

THE COMPLETE PERSON

“THE ABUNDANT LIFE”

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I. Introduction

God’s desire for us is that we not only have life, but that we have it *abundantly*. This means not only a “spiritual” life but a physical one as well (John 10:10; First Corinthians 2:9; Ephesians 3:19-21). Today, too often, people try to separate the spiritual and physical aspects of abundant living. Or, they fail to understand how God views an abundant life (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Some people will tell us that – physically – we must constantly suffer so we can enjoy a better – spiritual – life beyond death. Still others will say that we had better enjoy life now because there is nothing beyond the grave. They see God as nothing more than a big *Santa Claus in the Sky* or a genie. If we need a parking place near an entrance, God miraculously provides it. If we need or want something, we should simply send God the order! They maintain that as long as we have faith, God will always be there with whatever we want. If we ask and fail to receive, it is because we lack *faith*.

God does not treat people that way. He never did. He still does not treat us like that today. This does not mean that God does not care what happens in our lives. He does. In fact, no one cares for us like God. He wants only the BEST for us! God demonstrated this when He created the Garden of Eden for our first home. As we consider the great men and women of the Bible, we see that many suffered and died for doing God’s will. His greatest act of love and concern for us was to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for our sins. Spiritually, God wants us to be “transformed” into the image of Jesus, His Son. In Romans 8:28-29, Paul writes . . .

“ . . . we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foresaw, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brothers . . . ”

When we conform to the image of Christ, we gain not only spiritual life, but a new insight into our physical existence (John 14:12-14; Philippians 4:13; First John 5:14).

II. The Abundant Life Is Within Us

When God transforms us into the image of His Son, the abundant life wells up within us like springs of eternal living water (John 4:13-14). The abundant life is not something that we buy or make. It is God’s gift to us. It is within us and is part of everything we do, think, and feel. The

abundant life has nothing to do with our family background. It is God's personal gift to each of us – individually. It has nothing to do with our ancestors. They could have been kings or peasants, preachers or outlaws, rich or poor. None of that matters – the abundant life is strictly between each person and God! Our parents have some effect on our gaining the abundant life. Godly parents will train and guide their children in the ways of the Lord (Ephesians 6:3-4). Children can see the abundant life in their parents and many will want it for themselves. Although this “helps” children of godly parents, it does not mean that they will *automatically* become Christians, thereby gaining this abundant life. It is still an individual decision. Each of us must decide to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. It is when we do this that God bestows the abundant life upon us. Because a person has ungodly parents does not mean that he or she can never gain the abundant life. This person will have to learn about God and His will without parental help and sometimes, in *opposition* to parents. The person reared by ungodly parents is not necessarily immoral. He has been reared either without an understanding of God or to reject (deny) God. It will be harder for this person to learn of God and accept His will but it can be done. Within our culture it is impossible to escape some basic knowledge of God. A person reared in an ungodly family will have *some* knowledge of God – although that knowledge will be incomplete and distorted. Still, it can provide a starting point for learning the truth of God and His Son.

III. Effects of the Abundant Life

When we gain the abundant life, it changes much in our lives. One way it helps us is that it allows us to change how we think about others, ourselves, and our life experiences. People who do not live the abundant life are basically *negative* persons. This does not mean that they do not have positive aspects to their lives – they do. Their lives, however, are not overall positive ones, but rather negative with some positive aspects.

**The people who live the abundant life are just the opposite.
They live *positive* lives that have some negative aspects.
Overall, they are trying to make life complete.
They see others, themselves, and their experiences
as having a purpose and as being important.**

In the previous lesson, we looked at what makes a person emotionally healthy. The person who lives the abundant life is one who is emotionally healthy. He can correctly identify and express emotions. He understands that emotions are part of the way in which God created him. He neither represses nor denies them. He feels them and accepts them as part of himself. Also, he feels the same way about his thoughts. It is our ability to think and reason that makes us *human*. The unhealthy and immature person refuses to accept responsibility for his thoughts. Instead, he tries to blame others for how he thinks. The person who lives the abundant life knows that he is responsible for his thoughts. This does not mean that his thoughts are always appropriate or even what he wants them to be. It means that he tries to keep his thoughts centered on doing God's will. He knows that if he allows his thoughts to drift away from God, he will lose the abundant life that comes from God. Another effect of the abundant life is that helps us recharge our energy and enthusiasm. It keeps us in touch with the One True Source of power in the universe – GOD! Our energy and enthusiasm level is based in our attitude more than it is in our physical strength. When our attitude is controlled by the abundant life, our energy level and enthusiasm will be continuously restored. This does not mean that our energy level or enthusiasm will never decline. It will, of course, but it will be restored.

