



DYING TO **LIVE**

THE PARADOX OF THE CRUCIFIED LIFE

CLIVE CALVER

In a world where the message of Jesus can be dumbed down into being just another feel-good consumer product, Clive Calver calls us back to the fabulous upheaval and daily revolution that is the cross-centered life. Timely and incisive, yet warm and kind, Calver charms rather than chides. But make no mistake: this is nothing less than life-changing.

Jeff Lucas

Author, Speaker, Broadcaster

In his new book, *Dying to Live*, Clive Calver brings the reality of his life experience in dynamic fashion backed up with powerful, biblical exposition and application. He invites you to a closer relationship, seeking God for yourself, and God alone. You will be challenged with the centrality of the message of the cross and bringing all of life in line with the gospel. The fullness of Christ's work as Savior and Lord leads you to be a risk-taker and provides a practical challenge for life transformation as you die to live so that you will never die.

David M. Midwood

President

Vision New England

I have known Clive since my student days, and we've traveled countless miles and stood on numerous platforms together. I've watched the path he has taken and shared in many of his joys and sorrows, as he has in mine. I can assure you that this is not just another book, but the record of a quest for authentic Christianity.

With wisdom and compassion, Clive strips off the layers of "lacquer" that have obscured the rough wood of the cross and rendered it safe from the splinters that might pierce our comfort-loving flesh or disturb our religious consumerism. If you too are searching for the real thing, read on.

Graham Kendrick

International worship leader, speaker, and performer

One of the founders and the songwriter behind the global phenomenon

March for Jesus

The examples of everyday men and women throughout this book help the reader to realize that a follower of Christ who has died to himself will be a life-giver not only to the spiritually needy community in North America but also to those whose lives and hopes have been devastated by imposed poverty or by natural or man-made disasters such as genocides and ethnic cleansing in many countries where Dr. Calver has followed Christ. *Dying to Live* is an inspiration showing how a surrendered and Christ-centered life results in changed lives for eternity.

Celestin Musekura

President and CEO

African Leadership And Reconciliation Ministries, Inc.

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Dedication

There are four small groups of people with whom I pray:

The “Elms”—leaders and learners in our community

The “Bulldogs”—those of unique determination to keep going with me

The “Elders”—those who share authority and accountability within the local church, even at 6 AM!

The “Blokes”—those shaping each other, together, for twenty-seven years

To each I am deeply grateful and dedicate this book as a statement of a shared desire: to teach each other what it means to live a more crucified life.

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Foreword

In the first years of our ministry, Becky and I lived in a parsonage (a house supplied by the church). It was very small and very leaky. But we were so thrilled to be married and to have someplace to live that we didn't notice those little imperfections. I earned only a few thousand dollars a year, so we thought this house was a palace! It even had a garbage disposal. How rich we felt having a machine in our sink that would grind up all the garbage and make it go away!

One day the garbage disposal stopped working. The garbage started decaying, and life was getting smelly. We did not think we could afford a licensed plumber to fix the problem. So I tried everything I knew to “unstick” the disposal. But I am not mechanically inclined (that is an understatement), and nothing was working. Life became quite unpleasant with the odor of what was in the disposal and with the work of “taking out the garbage” of daily. Finally, we didn't care what it cost; we had to call for trained help.

The plumber came to our house, went straight to the kitchen, looked under the sink at the disposal motor, hit a red

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button that read “reset,” flipped on the switch above the sink, and the powerful garbage disposal worked as good as new! He then looked at me and said, “That will be fifty dollars.”

It was an expensive lesson that has never left me. Since that time, the first thing I look for in anything that is not working is a “reset” button.

This book is one giant reset button for the most important area of your life.

Most of us first trust Christ because we finally realize that we need God to do for us, and in us, and through us what we cannot do on our own. And so there is a great deal of relief, even exhilaration, when we trust that Christ has paid for our sins and we invite the Christ who made the universe to fill us with his life!

But then something happens that indicates our live is again not working so well. So we take over and try to fix what we know nothing about, and life gets filled with the very garbage God had taken away.

Clive Calver is about to remind us of something we have the power to do: hit the “reset” button. Re-depend on Christ. Re-focus on him and his life in us. His power will be re-engaged. And it’s free (as well as freeing)!

