



WHEN LIFE DOESN'T LINE UP

—

AMY BAKER

“I have found in my own counseling ministry that perfectionism is a major problem that dominates the lives of too many Christians. It robs them of their joy in Christ and makes them difficult to live around. Dr. Amy Baker has poured into this critical work great wisdom that comes from years of her own personal counseling ministry. Her approach to this destructive problem is refreshingly insightful because she takes the sufficiency of God’s Word seriously. Not only does this enable her to unscramble the real problem biblically, but it also enables her to prescribe practical answers with Scriptural insight.”

Dr. John D. Street, Chair of the MABC Graduate Program,
The Master’s College & Seminary; president, the Association of
Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC)

“I’ve been a pastor and counselor for over twenty-five years now and this is a book I’ll be handing out! Christians sing about amazing grace, but too often still live by the law of their own hard work and perfectionistic striving. Amy’s done a great job tackling an issue that flies right in the face of the Gospel and God’s grace but seldom gets addressed head-on or with the insights that Amy brings to this subject. She exposes not only the hub of the perfectionistic heart, but so many of the related sinful ‘spokes’ that are connected to this one heart issue—guilt, fear, pride, anxiety, and heightened sensitivity to criticism. And she diagnoses and explains it all so well with practical examples and clear, biblical teaching. Amy doesn’t just point out the danger; she shows you where and how to get free and rest in God’s grace. This book brings you back to the only perfect person—our Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Brad Bigney, MDiv, Pastor, Grace Fellowship in Florence, KY;
ACBC certified counselor; author of *Gospel Treason: Betraying the
Gospel with Hidden Idols*.

“I counsel, rub shoulders with, and too often resemble Taylor, Ian, Penny, Li (‘not satisfied with the way God set up his universe’—ouch!), and the rest of the compelling, real-life situations Amy Baker unpacks.

The tension she addresses is inescapable: God commands perfection but our ongoing sin prevents it. We then respond with anger, frustration, anxiety, and guilt. Without removing this tension, Baker uncovers the heart disorders beneath the many strains of perfectionism and she carefully provides Christ-centered, biblical counsel for each.”

Robert D. Jones, MDiv, DMin, Professor, Southeastern Seminary; author of *Uprooting Anger* and *Pursuing Peace*

“If you care about not just *what* your counselees or congregants hear, but also *how* they hear it, this book is for you. With a gracious and encouraging tone, Amy Baker connects and applies the believer’s identity in Christ with the empty promises of striving to live by perfect performance. Amy uses personal stories to demonstrate both the practicality and ability of living life in and through the power of the gospel.”

Kevin Carson, DMin, Pastor, Sunrise Baptist Church, Ozark, MO; Professor of Biblical Counseling, Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary, Springfield, MO

“Amy Baker has written a skillful and insightful book to help the perfectionist. Her illustrations are good, and the Scriptures that she uses are practical and powerful. As an exhorter, Amy uses her God-given gift to help turn the perfectionist from self-centered introspection to God-centered praise. I thank God for this book and Amy’s heart for God’s glory. I look forward to using it in my counseling ministry.”

Martha Peace, Biblical Counselor; author of *The Excellent Wife*

“In this book, *Picture Perfect*, Amy has given biblical insight into a form of legalism, self-righteousness, and a performance-based way of living that subtly and perhaps not so subtly turns people away from living in the richness of God’s grace through Jesus Christ. And more than that, she has also shown the effects of this attitude on the person and others with whom this person associates. Having done that, she then goes on

to prescribe a realistic and very helpful biblical plan for overcoming this self-righteous, performance-based way of living. I already have some people in mind to whom I will recommend this book.”

Dr. Wayne Mack, Strengthening Ministries Training Institute,
Pretoria, South Africa; pastor/elder of Lynnwood Baptist Church,
Pretoria, South Africa

“Amy Baker has written a book that strikes at the root of those of us who still act like we live under the law. Perfectionism is a yoke God never intended for anyone to carry. Amy helps us to see where we have put performance over relationship, where we have tried to prove our worth rather than live under God’s amazing grace. I would highly recommend this book for those who don’t just need to ‘lighten up’ but instead are ready to surrender and rest in the perfection of Jesus knowing His yoke is easy and His burden is light.”

