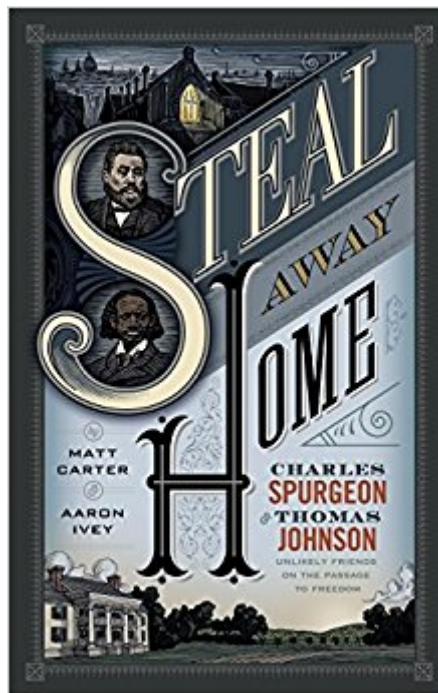


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# Steal Away Home: Charles Spurgeon And Thomas Johnson, Unlikely Friends On The Passage To Freedom



## Synopsis

Thomas Johnson and Charles Spurgeon lived worlds apart. Johnson, an American slave, born into captivity and longing for freedom--- Spurgeon, an Englishman born into relative ease and comfort, but, longing too for a freedom of his own. Their respective journeys led to an unlikely meeting and an even more unlikely friendship, forged by fate and mutual love for the mission of Christ. *Steal Away Home* is a new kind of book based on historical research, which tells a previously untold story set in the 1800s of the relationship between an African-American missionary and one of the greatest preachers to ever live.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"I loved this book and did not want it to end. I was unfamiliar with the story of the famous preacher Charles Spurgeon and the slave Thomas Johnson, and how our sovereign Lord brought them together in what can only be called a divine friendship. Now I am. I was greatly moved by this work and more than once brought to tears. Humans can be very evil, but our God is very good. This book is a wonderful witness to both of those truths." Daniel L. Akin, President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC "I've long been a great fan of Charles Spurgeon. I wasn't familiar with Thomas Johnson, and enjoyed reading about his part in the drama. As a fiction writer I appreciated the creative storytelling elements of this account. Matt Carter and Aaron Ivey have done a great job selecting historical realities and weaving them together into a compelling story. I really enjoyed *Steal Away Home*." Randy Alcorn, author of *Deception*, *Safely Home* and *We Shall See God: Charles Spurgeon's Devotional*

Thoughts on Heaven Â "We live in a time and a culture when many people feel their stories are worth telling. It is certainly not for me to judge the worthiness of every story out there, even the one you hold inÂ your hands. However, I willÂ offer thisÂ "I cannot imagine having not been given the opportunity to know this story.Â Â Charles Spurgeon is, of course, a giant of both Christian history and lore. But where his story intersects that of the faithful, enduring man, Thomas Johnson, it creates for us an almost cinematic tale.Â Â Matt and Aaron have worked tirelessly to accurately and fairly capture the history in which this story is set. The evil of slavery and of those who perpetuated it. The indomitable spirit of the African-American people, acutely seen through the life of Johnson. The sacredness of true friendship, and the beauty of the gospel are all at the fore, and I cannot more strongly encourage you to read this powerful work." Â Pastor LÃ©onceÂ ¸ B. Crump Jr., Senior Pastor of Renovation Church and author of *Renovate: Changing Who You Are By Loving Where You Are* Â "Gripping and creatively presented,Â *Steal Away Home*Â explores the unexpected friendship between Charles Spurgeon and the Virginia slave-turned-missionary Thomas Johnson. It is a remarkable story of courage and redemptionâ "one that captures the spirit of both brave men." Â Dr. Christian T. George, Curator of the Spurgeon Library, assistant professor of historical theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and editor ofÂ *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon*Â (B&H Academic) Â "A fresh and artful treatment of two remarkable, gospel-shaped men. Iâ ve read lots of books on Charles Spurgeon. Iâ ve never read one like this one. Once you start it, you wonâ t put it down." Â J.D. Greear, Ph.D.,Â Pastor, The Summit Church, Raleigh-Durham, NC Â Â "Steal Away HomeÂ is the collaborative work of a pastor who specializes in truth, and an artist who specializes in beauty. Their subjects are a titan of truth and beauty in his own right, the great "Prince of Preachers," Charles Hadden Spurgeon, and his lesser known yet no less significant friend, missionary and abolitionist Thomas Johnson. While claiming to write historical fiction versus pure biography, Matt and Aaron have done a great job honoring two men whose profound impact shares a common thread: neither outgrew his need for Jesus and the gospel. As a preacher and aspiring abolitionist myself, I am moved by this volume not only to be a better minister, but to remain thirsty for our freedom-fighting, truth-telling, and beautiful God." Â Scott Sauls, senior pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tennessee and author ofÂ *Jesus Outside the Lines, Befriend,*Â andÂ *From Weakness to Strength* "We are all craving God-fearing, humble, bridge-building examples of faith and friendship. Charles and Thomas are just that. I found myself relating and yet craving more for my own life. Prepare to be moved and changed by these men's lives. The two men writing this book, Aaron and Matt, share a unique friendship on mission too, and I'm blessed to sit under their leadership weekly in our local

