

You Can Live the **ABUNDANT LIFE!**

Your life can be full of enjoyment, happiness and ABUNDANT LIVING! God intends that you experience these things. Yet people do not know what brings—what causes—the abundant life.

Here are the vital keys that you can know!

BY DAVID C. PACK

NEVER HAS the world had so much, yet been so miserable. Depression, unhappiness, confusion, frustration, unfulfilled hopes and dreams, dissatisfaction, emptiness—and HOPELESS MISERY—describe humanity the world over.

The United States Constitution guarantees people the right to “life, liberty and the *pursuit* of happiness.” While the framers of the Constitution understood they could guarantee the American citizenry certain civil liberties and freedom from oppression, they understood they could not guarantee happiness. They could only seek to guarantee one’s right to “pursue” it.

Many are pursuing happiness, but in all the *wrong* places!

Vast new frontiers of expanding scientific knowledge have not brought the happiness that leaders prophesied would accompany it. Neither have laborsaving devices, which were supposed to bring people more leisure time to “enjoy themselves.” Instead, mental illness, drug addiction, despair, suicide, alcoholism, self-pity, and other forms of escapism—and general discontent with life—abound everywhere.

Educators have failed to lead people to the abundant life. Like science and

education, religion has also failed terribly in teaching people what God intends them to know about real abundant living.

Many religions have taught people to *feel guilty* if they enjoy themselves—if they are HAPPY! Many believe that God wants them to suppress joy and happiness—and that Christ expects this from His followers.

Millions view Christianity as little more than a series of “Thou shalt *nots*,” rather than as THE PATH to enjoying a wonderful, abundant life. These same millions often think of sin as the fun that will end if they obey God. They think that “accepting Jesus” also means accepting a life of almost morbid gloom and doom.

Be honest with yourself. Haven’t you seen Christianity primarily in *this* light? Haven’t you thought that Christianity primarily means an *end* to fun, pleasure, excitement, thrills and leading an interesting life? Haven’t you also thought of most church services as solemn, sober, unemotional and devoid of real meaning—and *happiness*? Because of this, many attend certain more emotional churches, seeking an emotional *feeling* (always temporary) that they equate with happiness, so that they can fill their terrible emptiness inside.

All of this wrong understanding exists because almost no one equates Christianity with enjoying a true zest for life!

What Christ Said

On the last night before His crucifixion, Christ taught His disciples many vital principles. At one point, He said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that My JOY might remain in you, and that your JOY *might be full*” (John 15:11).

On the same occasion, Christ, knowing the disciples would sorrow at His death, added, “But your sorrow shall be turned into JOY...and your JOY no man takes from you” (16:20, 22).

This is a powerful promise. Christians experience real joy and happiness *in this life*. If they are truly pleasing and obeying God, there is nothing that anyone can do to take this joy away.

This is an extraordinary statement. But most know nothing of it, or of other verses about this subject. Yet it has been God’s purpose from the beginning that His servants enjoy life to the FULL. And God has also intended that His people enjoy life with *His* joy. Christ said “My [His] joy” was to remain with His disciples.

Consider. The true God of the Bible is the happiest Being in the universe! David understood this: “In Your [God’s] presence is *fullness of joy*” (Psa. 16:11).

Do you see what David is saying? God intends that you live a life of full joy and happiness—*His* happiness—

the very same kind of happiness that God Himself experiences. God lives life with “fullness of joy.” All those in His presence experience it as well.

The apostle Jude added that God wants “to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with *exceeding joy*” (vs. 24).

This is your ultimate destiny!

Why then would God expect His people to merely *endure* this life? Yes, this life is a time of lesson-learning, including trials and suffering. But it is also a forerunner, in a very small way, of what eternal life is intended to be. It would make no sense for God to expect life to consist of only suffering and pain *now* as a preparation for perfect joy and happiness *later*.

What Christ Brought

Many years ago, I learned of one of the most incredible verses in the entire Bible. No one in the large, respected denomination of my youth ever spoke of it. Apparently, none ever *thought* about it either, because their lives did not reflect radiant happiness. Notice: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more *abundantly*” (John 10:10).

Have you ever seen—or even *heard* of—this verse before? Probably not.