Garrett Higbee, PsyD, Executive Director of Biblical Soul Care

“I am so thankful that Amy Baker has taken decades of counseling experience and turned it into this wonderfully helpful book. Loaded with Scripture and practical application, this book is just what you need to combat the bitter roots of perfectionism growing in your heart.”

Heath Lambert, Executive Director of The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (formerly, NANC); associate professor of Biblical Counseling at Southern Seminary and Boyce College; author of *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace*

Picture Perfect

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When Life Doesn't Line Up

AMY BAKER



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To Jeff—my beloved

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Foreword

Early in my counseling career I had the privilege of working with a young woman whose boss was at his wit's end with my counselee's behavior and was on the cusp of firing her from her job. The problem was—my counselee was obsessed with never making a mistake at work. For example, if she copied something wrong on the copy machine, she would bring the wasted piece of paper back to her desk and stare at it in a trancelike state. She defined a successful day at work as never making a mistake. As you can imagine, she had a lot of bad days. Her boss was a patient enough fellow but he simply could not tolerate a secretary who stared at papers instead of actually doing her job.

At first I thought this woman must be making this up. No one could be that focused on being perfect, could they? As is often the case in counseling however, the more I thought about her situation, the more I began to see ways that I too often focused more on my performance than on the finished work of Christ and my joyful, secure position in Him. I am now convinced that the Lord allowed me to work with that particular perfectionist—my counselee—so I could get a better picture of this particular perfectionist—me.

Amy Baker has done all of us a tremendous service by unpacking this insidious tendency. With love for the Lord and extensive case wisdom,

Amy develops the issue of perfectionism in a way that is winsome, biblically sound, and practically helpful.

I would encourage you to read this book first to counsel yourself and then second to counsel others. It really is true—the best counselor is first a good counselee. If you read these chapters and think you do not need to hear them (i.e., you are perfect), then you probably need to read them again!

This book will help you place less focus on your own righteousness and more on the imputed righteousness of Christ. You will find yourself saying with John the Baptist, “He must increase but I must decrease” (John 3:30). You will also find that the principles in this book really work. Amy is a seasoned counselor and has spent decades working with real-life people struggling with the very issues she is addressing.

I have had the privilege of working with Amy in our church’s biblical counseling center for over twenty-five years. Her life is perhaps the best endorsement for the book: she lives and loves Jesus. All of her coworkers consider Amy to be a kind, gracious servant who humbly acknowledges weaknesses as she joyfully rests in the merits of Christ.

By God’s grace, my former counselee handled her perfectionism well. Every so often I hear from her and her husband as they update me on what is happening in their life and ministry. It is always such a delight to see her smiling face—a smile that I know comes not from a never-ending pursuit of her own perfection, but in a satisfaction and amazement in the completed perfection of her Savior.

Steve Viars

Introduction

Years ago I heard a woman teaching on perfectionism say something like, “God doesn’t expect you to be perfect.” When I heard her say that, I was puzzled. I do know that no one is perfect, (Romans 3:10), but there are places in the Bible where God says we should be perfect (Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:16). On the one hand I understood what my teacher meant—that God knows we can’t meet his standards on our own, but at the same time, her comment stirred me to study why so many of us are drawn to perfectionism and what God really does expect from us.

I found that understanding perfectionism was far more involved than I had imagined. And, not surprisingly, I also found that I needed to deal with my own heart and life in the unpacking process.

Have I Left Jesus Behind?

Elyse Fitzpatrick asks, “In my pursuit of godliness, have I left Jesus behind? Am I more focused on my performance for him or his for me?”¹ As Christians it’s possible to live out our beliefs without a conscious acknowledgment or awareness of his presence. The person and work of the Redeemer becomes secondary to what we’re focused on—

living the Christian life. We become primarily focused *on us*—on our performance, our spiritual growth.

I realized how easy it is to focus on “living for Jesus” and think little about what Jesus has done for me. I could get so busy striving for godliness (of course always my own version of “perfect”) that I didn’t ever think about what Jesus did for me. I was in a race, but I’d forgotten why I was running—love for Jesus.

When that happened, I gave higher priority to my performance and my efforts rather than my relationship with the One who gives me the grace to work. Relationship was minimized; performance was maximized. What I accomplished took on a life of its own, and I was in danger of seeing what I got done, rather than Jesus, as the source of my perfection. I could tell that was true by how I became frustrated and sometimes paralyzed when things didn’t turn out the way I expected or wanted. I had to learn and relearn (daily!) that my only perfection is in Christ—in his perfect record applied to my account. Yes, growing in godliness is important, but that growth needs to occur in the context of a relationship that has the right goal and motivation, otherwise my work can’t be perfect (no matter how hard I try to micromanage all the details to get things just right) because it’s done in my name and for my goals.