Dr. Calver is just the right one to take us on this journey back to the original and powerful Way, Truth, and Life. He has led great ministry organizations, such as World Relief, which cares for the most destitute. He has written many books of spiritual insight. He is pastoring a church in which he shepherds people’s souls. These qualifications might fit our need: we are

desperate people looking for spiritual insight that will lead us to God's care.

Remember as you read this book that it speaks to a very personal journey. Clive does not write as an academic, but as one who is as needy as we are. Ultimately, the Christian life is not about what is or is not working; it is rather about who we really are in Christ, and who he is in us. The Christian life is not mechanical; it is personal. And the life God has for us is not about being good, it is about being loved.

I will be reading this book with you. It seems that I need the “reset” button quite often too. May the person and power of God fill our lives and clear away the garbage.

Joel C. Hunter, D. Min.

Senior Pastor, Northland—A Church Distributed

Thank You

Eucharizomai is the Greek word for “thankful.”

Today is Thanksgiving Day and therefore very appropriate. No book can be a “solo” effort, and this one certainly is not.

Charizomai means “to give” and *eu* means “good”; so together they mean “to give good,” “to show kindness,” or “a good gift.” On this Thanksgiving I want to acknowledge those who contributed their love and kindness in the hope that this book would result as “a good gift.”

So I express gratitude to Alison and the Authentic team in the U.K. who began the process and to Volney, Dana, and the U.S. Authentic Publishing Group who kept going with me through the good times and the not so good. Volney, your encouragement and commitment were stellar; I am so grateful.

Serving a local church has given to Ruth and me so many reasons for joy. One of the greatest is sharing life with so many others. This was certainly true of the book. Matt Baumgartner and Jamie Marshall researched the “Parabolani.” Donna Budd, Bev Carr, Marguerite Enslin, Dr. Jey Jeyapalan, Laura Kennedy, and Rich Rardin comprised the prayer team.

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Critical reading and initial corrections were provided by Lori Angel, Gary Arnone, Bev Carr, John Coyne, Paul DiMarco, Charles Galda Jr., Paul Hine, Dr. Jey Jeyapalan, Barbara Nelson, Joy Norman, Jennifer Ober, Karen Petersen, Bob Pious, Deb Priolo, Melissa Shaw, Steve Tanenbaum, and Joann Wright. I did not always agree with the corrections, so I cannot thank them enough for all the ways they made me reexamine the text.

Then to Trish Rocuzzo and my assistant, Leslie Goodwin, who typed, reshaped, retyped, and corrected all the corrections. To Bev Carr and Anna Mae Sholtes who tried to shape, adopt and move the material to a more coherent whole. To these I give my deep appreciation.

Then there are those who gave great practical support. Much of the book was written in the Dominican Republic; and Anja, with the staff at Lifestyle Holidays, did a great job encouraging and supporting me with help in many ways. And of course to Señor Alessandro, “Sandy,” goes my thanks for cup after cup of coffee and for his attentiveness through early mornings of writing in the balcony restaurant overlooking the sea.

But . . . to my darling Ruth and to my colleagues on staff goes my gratitude for just “living with me” through the process. And I give thanks to the Lord who birthed a desire in me so many years ago—one that is reflected in these pages.

Finally, to Andy Sloan, the editor Authentic provided. I cannot thank you enough, Andy, for the tireless support and incredible abilities God has given you. Without you, I don’t think this could have happened.

THANK YOU

The final word of thanks goes to Clay Norman, the chairman of the Elder Board and my friend, who coordinated, encouraged, prayed, and believed in this.

To you all, one word: *eucharizomai*.

Hungry

THE DISAPPOINTED CHRISTIAN

Do you remember your excitement as a child when you crawled into bed Christmas Eve and wondered what the morning would bring? Over and over you imagined what it would feel like to unwrap that special gift! You could see the colors, you could feel the texture—it would finally be yours. Months of hints and suggestions would bring delight. The waiting was nearly complete; Christmas morning was almost here!

When you ran down the stairs and looked under the tree, you saw that special gift, which made you giggle as you danced around the tree. But perhaps it wasn't there, and you experienced disappointment when you expected joy. Your parents knew your hope but made a different choice based on their understanding—even though it was painful. A playful puppy might replace the dream of a pony, or a special dress might appear instead of the

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hoped-for playhouse. Perhaps a bicycle was leaning against the wall instead of a Nintendo.

Do you remember when your dreams didn't match what you received?