Christ came bringing the *abundant* life—and He said so plainly!

Why then do so many believe that Christianity is supposed to be *endured* instead of *enjoyed*. Why do they not understand that the radiant, abundant life can be theirs—if they will follow God’s formula to achieve it?

God never instructs or commands His people to avoid anything unless it is for *their own good*. Many things *seem* like fun, but carry a delayed penalty, and terrible price, for having done them. God instructs us on what to avoid so that we will not get hit later by an unexpected “boomerang”!

I have never met a single person who actually *wanted* to be unhappy. All want to live life to the fullest, and feel happiness and joy. But most have simply not known *how* to do this—or whether God even expected it.

He does expect it—and tells you *how*!

Introducing the Bible Formula

For every person, there is a different definition for what a Christian is. Do you know the definition? Are you sure? Can you turn to a single verse that explains this, removing all doubt?

There is such a verse—and it is the only place to *begin* to fully understand how to live the HAPPY, JOYFUL, ABUNDANT LIFE!

The apostle Paul probably said more about the subject of happiness than any other Bible writer. We will see some of these verses in a moment. But the verse that speaks most about this subject appears not to mention it. Notice: “But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, *he is none of His*” (Rom. 8:9).

This basic scripture leaves no room for misunderstanding. A Christian is *one who has the Spirit of God*. If not, “he is none of His.” This includes you. Countless millions of professing Christians sincerely believe that they are “Christ’s.” Yet they do not have God’s Spirit and are, therefore, not Christians at all.

Let’s keep this simple—and move step-by-step. The beginning point of Christianity is that one must receive the Holy Spirit.

But what does this *mean*—what does having the Spirit of God have to do with happiness, joy and the abundant life?

Let’s see more of why Romans 8:9 has much to do with this subject. Paul wrote the Galatians, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, JOY, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance...” (Gal. 5:22).

This verse is all-important. When a newly converted Christian receives the Spirit of God, he receives a little of each of these qualities of God’s character. We have already seen that God experiences fullness of joy, so it is not strange then that His Holy Spirit—which is His “divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4)—includes JOY.

The Christian starts out by practicing love, which is the only fruit listed before joy. Love is the fulfilling of the

Law of God (Rom. 13:10; I John 5:3). “Joy” is listed second because it is the first and most immediate *by-product* of practicing obedience to God’s Law. Next comes “peace,” which flows from being genuinely happy in life—and happy toward those around you.

It is not hard to see how this will yield real peace in your relationships with others. Without the presence of God’s Spirit within one’s mind—which produces the deep, inner peace that Paul wrote must “rule in your hearts” (Col. 3:15)—it is impossible to be happy.

Each of the following fruits of the Spirit will flow as a direct result of having the Spirit of God, and *being* a real Christian. While millions may think that they are Christians, and may think that they have the Spirit of God, they have not followed the biblical formula (Acts 2:38).

This means you. If you have God’s Spirit present within you, you can experience both a joy and peace that no one can take from you—even when you are persecuted. Paul wrote, “...*all* that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Tim. 3:12). So you will be persecuted for your beliefs, but this need not upset you and cause unhappiness.

God actually tells us to “rejoice, and be exceeding glad” (Matt. 5:11-12) when the very worst and most intense kinds of persecution and false accusation are thrown against us. This is because we will receive a “great(er) reward” at Christ’s Return, as a result!

A Man of Sorrows, But Happy

The same is true of enduring trials, which are a part of every Christian’s life. Christ was not an exception when it came to trials and suffering. We have seen that He experienced joy and left it with His disciples and with His Church, through His Spirit given on Pentecost (Acts 2). Yet Christ was also “a man of sorrows [pain], and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3).

How could it be both? How could Christ be full of joy *and* experience a life of sorrows and grief?

Overcoming and conquering sin is not easy. Christ conquered sin, so

He understood this. He knew that the whole world lives in sin and suffers terribly as a result. This brought Him great sorrow because it was never what He intended for mankind.

Christ also understood that the Christian way involves trials and difficulties throughout life. This is an inescapable fact for those in whom God is working. These are essential to the character-building process, and are GOOD for us. Trials and tests can make us temporarily sorrowful, but bring great joy when we understand their *purpose*.