Through this process, I have understood more clearly what I need to say to myself and others who are struggling to live the picture-perfect life. I’ve been reminded that I’m running the race of this life for Jesus and with Jesus. I spent much time thinking about his love that covers over all I do badly and all I do with the wrong motives. I’ve discovered both how far I fall short and the freedom that comes from trusting in who Christ is and what he has done, instead of who I am and what I have done. That’s a weight off my back! I’m hoping that, as you read this book, you will also learn to live in the freedom that comes from faith in Christ. Faith, simply put, is trusting in the work of Another. If you are struggling with perfectionism, I’m guessing it’s quite hard for you to trust anyone but yourself. But as you come to Christ by faith, you will find he is absolutely trustworthy. You can give him your whole life, and he will walk with you, give you his Spirit so you can grow more like

him, and give you joy as you step into the good works he has prepared in advance for you to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Here's a quick outline of where we are going:

In Part 1, I've described various perfectionists in order to uncover some foundational issues that underlie perfectionism. I've tried to peel back the outer layers of perfectionism to give us a glimpse of what may be happening under the surface of our "picture-perfect" lives.

In Part 2, I've described some key concepts that set the stage for change to take place, including Christ's instruction in the Sermon on the Mount to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. I'll talk about the change process and discuss our satisfaction.

Last, in Part 3, I tackle some of the specific areas that are often troublesome for perfectionists. Things like fear of failure, guilt, pride, criticism, shame, and learning to rest.

Unpacking perfectionism has been a surprising journey that has given me Jesus—and the freedom and joy that comes from walking with him. I hope that you too will learn to walk in freedom with Jesus as your Savior, Brother, and Friend.

Part I

CHAPTER 1

I Love Perfection! I Hate Perfection!

Taylor could feel her frustration level rising. This was the fourth time she had taken the car to the dealership to get the damage corrected. Before purchasing the car, a hailstorm had created multiple dings in the car's surface. As a condition of the sale, the dealership had agreed to remove all the damage at no cost to Taylor. While almost all the dings had been removed, one stubborn ding remained. Taylor had returned the car to the dealership four times now to get it removed. Each time she had brought the car in, the dealership had said they had the problem fixed. Now the service manager was acting like Taylor was making a big deal over nothing.

Taylor's husband told her to quit being so picky. He kindly pointed out that the remaining ding was practically unnoticeable and that the dealership had done a good job on the car. From his perspective, the dealership wasn't obligated to do anything else.

Taylor didn't think she was being too picky. For Taylor, it was simply a matter of doing things right. The car dealership should remove every last ding because they said they would do that for her. And, if they said they would do it, they should. They shouldn't act like it was the

customer's fault when they didn't live up to their promise. What was wrong with wanting things done right?

Taylor doesn't just expect this of the car dealership; she expects it of herself as well. She expects to deliver flawlessly when she commits to something. Flawlessly! No shoddy work. No half-finished product. No neglected detail. Picture perfect. If something is worth doing, it's worth doing right. I've been there. Taylor's story could be (and often is) my story. Perhaps you've been there too.

This book is primarily addressed to people like Taylor. People who would in some ways, at some times, and with some people see themselves as perfectionists. Perhaps they don't view themselves as perfectionists in every area and in every relationship, but there's at least one compartment of their lives where perfectionism maps onto their desires and experiences.

Taylor doesn't really think there is anything major about her life that she needs to change. She wishes a whole lot of other people would change. In fact, although she wouldn't say this out loud and may not even realize she feels this way, Taylor wishes others would be more like her. If others would change, life would be better. If the people at the dealership would just be more committed to doing things right (like Taylor) she wouldn't be having this problem. Additionally, if her husband would be the right kind of husband, he would confront the dealership for her and she wouldn't have to keep calling them.

From Taylor's perspective, she cares about doing things right, even perfectly, while others don't seem to have the same commitment. In Taylor's eyes, a whole lot of problems would be solved if other people would just do things right.