**As the song goes, “I never promised you a rose garden.”
Such is life.**

Life is full of failure and disappointment. It is something that people try to deny or believe will never happen to them. We all have failures and disappointments in our lives. If a person believes that his life should always go smoothly and without disappointment, he is preparing himself for mental health problems when they hit. However, once we accept the reality that we *will* face failure and disappointment in our lives, we are better equipped to deal with it. If a person has possesses abundant life, he can accept bumps on the road. When he does this, he is on the road to recovery and success.

IV. Living the Abundant Life

A. Living the Abundant Life Focuses on Others

The person who lives the abundant life feels comfortable with himself and others. This is unusual because most people do not feel comfortable with themselves. This lack of comfort can be related to almost anything about themselves. An example is physical appearance. This does not mean people with physical disabilities or deformities, although it *can*. Many people see themselves as either skinny, fat, ugly, or having some unflattering physical characteristic. What is fortunate is that the vast majority of people are normal. There is really nothing wrong with them. If their idea of what is beautiful or handsome does not match how they look, they consider themselves as peculiar or strange. The problem is not with their *appearance* but how they think that they should appear. An example is the “thin” look. It has been fashionable for several years. A person who is of normal size or thin might look in the mirror, but instead of seeing herself, she sees an obese person. Rather than seeing a thin person of less than 100 pounds, she sees an extremely fat person of several hundred pounds. She hates her body and will go to any lengths to try to lose her “supposed” fat. Women and men have even starved themselves to death, trying to reach *their* idea of thin. Another example is a normal looking person who looks in the mirror and sees some ugly, horrible disfigurement. Most people are not so extreme in how they view themselves. There is some part of their appearance that they find uncomfortable, so they try to find comfort by changing their appearance. This desire is what fuels the booming cosmetic, fashion, beauty salon, health club, and plastic surgery industries. Being uncomfortable with yourself does not have to be physical. It also can be a personality or character trait. The bookstores are filled with self-help books to help you change your attitude or personality. When you are uncomfortable with yourself, you are uncomfortable with others. Since you see yourself as unacceptable, you believe that others also view you as unacceptable. Therefore, you believe that others do not accept you and you are uncomfortable around them. When you are comfortable with yourself and others, you can develop strong, cohesive relationships. God did not mean for us to live in isolation. He created us as social beings. Our mental well-being depends upon relationships with others.

The stronger and healthier we are, the stronger and healthier our relationships will be. When we lack meaningful relationships and feel abandoned or lonely, we suffer.

The abundant life gives us the ability to create and maintain strong, cohesive relationships. Because our primary relationship is with God – we are secure. This security allows us to be vulnerable. This gear of vulnerability is one of the main reasons people fail to develop strong, cohesive relationships. *They fear that the vulnerability will be used against them.* When we can be vulnerable without fear, we can be ourselves. We will expect people to either accept or reject us for who and what we are. We, in turn, will accept and reject people for who and what they are. This freedom to be ourselves and let others be themselves is the basis for strong, cohesive relationships.

B. Living the Abundant Life Provides a Goal

The abundant life does not just fall on everyone like rain. It grows from within us when we create a relationship with Jesus Christ. Not only is Jesus . . . The Source - He is also the *goal* of the person with the abundant life. When we focus on Jesus as our eternal goal, we also focus on living an earthly life that will help us obtain the eternal one. Living the abundant life on earth does not mean that we must all be robots, without individuality. God made each of us different. Therefore, we all have different talents. The abundant life allows us to use our special, individual talents to their greatest potential. Our goal should be to serve God the best we can, with the talents He gave us. Each of us is important to making life on earth better. This will insure that we use our maximum personal effort.

When we work not only to develop our own talents, but to help others develop theirs, we gain a sense of credibility with others. They will look at us with respect. They realize that instead of following the urges and greed of the world, we are seeking something better – not from selfishness – but for the good of all.