Here is how the apostle Peter told us to view trials: “Beloved, think it not *strange* concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But REJOICE, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s *sufferings*; that, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with EXCEEDING JOY” (I Pet. 4:12-13).

No one likes to suffer. Certainly Christ did not look forward to pain and suffering. But He knew, as He endured these things, that He would soon be sitting at God’s right hand, restored to full glory.

During trials we are to focus on the glorious reward that awaits us, if we “endure unto the end” (Matt. 24:13)—throughout this life!

Of course, most people *do* think that trials are “strange”—that they are bad, painful and undesirable. They certainly are *inconvenient*. Most convince themselves that their trials are worse than everyone else’s, but this is not true. Christians have to train themselves to recognize that trials bring lessons—and lessons learned forge, temper and strengthen one’s character!

This is why the apostle James instructed, “count it all JOY when you fall into various *temptations* [trials]; knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience” (1:2-3).

Temptations are tests. And so are trials. God says to count these opportunities for building character as a time for “joy.”

Again, WHY?

Because of the “exceeding joy” that we shall have when Christ returns.

And we will receive a greater reward because of more character that has been built!

Peter also wrote, “Wherein you GREATLY REJOICE, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the *trial* of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it [our character] be *tried with fire*, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the APPEARING OF JESUS CHRIST” (I Pet. 1:6-7).

Peter added, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled...unto SALVATION ready to be *revealed in the last time*” (I Pet. 1:3-5).

“Without the presence of God’s Spirit within one’s mind—which produces the deep, inner peace that Paul wrote must “rule in your hearts” (Col. 3:15)—it is impossible to be happy.”

Is this now clear? Do you see the direct connection to trials *now* and greater reward *later*? No wonder God says we should be joyful during trials, temptations and persecutions.

Now you know what to do the next time you experience trials and difficulties. Do not become unhappy, wondering what is wrong—and moan, groan and complain as though something *bad* has happened. Instead, realize it is something that is very GOOD, IF received and used properly. Why, if you are building something “more precious than gold,” would you complain or feel unhappy about it?

Christianity Means Change

Becoming a Christian means a TOTAL CHANGE to a completely different way

of life. It means a whole different way of thinking and believing. You must recognize that people do not automatically understand all God’s ways at the outset of conversion. All wrong ways, values and beliefs must be *unlearned*, and everything that is good, pure and right—all things of God—must be *learned*!

God says, “For MY THOUGHTS are not *your thoughts*, neither are *your ways* MY WAYS, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

This scripture is profound and far-reaching in meaning. It involves everything we think, say and do, including how we view the subject of joy, happiness and living the abundant life. It means recognizing that this is what GOD wants. This may mean sweeping from your mind all previous false concepts of what you thought Christianity was supposed to be like.

If you are Christ’s, then your eyes are fixed on the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33). You understand that this is the biggest objective—the greatest GOAL—in your life! Never forget that *everything* in your life is subordinate to achieving salvation, and building character along the path to *that* end!

Pause and think for a moment. How many things could bring more peace and satisfaction than understanding why you were born and where your life is going? The excitement, joy, thrill and enormous contentment that flow from this confident assurance will dwarf every trial, difficulty, hurdle, obstacle and problem you will ever face in your life. If you truly grasp this statement, you have gone a long way toward comprehending *why* Christ said that His way represents a life more wonderful—more *abundant*—than most could ever imagine!

Serving God does not mean a loss of fun and giving up pleasures but rather understanding what *real* fun and *real* pleasures are—and enjoying them.

Putting God First

Let’s take a moment to read Matthew 6:33: “But seek you FIRST the kingdom



“God’s Spirit flows like a river, and it produces mightily in the lives of those who have it.”

of God, and His righteousness; and all *these things* [material blessings] shall be *added* unto you.”

John also wrote, “Beloved, I wish above all things that you may PROSPER and be in *health*, even as your soul [life] PROSPERS” (III John 2).

These verses express God’s will regarding receiving physical things—enjoying *prosperity*—in your life. In time, if you truly put God and His kingdom *first*, you have His sure promise that He will add physical—material—blessings to your life. It is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18). When He makes a promise, He keeps it—and He has promised YOU that “these things” will flow into your life, if you put Him first!