Perfectionism's Trademark Characteristics

How about you? You don't have to be exactly like Taylor to have a struggle with perfectionism. Do you want things done right? Does it annoy you that others seem so easily satisfied with what appears to be mediocre performance? Do any of the following "perfectionistic" tendencies resonate with you?

- You want to be the best in everything you do.
- You have very high expectations for yourself and others.
- You are very upset with yourself if you make a mistake.
- You feel guilty for relaxing. You feel like you are never doing enough.
- You're very particular about the details of tasks.
- When you perform well, you analyze your performance for the weak spots and quickly gloss over the things done right.
- You want something done right or not done at all.
- You are perceived by others as a role model.
- You feel like others are never satisfied by your performance.
- You compare yourself to others. If you perceive someone is better than you, you analyze that person to see how to measure up.
- You don't attempt things you know you can't complete with excellence.
- You are frightened by the thought of failure.
- You procrastinate.
- Your relationships are often strained or difficult.
- You feel like you won't ever be perfect.
- You rarely experience joy.

The list identifies some traits that are positive, but it also points out characteristics associated with perfectionism that are clearly troublesome. Traits that make it hard to love God and to love others.

Would it surprise you to learn that Taylor is often frustrated and unhappy? For the last two weeks Taylor has complained to her husband about the car dealership. At work, she has made it clear that she wouldn't encourage anyone to buy a car from this particular dealer. And she has posted a poor review on the dealership's customer review webpage. The dealership gets a one-star rating from her.

A Source of Tension

One barely noticeable ding has become a source of strain in Taylor's relationships. Her high expectations have resulted in conflict. Taylor's relationship with her husband has been strained, even though he only disagreed mildly with her. Taylor got mad because he didn't back her up. She believes her husband ought to support her and take her side on every issue. However, Taylor's husband believes she is unreasonably exacting. Privately, both Taylor and her husband view the other as lacking.

Other people in Taylor's life have had to listen to her complaints. Their concerns have been minimized while Taylor's have been maximized. At the dealership, the service manager has begun to view Taylor as unreasonable. He is no longer interested in keeping her patronage because who wants a customer like her? Who wants to do business with someone who can't be satisfied? The word of mouth that results from customers like Taylor doesn't help, no matter how much they spend on purchases. On the flip side, Taylor isn't interested in giving the dealership her patronage. It's an easily broken relationship, just one of many in Taylor's life—relationships strained or severed because of unmet expectations for perfection. That story has been repeated hundreds of times in Taylor's life. She has wanted things done to a high standard and others haven't delivered.

There is nothing in and of itself wrong with Taylor's desire to have things done right. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with asking dealerships to honor their promise. There's no law against having great-looking landscaping, keeping your car washed and shiny, putting your shoes neatly in the closet, having an organized desk, making sure you always use your blinker when changing lanes, looking your best, living by a strict budget, preparing sharp-looking reports, avoiding junk food, etc., etc., etc. Most people would agree these are good things.

What creates the frustration and unhappiness that comes with perfectionism is what lies under the surface and drives these behaviors—the motives, beliefs, desires, fears, anxieties, and goals that live in and rule the heart and mind. These beliefs and desires interfere with loving relationships with God and others. We'll come back to that later. I think

it will make more sense if we first take a look at Taylor's thoughts about her own performance.

The Perfectionist's Self-Assessment

Although Taylor causes stress in everyone around her, what you might not realize is that she too feels unrelenting stress every time she approaches a new task, and she knows she places tremendous pressure on herself to avoid failure. The fear of failure can easily consume her, often causing her to lay awake in bed at night thinking about everything she needs to do so she won't mess up. Her fear of failure often pushes her toward irritability, and those around her would probably describe her as controlling, inflexible, and impatient. But even though Taylor invests heavily in not failing, she rarely feels as though her investment has yielded a high return. When she's done with her latest project, whatever it may be—from cooking dinner for company or launching an initiative at work—Taylor is hardly ever satisfied. For every one thing that went well, Taylor can usually identify twenty things that weren't right. When Taylor perceives she hasn't lived up to the perfection she demands of herself, she then beats herself up as a complete failure and berates herself as a loser who can do nothing right.

