



## Beyond Survival: Life That is More

Jody Zilske – November 3, 2018

### Session One

Key verse: John 10:10 “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

#### **Introduction**

“Jesus was making a couple of claims. First, he is the resurrection. Jesus is the one who makes the future resurrection happen. He has the power of resurrection. He claimed that anyone who believed in him would not stay dead, but would be raised because of him! He also said he was the life. One who believes in him will have a life--what life ought to be. One of John’s themes is that Jesus came to bring life. By that he meant not just existence, but life as God intended.” Al Menconi

So what is abundant life? So we want to be careful not to misunderstand the abundant life Jesus refers to in our key verse, John 10:10. That word “abundantly” literally means “over and above, something further, much more than all.”

“On the whole, we are a society of notoriously numb people. Lonely, bored, dependent people who are happy only when we have killed the time we are trying to save. We worry constantly about making a living but rarely about making a life.” *Repacking Your Bags*, Richard Leider and David Shapiro

#### **Physical Survival**

The Rule of Three: In any extreme situation you can’t survive for more than: 3 minutes without air—3 hours without shelter—3 days without water—3 weeks without food.

Six basic survival skills and needs listed in the U.S. Army Survival Manual (you may find it helpful to employ this memory device, A-S-W-F-F-N):

1. **A=Attitude**: More than anything else, attitude can determine how successful you are and even if you live or die. To avoid panic, the manual suggests to employ the S-P-E-A-R mnemonic device: S=Stop, P=Plan, E=Execute, A=Assess, and R=Reevaluate.

2. **S=Shelter:** You need to know how to find/build a shelter. You can get into serious trouble, or worse, due to direct exposure to the elements.
3. **W=Water:** Many people who are lost will die due to dehydration.
4. **F=Fire:** One of the most useful survival skills to master: Warmth, cooking, and even psychological support.
5. **F=Food:** You need to know not only how to obtain food, but how to prepare it.
6. **N=Naturalist Skills:** The more time you spend in nature, the greater your knowledge of your environment. And the more in tune you are, the more likely you'll be to survive in the outdoors.

The first thing about abundant life is that it's not just about life here and now, it's about so much more. It's eternal, because we were born into an eternal Kingdom. For us to not see more than the physical, would be limiting the magnitude of God.

Author Hugh Ross believes we have difficulty understanding the immensity of God because of "our inability to visualize phenomena in a realm beyond our experience." He explains, "...What follows then from string theory and from all the recent findings in particle physics and astrophysics is that God must be operating in a minimum of 11 dimensions of space and time."

Abundant life is not only kneeling at the foot of His Throne, but at the foot of His Cross. Oswald Chambers wrote, "We need to understand that Gethsemane and Calvary are the gateway into abundant life."

In addition to it being eternal, abundant life is a life where the reality of who God is and who we are in Christ is being lived out in increasing measure—It's a life that glorifies God and worships Jesus—It's a life where we eagerly go to His Word each day—It is a life where we learn to wait in grace and run in His strength with single-mindedness of heart—An abundant life is where we allow the Holy Spirit to move more and more in our lives as we learn to hear the still, small voice, and we begin to obey what we hear—It's drawing close to God so that our lives begin to reach deep down into His where we become rooted—It's growing in our enjoyment of the journey and seeing the bigger picture when the particular scene we are in is difficult. Why? Because we know how the story ends.

Considering these things can be overwhelming so begin to prayerfully ponder what might be inhibiting you from experiencing the abundance of everything God has for us.

Possible inhibitors that you may encounter:

- A. Misguided affections: Colossians 3:2 says, "Set your affection on the things above, not on the things of the earth." Worthless longings, setting the heart upon the fulfillment of the temporary. Col. 3:5: "And

that means killing off everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. That's a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God.” (*The Message*) Misguided affections can also lead to a tithing attitude about your life (90% is mine to control, and I'll allow God to control 10%). In our attempt to manage our lives, we forget who God is and who we are in Christ.

“Many believers have spiritual dementia. They rapidly forget who they are in Christ. Wandering off from where they are cared for—the presence of God—they stumble along through life, sometimes more in the way than helpful.” *Knowing the Heart of the Father*, David Eckman

B. False Dependence: A false need, requirement, addiction, and craving. Gal. 3:3: “Are you so foolish and so senseless and so silly? Having begun [your new life spiritually] with the [Holy Spirit], are you now reaching perfection [by dependence] on the flesh?” (*Amplified Bible*) Dependence on the flesh denoted mere human nature apart from divine influence. The problem is not dependence but false dependence. The good kind? Depending on Jesus' Word (John 8:14) and the Word of God the Father (Romans 3:4). Oswald Chambers wrote: “Let the attitude of the life be a continual “going out” in dependence upon God, and your life will have an inexpressible charm about it which is satisfaction to Jesus.” We need to rely on God's supernatural sense instead of just our common sense. Chambers wrote:

“Is the Lord Jesus Christ being abundantly satisfied in your life or have you got a spiritual strut on? Never let common sense obtrude and push the Son of God on one side. Common sense is a gift which God gave to human nature; but common sense is not a gift of His Son. Supernatural sense is the gift of His Son; never enthrone common sense. The Son detects the Father; common sense never yet detected the Father and never will. Our ordinary wits never worship God unless they are transfigured by the indwelling Son of God. Are we living in such human dependence upon Jesus Christ that His life is being manifested moment by moment?”