church. They are humble seekers of God's glory, who desperately desire the same things today Charles and Thomas desired... men to be saved and know the love of God." Jennie Allen, Visionary Leader of IF:Gathering, Author of Nothing To Prove

Matt Carter serves as the Pastor of Preaching and Vision at the Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas, which has grown from a core team of fifteen to more than eight-thousand attending each Sunday since he planted it in 2002. Matt has co-authored multiple books including a commentary on the Gospel of John in The Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary series and two group studies, Creation Unraveled and Creation Restored, which traced the gospel message through the book of Genesis. He holds an M.Div. from Southwestern Seminary and a Doctorate in Expository Preaching from Southeastern Seminary. He and his wife Jennifer have been married for more than twenty years, and they have three children, John Daniel, Annie, and Samuel. Aaron Ivey is the Pastor of Worship at The Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas, where he pastors a team of three hundred worship leaders, artists, storytellers, and musicians. Aaron has written and produced ten worship albums, and has written hundreds of congregational worship songs that are sung all over the world. His songwriting includes works represented in Worship Together, Jesus Culture, Capital Music Group, Doxology & Theology, and Austin Stone Worship. Passionate about mentoring and developing young leaders and world changers, Aaron spends much of his time communicating on topics of leadership, theology, art, and culture. He and his wife Jamie have been married for fifteen years, and have four children, Cayden, Amos, Deacon, and Story.

It's been a long time since a book made me weep as I did in the final pages of Steal Away Home. There is so much beauty in this story, in the writing of it, and—most of all—in the Gospel which saturates it, that there really was no other way to respond but through tears of joy for God's victory over sin and death, mingled with tears of sorrow for the brokenness which still mars our world until Christ returns to consummate that victory. I have read a lot of books by and about Charles Haddon Spurgeon. But I can truthfully say I've never encountered anything like this book, both in its scope and style. The book's authors, Matt Carter & Aaron Ivey, are two of the elders at The Austin Stone Community Church, a church whose ministry has often encouraged and inspired me. While visiting the Stone last May for what they call a Worship Pastor Intensive, Aaron shared with us about how co-writing this book had been such a blessing in his life; I pre-ordered it on the spot. While the book is somewhat biographical, its genre is difficult to identify due to its unique