Taylor has learned several defensive maneuvers to try to cope with all of this stress. Her fallback strategy is to try harder, believing that more effort will allow her to achieve her goal. But, although she doesn't realize it, this puts her in a repeating loop with no acceptable exit. Her desire to be picture perfect means she is always trying to reach her goal through her performance. When she falls short of the high standards she has erected, she concludes she is a failure and wallows in misery. This ends with a resolve to try harder, greater effort on her part, falling short, more misery, and a renewed resolve to try harder. Because she never reaches the perfection demanded by the performance-driven standards she has erected, she has no way out of the loop other than to quit. Many perfectionists do end up quitting in some, if not all, areas of life. When you can't keep your home as spotless as you would like, you might quit by abandoning chores and allowing things to pile up. If you

can't get all "A's" you might just drop out of school. If a job becomes too demanding or you make a mistake at work, quitting might seem like the best option. Or, you may procrastinate on projects out of fear of failure—putting them off because you don't think you can get it exactly right. Taylor however usually just keeps looping back through the cycle.

Another coping mechanism Taylor utilizes is to be incredibly picky about flaws that are quantifiable but to ignore flaws that are harder to quantify. She may insist that the columns in a report be exactly even but not notice that she has driven her personal assistant to tears by making her redo Taylor's project yet again and preventing her from leaving work on time to pick up her child from day care. Taylor is often oblivious to the fact that her relationship with her personal assistant is far from perfect, but she is quick to find typos. Typos and columns are more easily quantified than relationships.

Still another coping mechanism occurs in Taylor's relationships with others. Taylor seeks to control the people in her life so her desire for perfection won't be sabotaged by their mistakes. So Taylor often has rigid rules for others that focus on externals such as performance and appearance. She responds with thinly veiled anger when others fail to follow her rules. When others don't live according to her expectations and it becomes clear she can't exert control over them (as she is finding with the car dealership), she may abandon the relationship or settle for aloof, strained relations. The only relationships she tries to cultivate or foster are with those who seem to be able to accomplish what she desires.

A Distorted Perfection

Yet with all the tension that accompanies her perfectionism, Taylor is reluctant to abandon it. She still desires to be picture perfect. In a distorted sense, Taylor's desire reflects her original purpose. She was created to display "perfection." From the very beginning, God's purpose has been that men and women would reflect his image, that they would

radiate the glory of a perfect God, their Creator and Friend. Sadly sin has turned what was once a glorious mission into a source of tension. Sin has also caused us to come up with our own definition of perfection, a man-centered definition that often focuses on performance and outcomes that glorify us, not our Creator.

Why would wanting perfection leave you angry, frustrated, discouraged, or hopeless? The obvious answer would seem to be because others don't share your standard or because you fail to achieve the perfection you desire. But if we go beyond scratching the surface, this answer no longer makes sense.

If we truly valued perfection, we wouldn't quickly become angry and frustrated; those aren't "perfect" responses. Nor would we be controlling, inflexible, and impatient. Those aren't right or perfect responses either. So there's got to be something more going on than simply a desire to do things perfectly.

We've got to start asking questions, "What do I mean by *perfect* or *right*? Why do I want these things done perfectly? What makes perfection important to me? Where does God fit into all of this?" These won't necessarily be easy questions to answer. Uncovering desires can often be difficult. It's also difficult because the answers aren't the same for everyone. But wouldn't you like to be free from nitpicking, paralysis, self-hatred, and irritation? Wouldn't you like to be free to enjoy and accept others even though they don't do everything right? Wouldn't you like to be free to move forward despite your own mistakes and fears of not being right? God can change those things in you, but it doesn't happen by magic. Change begins by looking closely at what is going on under the surface of those feelings and behaviors. It all starts with what we want—our desire life.

Because of sin, good desires become warped and twisted. When you look closely, you can often see that wanting to be excellent doesn't come from a heart that longs to show others the beautiful perfection of God. Instead that desire shrinks and the focus becomes self-centered. You find you want to do all things with excellence because you want others to think highly of you; you want to look good to others or feel

good about yourself. You want to have things under control so that nothing can hurt you.

We can see that in Taylor's life in this way: God has said his two greatest commands are to love him and love others, yet Taylor hasn't really done either in the situation with the ding in her car. She hasn't loved God by trusting him to use even the failures of others for her good. God makes this promise to every believer in Romans 8:28, yet Taylor has functioned as if God can't be trusted to know what is best for her. When he has allowed the car dealership to repeatedly fail to remove the ding, Taylor has responded with anger, frustration, complaining, and impatience.

