed unnoticed and without honor, but for you and me, it should hold our keen interest. That night the Savior of the world was born. His earthly parents were humble people who battled with poverty, and sweet baby Jesus had no crib to sleep in that first night. Although He is our King, He lay sleeping in a manger. Why did the King of Kings come here amid poverty?

Jesus, our precious Savior, had left all His glory in heaven above to save sinful man. He had left His Father, whom He had always been with and loved dearly, to save us. He gave up all He had for us. Instead of being adored and honored by the angels, He willingly lay in a manger for you and me. What a loving Savior!

Not much is told to us of Jesus' childhood, but we do know from inspired records that He faced ridicule and taunts from his brothers; yet, He endured the jeering with humility. When He turned thirty, He left His home in Nazareth and His earthly family to tell others of His love for them. For more than three years He healed multitudes, not only physically but also mentally and spiritually. It was His desire that His Father would receive the glory, not Himself. He said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify thee" (John 17:1). Crowds flocked to hear Him speak. His words imparted life to them, for He spoke as no man had ever spoken before (see John 7:46). His tender love for the suffering ones of humanity drew many to Him.

Not everyone, however, appreciated Him. At the young age of thirty-three, He was crucified for you and me. He took all the sin of the world upon Himself so that we might be free. He was treated in the way we deserve so that we may be treated like He deserves.

Even when the soldiers were driving the nails into His hands, He said “Father, forgive them they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). He hung there on the cross, mangled and bleeding for you and me. He was willing to take our sin upon Him, even though He had never before felt the crushing weight of the burden of sin. He was willing to die, even though the reality of His rising again and seeing His Father seemed very dim. He was willing to do it for you and me.

Jesus would have made that sacrifice, even if it was just for you. He would have left His Father to be born here in a sinful world as a helpless baby even if only you needed to be rescued from sin. He would have died just for you! He loves you far more than you can comprehend. The sacrifice He made for you that day, though it happened more than two thousand years ago, is still very real. His love for us is just as strong and true now as it was then, and He is just as ready to help us today.

So how does this story affect us? It easy to hear the story of Jesus over and over again; yet, often our hearts are not touched by His great love. How do we come to love Him?

First of all, we must recognize our need of Him. As a little girl, I did not fully recognize my need of parents as I do now. It wasn't that I didn't appreciate them, but it never crossed my mind that if it wasn't for them I would have nothing to eat, for at that age I couldn't earn my own money. I didn't think about the fact that I wouldn't have anywhere to live because I couldn't buy my own house. I never thought that I would likely not have clothes because I couldn't afford them. I had no concept of all the work a parent must do or of all the time and training that parents put into their children.

I can almost hear myself saying, “Mommy, why do parents have it so easy, and we children have to do all the hard stuff like school and chores? All you have to do is cook and clean.” Looking back, it seems so foolish because I realize how immature I was and how little I knew. I no longer think that it's so easy to be a parent and that I have it harder than my parents do. I am thankful for all my parents do for me, and I have a deeper appreciation of how hard that really is. I recognize my need of parents.

Our relationship with the Lord is exactly like this. We need to come to the point where we recognize that of ourselves we can't be truly happy and successful. We will prove to be a failure without Him.

I know that I have not always recognized my need of Jesus. It has only been in the last few years that I have recognized that of myself I can't be truly happy or successful. If it were all left to me without His help, what kind of young person would I be? I can tell you I would not be who I am today. With Him we can excel and become wholesome, happy, successful people. He has made provision for our happiness and success. He gave up everything He had to come and rescue us, to help us, for He knows our weaknesses. The first thing we must do so that we may love Jesus is to recognize our need of Him. If we don't recognize our need of Him, His sacrifice won't mean very much to us, and we won't love and appreciate Him as we should.