When I was a child I begged to go away to boarding school. My parents were kind and loving in trying to dissuade me from this desire, but the books I read painted it as a life of fun and excitement. I was warned that there was a gap between my mental image and the truth, but I felt I knew best. I should have listened. Boarding school failed to match my expectations and became a tremendous disappointment compared to what I had envisioned.

We often construct our own picture of what life should be and how it should turn out. We try to shape the path ahead. Sometimes our vision is fulfilled. But sometimes life doesn't turn out the way we hoped, and we may not know why.

Hungry for More

A young man met with me to discuss his spiritual life. He began by sharing about the failure of the local church to meet his needs. As we talked further, he revealed more of his heart's longing. "Surely there is more to this whole Christian thing!" He had recognized a basic tenet of the Christian life: it's not enough to live the same life as before we met Jesus, with Bible-reading, church, and praying added on.

At least once a month I talk to people who love Jesus but are disillusioned about their spiritual condition. They come to Christ to drink from the well of new life, yet their thirst remains.

This isn't what they expected, and their disappointment is obvious. They aren't rejecting what they were given, but they wonder, "Is this all that's available? Why didn't I get what I expected?"

Some blame themselves for lacking commitment and question whether their faith is really genuine. Others experience emptiness in their Christian life and wonder if that is normal. Some see advances in their professional or family life, but they cannot understand why there seems to be so little progress in their spiritual life. Terms like "stagnant" and "standing still" are used. Such awareness is uncomfortable. Why hasn't the Christian life met their expectations for spiritual growth, and how can they satisfy their craving for the Christian walk to have a deeper impact?

The nineteenth-century British novelist Charles Dickens told the sad story of a young orphan boy named Oliver Twist. Confined to the workhouse, Oliver is placed under the care of Mr. Bumble, an authoritarian taskmaster. Because the children are forced to work so hard and are fed so meagerly, they are perpetually hungry. Finally the children can stand the hunger no longer, and Oliver is selected to light the torch of revolt. He reluctantly approaches Mr. Bumble with his empty bowl to ask, with childlike innocence, about the possibility of getting more. The mere request is enough to throw the workhouse staff into panic. No one had ever possessed the courage to ask for more!

Do you sometimes in your spiritual life feel as Oliver felt? Do you want more from God? Are you hungry for a deeper relationship with him? If so, please read on.

Awakening

Summer in England may be a brief season, but a walk on a warm day in the wooded hills just outside London, as the sun sinks on the horizon, can turn your thoughts toward heaven. Many years ago, as a young preacher, I wandered on these hills late one afternoon. Although I was reflecting on heaven, my life at the time felt more like hell on earth. It had taken me a long time to become a Christian. Now, five years later, even though I had been ordained and was seeking to serve Jesus, it was proving hard to remain a Christian.

I desperately wanted Jesus to make me into a different kind of person. I knew where I *wanted* to go but felt impotent and frustrated in my efforts to arrive there. I had been promised the transforming power of Jesus, yet somehow it never materialized enough for me to really become different. I understood only too well the words of the apostle Paul, “What I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. . . . I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out” (Romans 7:15, 18). This realization was beginning to tear me apart.

Frankly, my faith was head knowledge that had not really connected with my heart. If it had, then I would not have been so hungry for more.

Desperately Seeking the Real Thing

Walking alone that summer afternoon, I was comforted to remember that Jesus really is all he claimed to be. I found it reassuring to rehearse the evidence of my faith. Yet this remained just theory. There had to be more I could *experience* than I had

discovered so far. I had tried different systems, programs, and ideas. I had searched the “higher Christian life,” the “basic Christian life,” and much in between. Still this seemed to feed only my mind. I was tired of sermons and spiritual thoughts; I longed to know God and was not satisfied with secondhand experience.

Then it hit me between the eyes as I sat on a grassy knoll reading a little book that had been recommended to me. Majestic words of the twentieth-century Chicago pastor A. W. Tozer came as a bolt from the blue:

In this hour of all but universal darkness one cheering gleam appears: within the fold of conservative Christianity there are to be found increasing numbers of persons whose religious lives are marked by a growing hunger after God himself. They are eager for spiritual reality and will not be put off with words, nor will they be content with correct “interpretations” of truth. They are athirst for God, and they will not be satisfied till they have drunk deep at the fountain of living water. This is the only real harbinger of revival which I have been able to detect anywhere on the religious horizon. It may be the cloud the size of a man’s hand for which a few saints here and there have been looking. It can result in a resurrection of life.¹

1. A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 1982), 8.

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For the first time, I recognized the truth. I was looking for a resurrection in my Christian life. The only problem was that I hadn't foreseen that resurrection is necessarily preceded by *crucifixion*. There has to be a kind of death before one can be resurrected and enter into new life.