Nor has Taylor loved others. Instead of patiently and gently seeking to solve problems, Taylor has become increasingly impatient and harsh with the service manager. Instead of building others up in her speech, Taylor has complained. Instead of being kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving, Taylor has nursed a grudge. Instead of extending grace for human limitations, she continues to demand more than they can provide.

Taylor is relying on herself and seeking satisfaction in having things done by her standards (not God's standards). God's desire for Taylor is much different (and so much better) than what she wants for herself. He wants to make her like his beloved Son (Romans 8:29). He wants her to have rich, full relationships where she shares with others the grace and mercy she has been given as a dearly loved child of God. As Taylor begins to understand that the frustration and discomfort in her life comes not from the failures of others or even herself, but from her response to those failures, she can turn to God with her true failure: replacing God at the center of her life with her own desires for perfection and control. As she turns away from her own desires and turns toward God (what the Bible calls repentance), he will begin to help her function as he originally designed humans—to display his image and his glory. This will be a process and there will be many failures along the way, but God will not desert Taylor. When he begins a good work, he carries it on to completion. He will do the same for you.

Exchanging a Heavy Burden for a Light One

Think for a moment now about what you really want on a day-by-day basis. If, like Taylor and me, your heart and mind are often ruled by self-focused desires, it won't be long until you experience frustration, fear of failure, unrelenting pressure, and guilt. It won't be long until you seek to control others to get them to live according to your expectations. It won't be long until you live with a sense of dread that just around the next corner someone will discover you are a fraud; you're not really as put together as everyone believes you are. These are heavy burdens.

Taylor wants things done right because in her heart she believes this will bring her satisfaction. But Taylor has been deceived into believing that the perfection she is seeking will bring happiness. Taylor has been lured into believing that performance leads to perfection and that performance-based perfection leads to happiness and satisfaction. These deceptions are advertised regularly by the world around her promoting the perfect body, the perfect diet, the perfect job, the perfect investment, the perfect house, the perfect family, the perfect life. But the reason they resonate with Taylor is that she wants to believe them. She wants to believe that if she works hard enough she can attain perfection. She wants to believe that performing well will remove her anxiety and fear. She wants a life with no hassles or trials, and she believes being perfect will fulfill this desire.

True, there have been brief moments of satisfaction. Occasions of recognition have brought fleeting good moods, but these have inevitably been followed by pressure to do more and fear of being exposed as imperfect. For the perfectionist, achievement results in demands for greater achievement. Not a moment should be wasted in resting on your laurels or celebrating victory. There is always the next game to win, the next project to perform, the next expectation to meet. And the greater the recognition, the greater the fear of being exposed. The more people point to you as a model to follow, the higher the potential for humiliation when you don't live up to the exalted status conferred

on you. Perfectionism is a harsh master and serving this master is frightening and exhausting.

A life ruled by our own desires and shaped by what the world tells us is perfection eventually becomes an exhausting life full of disappointment and frustration. In contrast, how radically different it is when the one true Lord rules our lives. When the true Lord rules our lives, we find that his rule is very different. This ruler invites you to come to him and have rest. Listen to his kind invitation in Matthew 11:28–30:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Does this seem attractive to you? Do you feel worn out trying to meet all the demands of perfectionism? Do the anxieties, pressures, and fears that come with perfectionism keep you in turmoil, your mind always churning? Would you enjoy rest for your soul, a relief from the churning?

Jesus promises his yoke is easy, his burden is light. How can he do this? He did it by taking the crushing burden of our failure on himself and inviting us to turn to him in trust and repentance. As we turn to him, he offers us his perfection—his righteous record with no mistakes or flaws. With his perfection as our foundation, he then equips us to live with a whole different mindset. Different things become important to us. We develop different goals and desires. We pursue different agendas.

Be advised, the old desires, fears, anxieties, and goals will still tempt you to rely on them, but in Christ they no longer have the power to rule you. Woohoo! All those tensions that Taylor has lived with for years no longer have to have mastery over her. There can be peace.

Taylor needs a different way. Her striving for perfection has gone badly wrong—led by a heart that has been blinded by the promises of false gods. Her striving for perfection has brought tension into almost all of her relationships. Her striving for perfection has resulted in

tremendous pressure to do better and better. Taylor has a love/hate affair with perfectionism, and she needs a better way.

Christ offers a better way. He makes incredible promises that only he can deliver. The life he promotes is radical. It's restful. It's stunningly beautiful. It's the basis for this book.