The second thing we can do to obtain a deep love for Jesus is to ask for it. In chapter four we will discuss prayer more fully, but here is just a little glimpse into our need for prayer. Jesus wants us to love Him; He tests our faith to show us our deep need to love Him. We do not need to ask Him to love us, for He already does, but we do need to ask Him to give us a deep love for Him. He longs to put that love for Him in our hearts. He also wants us to be in earnest when we pray. So when you pray, don't just ask once; persevere until you have received the love for Him that you ask for (see Matthew 7:7).

I pray often that the Lord will give me a deeper love for Him, and He often tests my faith. I am thankful for this because as I pray more earnestly, my desire to love Him increases. Never once has He failed me. He has answered my prayers in giving me love for Him.

I still remember one day that the Lord answered my prayer to teach me to love Him in a beautiful way. We had been in the car for hours, and it seemed like everything in my day was going wrong. I had been irritable and felt like I failed the Lord. As I was sitting in the car looking out the window, praying for the Lord to give me the courage to serve Him, the most beautiful rainbow I have ever seen appeared. It was so bright. It was just as if the Lord was right there telling me how much He loved me and that He was with me.

As I continued to watch the rainbow, it got brighter and brighter. Then I realized it was a double rainbow, just as God's love for me is more than twice as much as I could ever imagine. The rainbow disappeared, but then it came back even brighter. It seemed so close to the car. It was the brightest rainbow I had ever seen and a beautiful symbol of God's great love to me, which is far deeper than

I will ever know. It inspired me to allow Jesus to grow my love for Him, the One who first loved me, and I was encouraged that I could serve Him.

God is longing to give you a love for Him. He loves you so much. He will answer your prayers for love for Him, just as He did for me. Though He may not always answer your prayers in the exact way you think He will, He will always do it in the way that He knows will be best for you. He is a God of infinite love.

We need to recognize how much Jesus loves us, and what a great sacrifice He made for us. We must also recognize our need of Him, just as I needed to recognize my need of my parents. Finally, we must pray earnestly for that love for Him. So right now, why don't you ask the Lord to help you recognize your need of Him, and ask Him to give you love for Him. He is waiting to hear your request. Will you pray this prayer with me: "Dearest Jesus, please help me to recognize my need of You today. Please fill my heart with love for You. Teach me love You as I should, for You love me so much. In Your name, I pray. Amen."

Going Deeper

Repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Mark 1:15)

Jesus lived a perfect life from beginning to end. He never failed, doing everything in accordance with His Father’s will. How different life’s story is with you and me. We often fail and make choices that we later regret. Unfortunately, we do not always do God’s will, but more often than not, we follow our own will.

Each of us has had this experience. We have all made mistakes and done things we wish we hadn’t. When we are seeking to love the Lord, we wish these things could be forgiven. The question may be confronting you, “Can my sins really be forgiven?” Yes, there is good news for you. Your sins can be forgiven, and you can rise to live a life of victory. There is hope, beautiful hope for you. In this chapter we are going to examine repentance, forgiveness for our sins, and how to begin a different life—a life of surrender.

1. Repentance

The first step we must understand before seeking forgiveness for our sins is repentance. We must be truly sorry for our sins. In your mind’s eye, I want you to see with me a picture of Jesus suffering on the cross, for you. See the blood flowing down His head, pierced with the crown of thorns, for you. See His hands and feet stabbed with the nails, for you. See the look of pain written in darkest hues across His face, for you.

Hear His mournful tones, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). Feel with Him the heartbreaking pain of separation from His Father, His best Friend because of your sins and mine. See Him suffer the pain of the cross, the darkness that pressed in on Him that led Him to ask the question and wonder if He would ever see His Father’s smile again. Remember, this was all for His erring children—you and me. Please know that He would have made that sacrifice even if you were the only one who had ever needed a Savior. We can never merit such love, such a sacrifice, but we can let Him change us—just now.

Today, instead of turning away and breaking that bleeding heart again, we can fall at the foot of the cross and ask Him to make us sorry,