

Destiny: Saved for a Purpose
Adapted from *Hero Tales, Volume II*, by Dave and Neta Jackson

From slave trader to slave himself, John Newton surrendered his life to the Lord, became a minister, worked to end slavery, and wrote many songs. His most famous hymn, "Amazing Grace," stills touches the hearts of many today.

One day when I was young I went horseback riding with some of my friends. Suddenly, a large bird flew up out of the grass near the trail with such a whir of its wings that it scared my horse. The horse reared up and threw me off. I landed on my back on the ground. The thud knocked the breath out of me.

As I gasped for air, I noticed that I had landed just inches from some sharp stakes that could have killed me if I had hit them. Someone had chopped down a hedgerow along the trail. The dried pointed stumps of the tough little trees created a bed of sharpened spikes each a foot long. If I had landed on them, they would have pierced straight through me.

My friends said I was just lucky, but I remembered my mother's words about God's love—that God loved me and had a purpose for my life.

But I soon forgot this lesson and went on with my selfish life without any thought of how God might want me to live.

A couple years later, I and some other boys decided to row a little boat out into the river to see a big warship that was anchored there. We planned our adventure for the next morning, but being lazy, I overslept and arrived at the river late.

The other boys had grown tired of waiting for me and left without me. They were already out in the boat laughing and yelling and having a great time. I yelled and screamed for them to come back and get me, but they only called insults at me. "See you later, John Boy," they cried. "Why don't you fix us something nice to eat for when we get back."

I was so angry that I stomped back and forth along the bank calling them names. If I'd known how to swim, I would have dived in and headed after them.

But as I watched, a couple of the boys stood up in the boat, and the boat tipped over. All kinds of splashing followed as the boys scrambled for safety. Finally, a boat was launched from the warship to rescue them before they drifted downriver and out to sea.

But by then, my best friend had drowned.

In my grief over the death of my friend, I realized that if I had been in the boat, I would have drowned, too, because I couldn't swim. God had saved me again! But still I paid no attention.

Years later when I was made a slave in Africa, I was treated so badly that I almost died. But again, just in time, I was rescued. Why was God always saving me? I still didn't take time to think about the question.

Finally, when I became a ship's captain, a terrible storm nearly sank my ship. This time, I remembered God and prayed for help. When God saved my ship, I finally realized that God loved me and had a purpose for my life.

Discovering your destiny—what God has planned for you—begins by believing that God loves you and has a special purpose for your life.

