



## Newton on the Christian Life: To Live Is Christ

*Tony Reinke, John Piper (Foreword)*

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John Newton is famous for his legendary hymn “Amazing Grace.” Many have celebrated his dramatic conversion from a life in the slave trade to his eventual work to end it. But often overlooked are Newton’s forty years as a pastor ministering to parishioners and friends unsettled by the trials, doubts, and fears of life.

Newton is perhaps the greatest pastoral letter writer in the history of the church. He took up his pen day after day to help others fix their eyes on Christ, which, he writes, is the underlying battle of the Christian life. Through a careful study of scores of letters, Tony Reinke brings together Newton’s brilliant vision of the Christian life in one accessible place.

“Here is mastery! Reinke distills a vast flow of pure honey for the Christian heart. This is a book to read over and over again.”

—J. I. Packer, Board of Governors’ Professor of Theology, Regent College

“Newton on the Christian Life is a magnum opus. A bold project, beautifully done. You know about John Newton; now you can be pastored by him.”

—Ed Welch, counselor and faculty, The Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation

“Linger long here. The depths and riches within these pages are truly rare, and answer what your soul most hungers for: life in Christ. I will be returning to this book many, many times over.”

—Ann Voskamp, author, New York Times bestseller, One Thousand Gifts

“For some readers, this book may just become the most important book, outside the Bible, they will ever read.”

—Ray Ortlund, pastor, Immanuel Church, Nashville, Tennessee

## **Newton on the Christian Life: To Live Is Christ Details**

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## From Reader Review Newton on the Christian Life: To Live Is Christ for online ebook

### Spencer R says

You can read my full review here: <http://wp.me/p3JhRp-zt>

Crossway's Theologians on the Christian Life series wants to fill our lack of "perspectives from the past, perspectives from a different time and place than our own... [When] it comes to learning about and practicing discipleship[, it's] like owning a mansion and choosing to live in only one room. This series invites you to explore the other rooms" (Series Preface). The aim of the TotCL series isn't to give us biographies nor full-blown theologies of each man. They are "an exposition of each man's view of the Christian life" (Storms).

Tony Reinke writes this volume on the ex-sailing slave trader turned devoted follower of Christ, a man who Packer calls, "the friendliest, wisest, humblest and least pushy of all the eighteenth-century evangelical leaders, and was perhaps the greatest pastoral letter-writer of all time." (Foreward).

John Newton was focused on the Christian participating in the joy of Christ. This was especially important because, like Paul, we have "conflicts on the outside, and fears within" due to the immense trials we face. The trials consist of physical hardships, inner turmoil, anxieties, fears, and the indwelling sin that remains. Newton gives good reasons for why the Christian still has sin remaining and how God will use that for his glory and our benefit, mainly, we will know him better. Newton is concerned with the Christian's defeating not only the big sins, but the small blemishes as well. Christian "[trials]are medicines of kindness applied to serious diseases called indwelling sins." But victory can be found our spiritual weariness brought on by life, and victory of Mr. (and Mrs.) Self. We can battle and have victory over our insecurities because the Lord is on our side and is fighting for us.

### Recommended?

?My one complaint is that I had a difficult time finding any sort of structure while I was reading the book. The chapters themselves were excellent, but I didn't really know why they were ordered as they were. But that aside, this book is highly recommended. If the rest of the series is this good, then every volume is worthy of purchase.

We are not to think that 21st scholars, pastors, friends, and parents are the products of all that have come before us and are, therefore, wiser and more insightful than our previous ancestors. The way we choose to live as Christians speaks volumes to the world around us. Let us not pass up this opportunity.

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### Jon says

John Newton once said, "There are silver books; and a very few golden books." This is true. Gold is hard to come by. And I have found this book by Tony Reinke on John Newton to be golden. In reading it, Newton and Reinke pastored me profoundly. Both of them did, because, as John Piper writes in the Foreword, "the voice of Tony Reinke and voice of John Newton...become almost indistinguishable..,because Tony has absorbed the spirit and mind of John Newton." This book captures the source, essence, and phases of

maturity of the Christian life with unusual clarity, illumination and warmth.

I fear this book is getting lost in the sea of publications and obscured amongst its companion books in the Crossway series of which it is a part. So I'm waving my hand here and calling out, "There's gold here! I found one of the few golden ones!" I hope you'll pick it up and read. You'll find out what I mean.

