Introduction

In 1962, Dick Hoyt was by all means a typical young man. At 20 years old, he was married to his high school sweetheart and serving in the Air National Guard. When his wife told him they were expecting their first child, Dick was excited. He hoped for a boy. And he got one. Dick’s baby boy—Rick Hoyt—was born in January. But excitement quickly turned to fear as Rick’s umbilical cord nearly strangled him during birth.

Doctors diagnosed Rick with cerebral palsy and said he would be a quadriplegic for the rest of his life. They didn’t mince words either, telling Rick’s parents that he “would be a vegetable” and advising them to institutionalize him. Rick would never walk, never talk, and never amount to anything, the doctors said.

But Dick couldn’t imagine being separated from his own son. So he and his wife raised Rick along with his brothers. With a little help, he did everything his brothers did. He communicated, he went to school, and he loved sports. And from there, Dick and Rick Hoyt did the unimaginable. With the help of a specialized wheelchair and other equipment, Dick has pushed Rick through more than 1,000 races—marathons, triathlons, and Ironman competitions. The father-son duo even biked and ran across the United States in just 45 days.

What a sacrifice! What an incredible love! What a victory for the father-son team to celebrate!

Getting to the Heart

As we celebrate Easter, it’s tempting to focus on the empty tomb and skip all of the ugliness that happened before that glorious morning. But if we rewind just a bit, we see that our story begins in a way very similar to Rick’s life. Rick was deprived of oxygen, cut off from the very thing he needed to survive. And we, too, are deprived of life—by our sins. They paralyze us, leaving us unable to do anything worthwhile on our own. Our sins are constantly “crouching at the door” (Genesis 4:7), cutting us off from everything that’s good, including our heavenly Father.

Could God, our holy Creator and Father, leave his children like that? He certainly could have. What kind of father would love a child that chooses the wrong way, does the wrong thing, and is constantly second-guessing his rules? What kind of father has the patience or the love to deal with a child in which “nothing good dwells” (Romans 7:18)?
That’s the response that you might expect from an earthly father, but not our Father. His love isn’t motivated by convenience or personal gain. No, God loves us—his precious children—unconditionally. His love runs deeper than our sins. It never grows weary or runs out. Put simply: “God is love” (1 John 4:8, emphasis added)! And God, with a love like that, would never abandon his sons and daughters.

And this is where we circle back to the Easter story. Easter happened only because of God’s unfailing love for us. Without his love, sin would still reign and we would be forever crushed by its power. But Easter did happen! God’s love was more powerful than sin. He proved it by sending his only Son to live a perfect life and die on the cross in our place. God’s love was shining bright even amidst the dark skies on Calvary’s mountain. A cross that was meant to kill gave us life. Our Savior’s sacrifice and resurrection defeated sin once and for all:

*Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 15:57

Jesus secured the crown of life for each of God’s children! Jesus’ victory is our victory—sin will never cut us off from God again! In faith, we live each and every day with the love of our heavenly Father in our hearts. We can stop battling with our burdens—Jesus has the victory. We can stop wrestling with that voice in our heads that tells us we just aren’t good enough—Jesus has the victory. We can love others, even when they’re not perfect—Jesus has the victory. Sin’s power is gone and we have eternal life! Hallelujah!

**Taking It Home**

Today you will each receive *(name the item you intend to distribute)*. As you take it with you, let it remind you of God’s great love for you in Jesus. God loves you so much that he would do anything for you, including sending Jesus to live and die in your place. Every time you look at this gift, you can celebrate Jesus’ resurrection and his Easter victory over sin!