Supernatural sense feeds abundant living; common sense feeds survival.

C. Ingratitude: A discontentment. An ungrateful heart releases a plague not only on the one who is ungrateful, but on all those connected to that person. It leads to judgment, bitterness and unforgiveness. Gratitude is more than a mere thank you. It is the gateway to an acceptable service or worship we offer God (Heb. 12:28).

D. Stagnancy: Having no movement. There's a real danger to being stagnant: Zep. 1:12: “It will come about at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit, who say in their hearts, ‘The Lord will not do good or evil!’” A stagnant spirit leads to a blaming heart. We need to stretch ourselves forward in Christ toward God. It's a spiritual determination fueled by God, leading us toward His presence.

E. Fear: Related to stagnancy because we don't move forward because we are afraid. Consider these fearful times as opportunities to not only get closer to God for His peace and comfort, but as times He can grow you past what the world made you. Paralyzing fear isn't rational as a Christian because we have a God who is

bigger than our fear. Consider how He intercedes on our behalf: 2 Sam. 22:13-20: He thunders from heaven. His voice resounds. He shoots arrows and scatters our enemies. He reaches down from on high and takes hold of us. He draws us out of deep waters. He rescues us from our powerful enemy, from our foes who are too strong for us. He brings us out into a spacious place. He rescues us because He delights in us.

F. Loss of Identity: We live as who we were before we were saved. Do we forget we've been bought with a price, redeemed by love and restored by grace? We're a new creation. (2 Cor. 5:17) Allow the Lord to remind you of your newness and take you past who you were in the world.

G. Blight: Similarities between natural and spiritual blight. Natural blight is a plant disease where the plants dry up, break off and collapse. As Christians we can become dry and collapse under the weight of trials. There are many contributors but the treacherous is loss of hope. Ezekiel 37: The Valley of Dry Bones: "He led me back and forth among them and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry." Verse 11: "Son of man these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say our bones are dried up and our hope is gone, we are cut off." Loss of hope can cause us to live a half-life, just barely surviving. Symptoms of spiritual blight can occur anytime during our walk with the Lord. Meeting with him and daily reading his Word and praying keeps us connected to our true source of health.

### Conclusion

Once we consider what hinders abundant life, Jesus poses an all-important question. In John 5:36-40, Jesus says, "These scriptures are all about me and here I am, standing right before you, and you aren't willing to receive from me the life you say you want." (*The Message*) We need to ask how willing we are to receive the life that Jesus has to offer.

When we go through a really rough trial we can become more rigid in our belief that we are victims. *We very often determine the direction of our lives based not on the lessons we've learned, but on the hurts we've experienced.*

There is hope. The answer to whether we can live an abundant life is a resounding yes. In 2 Peter 1:3 it tells us: "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness."

But do we know that divine power? If we truly want to know who Jesus is, we have to look at who *he* said he is.

**He is the way.** Jesus is not only the way to the Father, He's the way through the desert, through the valley, the doorway to the place of healed emotions and wholeness, and the pathway on which we stand and walk.

**He is the truth.** He is the standard that erases the grey areas of our lives, the truth that tears down our walls, invalidates our excuses, the truth that exposes and reveals.

**He is the life.** He is our sustenance who grows us up in the way we should go. His death provided a way back to relationship with the Father, and His resurrection paved the way to eternal life with Him.

## Application

Are you in a place where you are beginning to consider walking in God's abundance? It begins where everything begins—with a posture of repentance, humility, gratitude and a genuinely seeking heart.

Been walking with the Lord for a while but the past week, months, years have been difficult to say the least? Don't let your discouragement define your walk. It doesn't end well.

Lay it all at the throne of his grace and leave it all at the foot of his cross.

Take the time, today if possible, to get alone with the Lord. Lay all the difficult questions and doubts before him and wait.

Wait for his peace. Wait for his gentle response because the reality is—you are exceedingly precious to him.

## **Beyond Survival: Life That is More**

### Session Two

Looking at survival in the natural realm allows us to draw spiritual parallels. Because the original plan was for God and man to have relationship, he placed in us and in the natural world not only a survival instinct for our bodies, but what would be necessary to sustain a spiritual relationship with him.

### Spiritual Basics

Let's look again at the six things necessary for physical survival from Session One, but this time in a new light, given their spiritual importance.

#### **A-S-W-F-F-N**

**1. A=Attitude:** What has formed your attitude? Romans 12:2: Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. We need to stop allowing our attitudes to be shaped by the world and allow them to be transfigured by a renovated mind.