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### **Matt Chapman says**

Wow! This book is so richly Christ-focussed and edifying. A new favourite of mine and one I'd like to revisit regularly.

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### **Daniel Budd says**

Beautifully written. A real treasure. John Newton (through Reinke's labours in reading and digesting his many letters) has stirred me to cultivate a gospel-simple heart, to look to Jesus more frequently, and to delight in him as my all-sufficient Saviour. So so good.

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### **Brittany Kauflin says**

This is a book I wish every Christian could read.

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### **Robin says**

What a treasure of a book! Reinke did an amazing job collecting quotes and themes from John Newton's life. Newton, if you didn't know, wrote the famous hymn, "Amazing Grace." I read this book along with my devotions and boy, did it stir my affections for Christ every morning! Every page is Christ-saturated and dripping with the amazing grace that saves, keeps sanctifying us and that will bring us home. Newton believed and depended on Christ's sufficiency all the way to the end and said famously before his death, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior." Amen! Lord, help me believe both of these truths deeper and deeper!

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### **E says**

I really admire John Newton and his pastoral heart, as exhibited in his rich and warm letter writing ministry (perhaps the greatest of all time). Yet, since Newton was an occasionalist, not a systematician, a book like this is a bit of a tough fit. Reinke has clearly read a ton of Newton, but it still felt like I read the same chapter fourteen times. There was little narrative drive. This has been an issue in a couple of other entries in this series, but this is the worst so far.

I should say something good: the chapter on trials was excellent, for it was really about God's sovereignty

and providence. Newton's teaching is famous, and aptly so: "All shall work together for good: everything is needful that he sends; nothing can be needful that he withholds." Do we really believe this? Do we trust that everything that comes into our lives, no matter how painful, is for a good reason? And can we be content with what God has chosen not to give us, no matter how badly we might want it? If so, we can face anything. The rest of this chapter addresses specific reasons that God provides trials (and these reasons are quite insightful), but it all comes back to this core truth.

The rest of the book is decent, but don't miss the chapter just highlighted (chapter 9).

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### **Mark Nenadov says**

I've been plunging into several William Cowper biographies lately, and I'm amazed at how bitterly many of his biographers hate John Newton. As I've read the perspectives of, say, Hugh l'Anson Fausset or David Cecil, I see transparently festering contempt for Newton. So, when I received this volume on John Newton in Crossway's "Theologians on the Christian Life" series, I was ready for a refreshing change. I knew Tony Reinke has a sincere appreciation for this man and his legacy. After such unveiled contempt, even a little hagiography would be excusable!

In this series, thus far I've read the volumes on Jonathan Edwards, Martin Luther, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I generally appreciated and enjoyed them, though I also found some weakness in each of them. I had no desire to nitpick, I just really expected more. And, so, beginning this book, I've been very interested to see how it would measure up.

John Newton (1725-1807) made a lasting contribution to the Christian church when he penned the words to the hymn "Amazing Grace." However, there is a rich store of resources from the pen of John Newton which have gotten much less fanfare over the last three centuries. Newton's placement in history at the point at which "the Post Office had developed to the point where letter delivery was more affordable and reliable than ever" allowed him build a substantial letter writing ministry. These one thousand or so letters rivaled his sermons "in both substance and usefulness."

Tony Reinke has submerged himself into this vast quantity of letters in an attempt to show that Newton was, indeed, a theologian, and then presents for a popular audience the essence of his theology. Reinke shows Newton as a "spiritual doctor," or more specifically an expert in "cardiology," a student "of his own heart and the hearts of others."

The first and most enduring impression I had upon reading this book was that Newton exalted the supremacy, centrality, and glory of Christ. Christ, to him, is the "priceless treasure" that seeps through all of what he writes. "Like an unceasing echo, the theme of Christ's super-abundant grace is heard in everything Newton writes" Newton "will not allow us to abstract the Christian life from Christ" and so, a book on Newton's view of the Christian life is largely a book about Christ. This emphasis seeps through all of what Reinke writes about Newton! Here you can really see how Reinke has steeped himself into Newton's work and does a fantastic job of bringing this emphasis out.

I would like to highlight a few portions that were especially helpful: There is an excellent discussion of "gospel simplicity" (Simplicity of Intention/Dependence). The discussion of seven types Christians with character flaws is excellent and convicting (Austerus, Humanus, Prudens, Voatilis, Cessator, Curiosus, and Querulus). Don't let the Latin trick you, the observations in this section are extremely concise and simply

explained! The chapter on “Discipline of Trials” is also excellent and very thought provoking!