The truth was, all the time I had been looking in the wrong direction. I had been searching for something new to *add* to my spiritual life, but God wanted to *subtract* my intrusive will and replace it with his will. The prerequisite for God to work in my life and to renew it was that I willingly lay down my life. No two individuals can be masters in a house at the same time. In the same way, two competing priorities cannot be held by one person without creating spiritual schizophrenia. When God lives his life in us there is no room for two independent spirits. One must submit to the other.

As the wind ruffled the grass around me, I knelt in humble appreciation that Jesus did not come just to *teach* me how to live—he wanted to *show* me how to live. He showed us how to die and that death would come through a cross. There he revealed the secret of the “crucified life.”

Life Begins at the Cross

That day on the hill I learned that the Christian life does not grow by acquisition from God, but rather by surrender to him. I cannot receive all that he longs to give me until I first make room for him to work in my life. Resurrection follows crucifixion. It dawned on me that Jesus' death on the cross achieved two things: how to die, and how to live. The cross didn't mark

the end; instead, it marked a new beginning for all who would be introduced to a crucified life. God desires our unqualified devotion. Crucified love is his gift to us. Resurrected life with God is his purpose. He requires that we, too, live a crucified life.

Such a life is surrendered—sacrificed to Jesus and broken of self-will. It is dead to our own desires and lives for his glory rather than our own. That is the life of a disciple: our power exchanged for his, making us fulfilled and fruitful. A crucified life realizes the dreams and hopes laid before us in God's Word and energized by the Holy Spirit.

This truth poses a major problem for many of us. For far too long we have been presented with a version of the Christian faith that majors on what we get rather than on what we give. The cross has been portrayed as the place where Jesus died for us and where we receive from him, but rarely is it shown as the location of our joint crucifixion with Christ.

The uncomfortable truth is that Jesus calls us to share his cross. He said that “anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:38). Jesus explained that he was not going to do all the dying so we could comfortably enjoy all the living. He insisted, on the contrary: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). This rigorous challenge comes at the beginning of faith, not halfway along the journey.

We have become accustomed to Christian literature that outlines programs and processes for changing our lives so that we may benefit more from living for Jesus. This was never what Jesus intended. His purpose was not to call us to a glib

“easy-believism.” Instead, he challenged people to come and die, a death that was not intended to be an end, but a beginning. This explains the words of Jesus, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39). Instead of using self-discipline and hard work to conform our will to God’s will, we can live by his power and life within us.

So how do I live the crucified life? It all begins at the cross. There I abandon control of my own life and surrender it into the hands of the one who died for me. Then I stop trying to live for Jesus and start allowing him to live his life through me. This is the crucified life. Perhaps this does not seem attractive, sounding too much like hard work. Actually the opposite is true, for the wonder of it all is that through a crucified *death* Jesus offers the only doorway to resurrection and to a crucified *life*. As I die to myself, Jesus creates new life in me and through me. He begins to exchange my energies, desires, abilities, and passions for his! This is a whole new life, one that starts with a cross.

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At first glance this appears to be a contradiction. Here, however, is the supreme paradox. For how can life emerge from death? How can a person die and live simultaneously? How can the suffering and disgrace of the cross ever be regarded as something with a wonderful outcome?

On that sun-dappled afternoon in England, I first glimpsed the understanding that Jesus does not require my best effort. Instead, he wants to live *his* life in *me*. He doesn’t want to improve the old version; he wants to *replace* it. When I came to

that realization, my world exploded. No longer did I search for textbooks on how to live. I had discovered the great, liberating truth that Jesus simply wanted to live *through* me.

As I stood, brushed off the grass, and left the hillside behind, I could scarcely believe what I had discovered. I saw the landscape of my life in a new light. The Christian life was not a teller's counter from which to withdraw gifts from the bank of heaven for my own benefit. No, this was the place to invest my life, for God's glory.