You can count on this!

Malachi 3:8-10 is an example of how this principle works in the mind of God—how He views faithful obedience. When we obey Him, good things happen—and sometimes *lots* of good things!

But be careful that you do not expect them right away. Also be care-

ful that you do not obey God simply because “there is something (material) in it for you.” Many Bible verses speak of the importance of being patient and waiting for answered prayers and blessings to come according to *God’s* timetable.

Also, we must be sure that we are pleasing God as a *regular* practice in our lives.

Let’s read an important verse that ties obedience to confidence and answered prayer. John wrote, “Beloved, if our heart [mind and conscience] condemn us not, then have we CONFIDENCE toward God. And whatsoever we ask, *we receive* of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (I John 3:21-22).

Take time to savor this verse. Internalize it and practice it—and then expect that God will give you all the physical things that you need.

Source of Enormous Power

Almost no one understands what Christianity really is. They have no

idea that it can bring them supreme happiness, beyond imagination. They have no concept that it represents fullness, richness, pleasures and overflowing with plenty, both physically and spiritually. They have no idea that boundless energy is available to them if they will but TAP it.

Here is what Paul wrote to Timothy in this regard: “For God has not given us the SPIRIT of fear; but of POWER, and of *love*, and of a *sound mind*” (II Tim. 1:7).

This verse is not about how to tap the better “inner you.” It is not about practicing “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” positive thinking derived from human strength. In the long run, these are not worth much. On their own, people fall short, and ultimately fail in the most important aspects of life. They are powerless to overcome weaknesses and faults—and to triumph in the end.

Paul is speaking about drawing upon God’s Spirit within a converted mind, and using it as a source of strength—of real power! He wrote the

Ephesians to “be strong in the Lord, and in the POWER of *His* might” (Eph. 6:10). This can be you. Enormous inner strength and power will flow into and through you, if you take advantage of the access that God offers you.

Read what Christ told His disciples about how God’s Spirit worked within them: “He that believes on Me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow RIVERS OF LIVING WATER. (But this spoke He of the SPIRIT, which they that believe on Him should receive...)” (John 7:38-39).

Have you ever stood by a powerful river and watched the current? I have many times. A big river carries enormous power and force—and Christ understood this when He chose this analogy. God’s Spirit flows like a river, and it produces mightily in the lives of those who have it. It radiates out of one who has it and brings love, faith, joy and peace from its Source—God.

This Spirit will help you meet challenges, defeat enemies, conquer fear and reflect cheerfulness. It will bring wisdom, knowledge and understanding, and drive anger, bitterness and anxiety away. It will replace discouragement with energy and hope. It will bring zeal to accomplish and remove confusion and indifference. It will take shattered dreams and shriveled feelings, and expand them to new horizons—and bring an *expectation* of success. It will take stress and turn it into productivity and fulfilling ACCOMPLISHMENT.

In James 1:17, God says that He gives every good and perfect gift. People cannot offer or bring to you the truly good things of life, but GOD CAN—and He says that He will if you come to Him and ask for help when you are in “time of need.” His answers are satisfying, and His strength is real—life-changing.

How sad that the lives of so many are so completely empty—so utterly devoid of joy, happiness and abundance. Many try drugs, fall into immoral lifestyles, pursue the wrong kind of entertainment, commit crimes, and otherwise get into trouble, simply because they are *bored*. They have no idea that their lives can be FILLED WITH PURPOSE. This lack of understanding is so un-

necessary, so far from what God intended for *every* human being.

Notice what Isaiah wrote: “...*every-one* that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1). You too can come to God and “buy” His “waters” (His Holy Spirit) when you have “no money.” Isaiah continues by asking, “Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?” (vs. 2). Billions do this continually.

This has been a critical principle that I have had to learn.

I lead a very active, busy life. I am generally able to work long hours, day after day, for long periods. But this was not possible (and would never be possible) until I learned to claim God’s promise and tap His strength for the physical energy needed on a daily basis. Take a moment to read Isaiah 40:28-31, and then claim God’s promise to RENEW the “weary,” the “faint” and those with “no might,” if they come to Him.