Upon reflection, I’ve concluded that this is the best book in the series, a fair amount better than the works on Edwards, Luther, and Bonhoeffer. Each has remarkable strengths, but none I have read in the series yet measures up to this one. The only notable weakness I would point out is perhaps connected to its strong points. Reinke has submerged himself in Newton’s letters and masterfully described his theological thinking, but he has perhaps not given enough space to show how that theology worked itself out in practice, both in his life’s decisions and also in his pastoral advice on specific topics. Some of the exploration of Newton’s theology could have been tied a little tighter into concrete events in his personal or pastoral life. At one point towards the end of the book Reinke intimates that there is much more to be said about Newton on topics such as friendship, fellowship, marriage, discerning God’s will, etc. I think that rings true, and I am left wishing Reinke devoted some space to these subjects if he could do so without too severely truncating his coverage of Newton’s theological thinking.

Reading this book is certainly profitable from a devotional perspective. It also is a helpful volume if you want to better understand the theological emphasis of 18th century evangelicalism. On both accounts I can sincerely recommend it and I hope many Christians read it, not only to know John Newton, but ultimately Jesus Christ, who he so vigorously pointed to.

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### **Jeanie says**

**We become by beholding. “by Beholding we are gradually formed into the resemblance of Him whom we see, admire and love.**

It was hard to choose a quote that reflected the heart of this study of Newton because there was so much and so much of it was good. Newton strived for one thing and that one thing was Christ. As his writing suggests, the one thing we fight for is not an easy to obtain as so much of life detracts us from Christ.

We may all know the hymn that John Newton was famous for *Amazing Grace* however; do we think on the inspiration of those words that were penned. John Newton had the confidence and the freedom to face his own personal sins directly because he also knew the grace of Christ to walk away from those sins. I appreciated his words on indwelling sin and how God desires for us to feel the weight of that sin so that all we have and know is Christ. It is always our union with Christ that frees us from sin. It is God’s grace that the very thing that keeps us from God (sin) drives us to him our confession and our union with Christ.

In an age where programs are king and the gospel is secondary, it is uplifting in the writings and study of Newton to see the Gospel in simplicity in living in the glory of God alone. *It is the man who drinks deep at these streams will not thirst after other waters. When we behold Jesus and his love by the eye of faith, we may, with the Prophet of old, sit down by a barren fig tree and a failing crop, and still rejoice in the God of our salvation.*

John Newton is the example to live is Christ. John Newton had all the temptations as we do and had succumbed to his temptations as well, however, in knowing the Glory of Christ in grace and the depth of his sin, each time has died to himself and lived thru Christ; all in the simplicity of the Gospel.

*A Special Thank You to Crossway Books and Netgalley for ARC and the opportunity to post an honest review.*

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### **Jonathan Sussex says**

I enjoyed reading this book, the author does a great job in presenting the Theme that encapsulated Newtons life, To Live Is Christ. You dont notice when Tony Reinke transitions from Newtons words to his own which makes it flow well. There is endless encouragement for the christian in these pages.

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### **Tom Wilding says**

A new favourite of mine - really Christ-centred and therefore warming. Chapter 4 on 'gospel simplicity' was fantastic!

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### **Rex Blackburn says**

Finished 1/14/17

Finished 7/3/17

It has been a very long time since a book has done so much for me. Reinke has done a great service to the church by opening up the lines of pastoral communication between us and John Newton. In an age of instability, relativism, and rampant self-centeredness, Newton points us over and over to the person of Jesus. By doing so, he places every category of the Christian life under a single heading: 'To live IS Christ.'

Newton, with Reinke's help, has pointed me back to the North Star of the Christian life: Jesus. I plan on re-reading it this month, using it as a foundational text in discipling others, and returning to it often. PLEASE read this book!!

And thank you, Tony Reinke, for such a gift.

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### **Shawn Yoder says**

This is the first book in the series "Theologians on the Christian Life" that I have read. And if they are all this good, then I'm going to be eating them up this year.

This was one of the best books I have read in a very long time. I can easily see this as a book that I come back to over and over again throughout my life and am already looking forward to reading it again. My copy of this book is covered in underlines, exclamation points, and boxes. Reinke did an excellent job in capturing the heart of Newton's theology, and his commentary on Newton blended in with direct quotes from Newton so that you thought as if the whole book was written by Newton himself.