The person with the abundant life does not need to make others lose so he can win. He knows that within God's scheme, ALL can be winners! His attitude is *positive*. He is not afraid to take a stand for those things that are right just because they are not popular. As long as he is on God's side, he is in the majority. He wants all to join with God and him. He will not only project the right view, he will be a model of winning together. The only losers are those who reject the abundant life offered by God.

V. Abundant Living Requires a Plan

Man is a relational being. Therefore, he likes things organized. Even the most disorganized among us has some organizational method. It might not be something of which we approve, but – it works for him! The person who lives the abundant life has a plan. The plan includes . . .

A. Written Goals

Goals are important because they provide a *target* for us. Goals help us focus on what we consider important and what we want to accomplish. Writing it helps to make it solid and real to us. By their nature, goals are long-range – usually taking years or a lifetime to accomplish. Because of this, we must break them into smaller, easy to accomplish objectives. Objectives are the “stepping stones” to our ultimate goal. Usually, they must be completed in sequence before the next step can be taken. An example is the goal of becoming a doctor. A person starts by having to have high enough grades in high school and on college entry tests as the first step. The second step is getting “accepted” to a college that offers a degree in premed. The third is graduating with a high enough grade point average to meet academic prerequisites for medical school. Then there is *another* step followed by another and so forth until eventually reaching the goal of becoming a doctor. It is not an easy process but it is the only way to become a doctor. Every goal that we establish follows a similar process – step-by-step.

B. Visual Pictures

Visualize your goal. In your mind, see yourself having accomplished your goal. In the above example of becoming a doctor, as the person accomplishes each objective, he keeps a mental picture of himself working as a physician. This visualization helps to keep the goal in focus and make it *real*.

C. Stated Obstacles and Planned Solutions

There are obstacles or barriers to everything we do in life. The abundant life allows us to overcome these obstacles. As we develop our plan, some obstacles are known. When we know about obstacles at certain stages in our plan, we can develop a secondary plan to overcome them. Like everything in life, there will always be obstacles that we will not foresee or have plans to overcome. The abundant life allows us to face these unexpected obstacles and overcome them. Frequently, those who do not live the abundant life will allow unforeseen obstacles to overwhelm or stop them. They just give up. Their goal vanishes and the plan collapses in ruins.

D. Rewards for Achievement

When goals are achieved, some type of reward goes with them. It can be monetary gain, social status, political power, sense of satisfaction, or . . . whatever. Although many people reject the importance of a reward, it is the motivator that keeps us on the trail of our goal.

VI. Conclusion

God did not create us to be failures. He created us to live with Him for eternity. He leaves the choice of accepting or rejecting Him to each of us. When we accept Him, He gives us the indwelling abundant life to help us live victoriously in this world. With God and His Son, Jesus Christ, by our side – we can do all things (Philippians 4:13). The late author, Max Leach, in *Christianity and Mental Health*, well described the person who lives the abundant life . . .

***“He is serene even though in pain;
Hopeful, although dying;
Secure, although penniless.”***

STUDY QUESTIONS

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

1. In order to become like Jesus, we must be
 - (a) penniless
 - (b) conformed to the world
 - (c) transformed by the renewing of our mind
 - (d) none of these
2. God's gift to the obedient is
 - (a) gold in every pocket
 - (b) long life
 - (c) no worries
 - (d) the abundant life
3. Once we accept the fact that we will face failure and disappointment, we can
 - (a) deal with it
 - (b) refuse it
 - (c) escape it
 - (d) none of these
4. One who lives the abundant life is comfortable with himself and
 - (a) others
 - (b) no one else
 - (c) himself alone
 - (d) only his *inner circle*
5. The stronger and healthier we are, the stronger and healthier are our
 - (a) pets
 - (b) plants
 - (c) relationships
 - (d) roof-tops
6. Because our primary relationship is with God, we are
 - (a) insecure
 - (b) secure
 - (c) security risks
 - (d) all of these
7. We focus on Jesus while living on earth as long as our goal is an
 - (a) eternal one
 - (b) envious one
 - (c) earthly one
 - (d) indigenous one
8. One enjoying the abundant life does not need to win by making others
 - (a) lose
 - (b) less
 - (c) worse
 - (d) all of these
9. Goals are important because they provide us with a
 - (a) market
 - (b) target
 - (c) game to play
 - (d) a scorecard
10. There are obstacles or barriers in
 - (a) heaven
 - (b) the grave
 - (c) all we do
 - (d) nothing