It was becoming clear that Jesus' death on the cross had achieved two things: it showed me the way to live, and it showed me the way to die. This meant that I could start to live through Jesus' life within rather than work on self-improvements in my old life. I could exchange his life for mine.

Luis Palau, the Argentinean-born evangelist, has spoken about the deep discouragement he felt early in his relationship with God. He recalls how one day as a young man he was reduced to feeling "fit to quit." He felt inadequate for the challenge God had given him to go and change the world. He knew he lacked the required personal resources. The awareness of this inadequacy did not prove to be solely negative for Luis. Far from it! This realization proved to be the doorway to a deep surrender that would transform him into a man God could use to touch hundreds of thousands of people.

When we stop trying to prove or to improve ourselves, God can step into our lives in a fresh way. When we allow the Lord to reduce us to a position where we too are "fit to quit," then he can do a deeper work in our hearts and lives. When we stop

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searching for ways to change ourselves, we prepare for a journey of discovery into all that *he has for us*—not what *we have for him*.

The death of our old nature must precede new life. This is not, of course, about taking our lives physically. Instead, we surrender our inner nature and priorities for a higher purpose. In essence we die to ourselves in order that we might live for God. We follow the instruction of a father who sacrificed his son and who desires that we lose our lives so that we may find them again.

As Paul phrased it for the early church, “Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:3–4).

Only the life of the risen Lord Jesus vividly displayed in you and in me will make a difference. We may *want* to change. We may even *expect* to create godly change within ourselves. True change, however, will never result from our human efforts.

Beyond the Cross

How do dying and living embrace each other in the “crucified life”? How does the paradox become resolved? Like a valuable gemstone, the Christian life has various facets. Each chapter of this book deals with one facet.

- **Crucified**—I view my life from a cross. I offer my spirit and inner nature to be renewed by the one who first gave me life.

- **Surrender**—I abdicate the throne of my life to Jesus’ reign and rule.
- **Disciple**—I follow the only leader worthy of my devotion and service.
- **Sacrifice**—I gamble my life, but not with dice. I risk my life for God’s purposes.
- **Giving**—I lose my priority of self-interest for service to others.
- **Exchange**—I transfer my life to Jesus, exchanging it for his life in me.
- **Dying**—I die to myself so that Jesus can enable me to live for him.
- **Broken**—I pour out my life and love in appreciation for the love given to me.
- **Spirit-Filled**—I know that God himself lives in me, and I experience the glorious roller-coaster ride of life in the Spirit.
- **Fruit**—I live a transformed life that is productive and gives me the excitement of seeing results in my Christian walk.
- **Destiny**—I receive life from God not to waste it, but to live for a purpose—a glorious purpose!

In all of these facets Christ speaks. He offers life from a cross for me to share: a *crucified life*, the only antidote to the “do-it-yourself” religion I tried for so long.

You could say that my friend Ted was born with a guitar in his hands. His passion to play music was reflected in a career of clubs, bands, and solo performances, punctuated by the

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occasional steady job and paycheck when things got desperate. He desired musical excellence, and as a result he had a successful career as a professional musician. Despite success in his career, Ted experienced sickness in his family, rejection at work, and the disappointment of unfulfilled musical dreams that brought him as low as he had ever been.

It was then that Ted faced the cross of Jesus. He found, to his surprise, that Jesus hadn't died simply to bring him the good life he wanted. Instead, Christ asked Ted to join him! A joint crucifixion was not the life Ted had anticipated. Nor were his problems disappearing. He continued to need God's strength and care, but his life was starting to change.

The men's ministry at church needed a worship leader, so Ted reluctantly stepped into the role. Looking back, he recalls, "We sounded nothing like the professional, album-cutting worship team I envisioned." He wanted to leave his post, but the Lord reminded him that a crucified life does not act on its own desires. It cannot—it is anchored to a cross.

Ted humbled himself, as Jesus did on the cross. Today, the Lord reveals himself through Ted's music ministry; and Ted is glad he chose to remain a worship leader. Others recognize that his life has changed, and Ted is experiencing true inner joy. He still reminds himself, "It isn't about me and my musical ability; it is about God and his glory."

In dying to live, we are introduced to the joy of resurrection.

Prayer ► Lord Jesus, it is incredible that you not only died *for* me but you also expect me to share in that death. And thank you, Lord, that it does not end there. Please help me to relax in your love and allow you to live your life through me. Introduce me to the joy of knowing and living a crucified life. Amen.