Christ-centered is a catch phrase in today's Christian subculture, but Newton truly embodied it. To live is Christ is more than simply the subtitle of this book on Newton, it was the dominant theme of the life of Newton.

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## Zach Barnhart says

This is the third book from Crossway's tremendous Theologians on the Christian Life series that I've both read and now reviewed. After reading Dane Ortlund's work on Jonathan Edwards in January, then Carl Trueman's take on Martin Luther in February, I arrived eager to read Tony Reinke's approach to John Newton. This has been the title I anticipated reading more than any other from this entire series. This was only Reinke's second book written, and I knew little about John Newton's ministry apart from a few sporadic events and quotes of his life. I was coming into this book with virtually no prior persuasion. I walked away from it feeling utterly persuaded to soak myself with more of Reinke's work, more of Newton's letters, and most of all, more of Christ Himself. I'll expound on these three subsequently.

First of all, Tony Reinke is the perfect fit for writing a "pastoral synthesis." It is obvious he was diligent in researching for this book?—?this book was in the works for nearly three years. Few could take on the daunting task of not only sorting through a thousand of Newton's letters, but also delivering them through an accurate and precise scope on the man that is John Newton. To do this, Reinke lets Newton do the talking and steps to the side, a trait so many authors should strive to replicate. Reinke writes JNXL in such a way that makes the reader feel like he's reading an autobiography of Newton, not a narrated take and opinion piece on his life. It was not simply reading about Newton, but nearly like reading with him (most chapters had 50+ citations of Newton's words!). His brilliant use of metaphor and allegory faithfully complimented Newton's teaching, making the two a dynamic duo in proclaiming Christ's goodness clearly to the reader. Tony: I cannot thank you enough for humbly laboring to bring us a passion for getting to know the authentic John Newton.

Not only was I impressed with Reinke's skill in this project, but as I've alluded to, I don't know if I've ever been more motivated to dig into the work of a theologian after reading a summary of their life/theology. What I appreciated most about Newton's life was his unceasing assurance of both his humanity and the power of grace. Pagan of all pagans, Newton never let himself forget what he was; not a successful minister, not a wordsmith, but a great sinner saved by great grace. I believe in every quotation of Newton in this book, one theme holds them all together; Christ is all. Newton's life serves as a deep breath of oxygen for the Christian. If Newton could be saved, we must be encouraged. Also, his dedication to ministering through meek, diligent, tedious, and private letters instead of lofty, fame-seeking, public acts of gain encourages church leaders and pastors with placing primer on abandoning prosperity for faithfulness. I want to be a pastor like Newton, but not because he was famous or notable?—?quite the opposite. I want to faithfully serve the Lord, day by day, in the small and quiet, continually reminded of His grace in my own life and the lives of others.

Finally, this book has pushed me to be thankful for the all-sufficient, long-suffering Christ that I know and love. In studying theology and holding to a Reformed view, it becomes easy at times to make faith academic study instead of treasured warmth for our soul. Reinke displayed Newton well, and Newton displayed Christ well, and Christ has revealed Himself through this book, and made it abundantly known that He is all in all (Col. 3:11). Since I finished Chapter 4, called "Gospel Simplicity," this has been my prayer every morning, a quote from Newton:

"May [I] be enabled from henceforth to serve him with a single eye and a simple heart, to be faithful to every intimation of his will, and to make him [my] All in all!" (124).

This will hopefully become the daily prayer and plea for me when I roll out of bed and crawl back in. As I

pursue ministry, trials are sure to come, faith is sure to get difficult, circumstances are sure to look grim. But this word, and the life and character of Christ, well-reflected by Newton and Reinke, will be sure to get me through. To live is Christ.

Recommend this book? Absolutely. It's my favorite of the series thus far. But I must warn you: Be ready to become aware of the depths of your depravity without the Redeemer, and the heights of the glory of Him. Be ready to be enraptured in the life of a slave-trading seaman who was blind but now sees. Be ready to make much of Jesus, to sing with Paul in his letter to Philippi, "To live is Christ." Reinke does it well. Newton does it well. This book pushes us to do the same.

Stars: 5.0/5.0

I was provided this book via Crossway in exchange for my review.

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### **Kara says**

It took me three months to finish this book... not because it was slow or boring at all. It caused me to think so much and required a lot of journaling and self-reflection. I loved it. It was like being discipled by both Tony Reinke and John Newton at the same time. I will definitely be re-reading this another time.

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