nature. In the introduction, Carter states that the book's style was inspired by Michael Shaara's excellent book *The Killer Angels*, a novelized story of the Civil War focusing on the lives of several historical figures. *Steal Away Home* is written as a novel in which the main characters are the 19th century preachers Charles Spurgeon and Thomas Johnson. If you're like me, you're reading that second name and saying, "Who?" The fact that Johnson's name is relatively unknown is a real tragedy! His story is truly fascinating, and the impact he had on the Kingdom of God is immense, both as a missionary to Cameroon and as a much-needed encourager and friend to the "prince of preachers." Thomas Johnson had been a slave for 28 years in Virginia when the end of the Civil War brought about his emancipation. Though he had heard the name "Charles Haddon Spurgeon" (when he was forced to accompany his master and a Baptist preacher to a book burning in which the works of Spurgeon— "an outspoken abolitionist who openly challenged slave-holding "Christians" in the American South— were read to slaves before being thrown into the fire), he never dreamed he would have the opportunity to meet with him, much less become his friend. Providentially, God allowed Johnson to be sponsored to attend Spurgeon's Pastor's College in London, to be trained and commissioned as a missionary to Africa. During his time in London, and for decades later, Johnson became one of Spurgeon's closest friends and confidants. Spurgeon's lifelong struggle with depression and physical ailments are well known. But the way Johnson spoke truth into Spurgeon's life, teaching him about true freedom in Christ, has remained mostly obscured from history until now. I'm so grateful to Carter & Ivey for telling his story! While the narrative and much of the dialogue for this book required some "artistic license" from the authors, as often as possible the words and "voice" of the characters come from their own writing, primarily their frequent correspondence (Spurgeon kept all of Johnson's letters in the desk in his study), and from Johnson's own autobiography, *Twenty-Eight Years a Slave or the Story of My Life in Three Continents* (Classic Reprint). The book was thoroughly researched at the Spurgeon Library at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and the fact that so many prominent Spurgeon scholars have endorsed the book lends a lot of credibility to the historicity of the story. I can't imagine more capable hands for the telling of this story than Carter and Ivey. I know of no other ministry so invested in story-telling as Austin Stone (learning more about their Story Team is one of the main reasons I attended the Intensive in the Spring). The story is beautifully told, and I wholeheartedly commend it to you.

While *Steal Away Home* transports you back to the mid-1800s, its pages are still wet with the ink of timely relevance. There's no doubt you will weep several times, but your

resounding and remaining cry will be the cry for freedom in Jesus for every soul and every physical body bound in chains. The divine intersection of two lives worlds apart weave a beautiful tapestry of the faithful friendship, true ministry and lasting legacy of Charles H. Spurgeon and Thomas Johnson. Indeed, these men and their wives are living letters written not with ink, but by the Spirit of God. Matt and Aaron's descriptive imagery and intimate dialogue will take you back in time to hear not only their voices, but also the voice of Jesus - the One who sets captives free. The title, drawn from a hymn Thomas learned while enslaved, serves as a compass for their heart and ours in our journey home to Jesus. Like the chorus of a song, this recurring phrase will call you to remember that this home - in our Father's house - has many rooms that are not yet filled. Experience this book and then spread the word. Tim McKenzie On Every Word Ministries

I knew I would love it the minute I heard his wife (Jamie Ivey) start chatting about the idea and the research he was doing. It is simply beautiful. I'm nearly finished with it, and I am wanting to slow down. The characters are rich. The history is full. Even the cover is simply glorious. I highly recommend this book.

I couldn't put this down. I laughed and cried. I have read many biographies of Spurgeon yet this was to me by far the most easily read. I had never read of Thomas Johnson or at least didn't know enough to recognize the name but am blessed to have done so now. I can't recommend this one enough.

I love any book that leaves me thinking about the characters days, weeks, and sometimes months after the last page, and this book was that for me. The character development was wonderful, and the relationship between Charles and his wife was my favorite. Each page left me wanting more, and at the end I was truly sad to see it be over. Great book by these two great guys!

This was a beautiful story, wonderfully written. I was moved to tears several times, and so inspired by the strong faith of Charles amidst suffering. I'm so glad I own this. I'll be reading it again!

If in doubt about God's presence or God's love during trials and rough times, read this book. Both of these faithful believers endure great hardships and the authors are true to show that there are times that God's purpose for these sufferings are questioned by both men. Yet, their faith is strong and their lives are presented as ones lived to glorify God and His love. Hard to put down!

This book is so great! I have enjoyed reading it! The story of these two incredible men are interesting and I would recommend it to anyone!

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