Instead of the S-P-E-A-R in Session One, let's employ another acronym:

## **S-W-O-R-D**

**S=Salvation**: When you understand what has been done for you—the sacrifice, the love—your attitude about the world changes. Now is the time to come to him and now is the time to rejoice in the sacrifice that was given for you.

**W=Worship**: Worshiping God sets your eyes and heart and your mind on Him, not on your own circumstances and limited understanding. Worshipping, serving, bowing down to God can alter your attitude.

**O=Obedience**: To obey is better than sacrifice. Not only is God aware of how we obey, the world is watching, too. Ro. 16:19: For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore, I am rejoicing over you.

**R=Remember**: What do we call to mind? Psalm 77: Psalmist remembers that God is the One who performs miracles. Willing obedience is the gateway to a transformed attitude.

**D=Dwell**: Psalm 61:4: Let me dwell in Your tent forever. Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings.

Abundant living requires a mind, an attitude, that is stayed on Christ.

**2. S=Shelter**: Shelter literally means hedged and shut in, to block and stop the approach, and to cover. The reality is when we get saved we no longer live in a temporary shelter we've created but instead, we live in the One who has created everything. Rev. 7:15-16: That's why they're standing before God's throne. They serve him day and night in his temple. The One on the throne will pitch his tent there for them; no more hunger, no more thirst, no more scorching heat. (Ps 27:5; Ps 31:20; Ps 55:8; Ps 61:4; Ps 5:11; Rev7:15)

**3. W=Water**: John 4:10: "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." John 7:37-38: Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If a man is thirsty let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." (John 4:10; John 7:38)

**4. F=Fire:** Matthew Henry: “Is fire enlightening? So the Spirit is a Spirit of illumination. Is it warming? And do not their hearts burn within them? Is it consuming? And does not the Spirit of judgment, as a Spirit of burning, consume the dross of their corruptions? Does fire make all it seizes like itself? And does it move upwards? So does the Spirit make the soul holy like itself, and its tendency is heaven-ward. Christ says, ‘I am come to send fire.’” (Mt 3:11; Pr 14:30)

**5. F=Food:** John 6:35: Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry...” John 6:51: Jesus says, “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.” Feast on God’s Word, feast on Jesus, the Bread of Life, and feast on the comfort of the Holy Spirit. (John 6:51; John 6:57)

**6. N=Naturalists Skills:** Why would God place this need for man to understand and be familiar with his environment? Phillip Keller wrote, “Yet divine revelation is irrevocably bound up with the basic subjects of the natural world...” He says that we need to “recognize the fact that God is author and originator of both the natural and supernatural (spiritual). The same basic laws, principles and procedures function in these two continuous realms. Therefore, it follows that to understand one is to grasp the parallel principle in the other.”

There is also another aspect to our environment that we need to be familiar with so that we can move beyond just surviving our time here so we can be equipped to thrive.

Eph. 6:12:

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

We live in an angry world that will only get worse. We need to understand where that anger originates so we can respond appropriately.

Choosing spiritual life translates into how we live life in the natural. One feeds the other. We choose. Is our spiritual life feeding our spiritual life? Or is our natural life trying to sustain our spirits?

Deut. 30:19-20:

“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, that you and your descendants might live! Choose to love the LORD your God and to obey him and commit yourself to him, for he is your life.”

In Eph. 5:14, we are told: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." We need to *decide to wake up and live!* Be encouraged and listen to the words of Oswald Chambers: “We all have any

number of visions and ideals when we are young, but sooner or later we find that we have no power to make them real. We cannot do the things we long to do and we are apt to settle down to the visions and ideals as dead, and God has to come and say, ‘Arise from the dead’. When the inspiration of God does come, it comes with such miraculous power that we are able to arise from the dead and do the impossible thing.” Don’t allow the enemy of your heart to tell you that the visions and ideals the Lord spoke to you are beyond your grasp, that the life, the abundant life, has passed you by, and that all that’s left for you is just a bare existence.

### **Conclusion**

Learning to live a truly abundant life is an ongoing journey, fueled not by feelings or by the seemingly impossible details of our current circumstances. It is fueled and sustained by the promises of God. It’s learning to trust amidst the fearful voices of the world and knowing—really knowing—who you are in Christ.

God by his very nature exudes abundance: abundant love, abundant mercy, abundant grace.

And finally, you know you are living in God’s abundance when you truly believe and understand that you have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus and that you have hope—a hope that is over and above any hope the world offers. In Him there is more than you will ever need.

Do you believe that God is enough, with a belief that transcends mere understanding?

### **Application**

How would you describe your life if it were an *abundant* life?

What might God be drawing you to? Is it to a deeper trust in Him in a seemingly impossible situation?

Is it to take a step out in faith? Consider what He might be calling you to.

Consider what might be obstacles that keep you from living in God’s abundance. Go through the possible inhibitors to obtaining abundant life on Session One, Pages 2-4. Which ones apply to you? Can you think of others?

What steps might you take to overcome those obstacles? (Refer to the suggestions in the Application section of Session One for ideas.)

*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotes are from the NIV.*