A Wonderful Way of Life

The vitality and abundance—and pure JOYFUL HAPPINESS—that can be yours is closer than you think.

But you must recognize that God offers an entirely new and different way of life. It means living “by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4; Deut. 8:3). This means studying God’s Word and drinking in its meaning. It means praying daily and seeking God with your whole heart—and resisting Satan the devil.

This also means periodically accepting the Bible’s correction, which can sometimes cut very deep (Heb. 4:12). But the converted mind seeks to grow at every opportunity. And receiving correction is also directly connected to happiness. Notice: “Behold, HAPPY is the man whom God corrects: therefore despise not you the chastening of the Almighty” (Job 5:17). Of course, no one naturally enjoys correction, but yielding to it produces a by-product described as the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:9-11).

So, if even *correction* can bring happiness, just think of the joy that will come from practicing the many other aspects of the Christian way of life.

Practicing God’s Way will lead you to be concerned for those around you. You will move away from self-interest and replace it with an interest in others. You will want to humble yourself and value the lives of others, more than your own opinions—and your own needs. You will feel good will and cheerfulness in your heart. You will want to smile, lead a life of vigor and reflect calm when standing in the eye of a storm. You will find courage to step out in full and complete faith, knowing that God is with you—that you are not alone! It means understanding that you “can do *all things* through Christ who strengthens [you]” (Phil. 4:13) and that “with God *all things* are possible” (Matt. 19:26).

Those around you cannot help but see these things. You will become an example to them—a light (Matt. 5:14) in a world growing darker every day (John 3:19-21; 9:4). They will see that you have found meaning and purpose in a confused, disagreeing, unhappy world! And knowing that you are doing this will bring its own happiness and satisfaction to you—because it is what God intends for His servants. Confidence will flow from this, but not *self-confidence*.

You will not find yourself constantly carping, griping, moaning and complaining about life’s endless “injustices.” You will not want to speak evil of others, but will want to lift them up, rather than pull or put them down. You will be able to conquer loneliness. And this conduct will generate a never-before-realized strength, boldness and confidence that will literally DRIVE YOUR LIFE!

This may cause people to ask you for help, encouragement or advice. They may see that your life is “together,” while theirs is not! People are drawn to strength—they are drawn to confidence. If you exude these things, radiating a power that is greater than anything they have seen, they may seek your help.

Of course, be sure that they *ask* for your help (and they may even *ask* why

you are filled with hope and cheerfulness—I Peter 3:15) and seem to really need it. Be sure that you do not go around pushing your beliefs and values on others. This will turn them off, and drive them away, producing the opposite of what you are trying to achieve.

But if people see that you always give others the benefit of the doubt, and are always willing to offer a helping hand, they will recognize you as *different* than everyone else. While they may not appreciate your doctrinal beliefs, they will very much appreciate your radiant attitude.

Remembering the Supreme Goal

Finally, you will always remember why God put you on earth—why He gave you life. You will want to seek

salvation, with zeal, vigor, enthusiasm and drive—and led by hope and faith—as though final success depends on your conduct *every day*. You will not want to compromise God’s Way or His truth—and you will enjoy richness and fullness overflowing as a result of this determined approach. This will give you more strength to address your problems and overcome them.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians to “rejoice evermore” (I Thes. 5:16). This is one of the only two verses in the Bible that contains two words, making it hard to forget. Yet it is a command from God to all those begotten of His Spirit. It is why a thousand years earlier, the Psalmist approached each day by saying, “This is the day which the LORD has made; we will REJOICE and

be GLAD in it” (Psa. 118:24). In the very next verse, he asked God to “send now *prosperity*.”

These are not vague, nebulous scriptures. They are clear, direct and *plain*—and vital instruction for you and me. John added, “truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ...THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL” (I John 1:3-4).

Your joy can be full, beyond your wildest dreams, if you walk and fellowship with God and Christ as a constant way of life that overarches your every word and deed.

Yes, you can live the rich, radiant, full, happy, joyful, ABUNDANT life. All you must do is be willing to leave the old way of life behind—go to the SOURCE—and begin! □

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