



Student Support Program

THE CHURCH OF Jesus Christ

Living Abundantly in 2014

Living with purpose and fulfillment requires a godly perspective



By Sister Michelle Watson

A new year stretches before us! For some of you, 2014 may bring graduation from school, your first "real" job, or even marriage. You may be asking questions like, "What do I want from life?" "Is my life on track?"

These are all normal questions, but I want you to add one more question to your list: "Am I living an *abundant life*?"

In John 10:10, Jesus says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." It sounds great. But what does it really mean?

Worldly Abundance

The world has its own definition of abundant life. I don't have to describe it to you because it's thrown in your face every day. Abundance is characterized by having a good job (and, by extension, loads of money), a

nice place to live, a spouse, some kids, plenty of time for recreation, and precious few problems. Abundant life means that your needs and wants are satisfied and you live in relative peace.

Every time you watch a movie, read a magazine, or see an advertisement, some part of this "dream" is subconsciously reinforced. And, to be honest, it sounds pretty good. So we buy into it.

Life has a "plan": Graduate from school, get a job, get married, and have kids. Preferably in that order. After that, you just have to make it to retirement. While it's fine to achieve those milestones, in and of themselves, they don't guarantee abundant life.

There are a lot of successful people out there who have great jobs, more than enough money, a spouse, kids, lots of possessions, and a beautiful home. Judging from their Facebook status

updates, their lives are perfect. But many of these people feel unhappy, stressed, empty.

How can that be? It's because worldly abundance can never satisfy us. We have a checklist of things that we "need" to accomplish in life, and we focus so intently on reaching the next stage that along the way we lose perspective on what really matters.

Godly Abundance

God has His own definition of abundant life, and guess what? To have abundant life, you don't need to have your dream job, a spouse, kids, a house, material possessions, or even necessarily an "easy" life.

Think about Jesus' life. He had a job to do, but He didn't have much money. He never married or procreated. He never even owned a home or many personal items. His life

was not easy. And He lived a fully abundant, purposeful, and perfect life.

Now you may be thinking to yourself, "But I *want* a good job, a home, a spouse, and kids. Do I have to give all that up to have abundant life?" No. But you do have to give up one thing — control. If God is your co-pilot, then you have to switch seats. Again, take Jesus' life for example. He fully submitted to the Father. You need to be willing to say, "God, I'm yours. Take my life and do what you want with it. If that involves the job I want, a spouse, or kids, then so be it. If it doesn't, so be it. I know your plan is perfect."

What's So Abundant About It?

You may be thinking, "Giving up control...umm...I'm not so sure about that."

Stick with me. I want to explain why an abundant life in Christ blows a regular ol' life out of the water.

You may be wondering, should I sell everything I have and move to the mission field? Some people do, but for others, an abundant life looks much more normal. By worldly standards, an abundant life may even seem average, but by God's standards, it's overflowing with fruit.

Worldly abundance is all about you. *Your* career, *your* family, *your* stuff. Things are important only as they relate to you or affect you. Your career is a means by which you increase *your* standard of living. Your spouse satisfies *your* need for validation and intimacy. Your possessions promote feelings of comfort and stability.

Godly abundance is all about...well...God. And by extension other people (Matt 25:40). You look at your career as an opportunity to share God's love with your co-

workers. Your relationship with your spouse exists as a living example of Christ's relationship with the Church. You readily share your possessions with others in need. In a nutshell, your life extends beyond the boundaries of your skin and touches others.

An abundant life changes lives. My husband's grandfather caught a thief in the act of breaking into his garage. Instead of calling the police, he gave him a key to the garage and said, "If you ever need anything, you don't have to break in." When he passed away, the would-be thief came to his funeral and said he never stole again and he kept the key as a reminder to stay out of trouble.

Fulfillment and contentment don't come by having everything. They come with *sharing* everything you have, from your love to your money. When you live outside yourself, sacrificing your comfort for His kingdom, it results in a life that's way more full and alive than anything you could've planned for yourself.

Abundant Trouble

Isn't all this *giving* and *sharing* kind of...inconvenient? Won't this add responsibility and stress to your life? Maybe you tried lending a helping hand in the past, and it was "more trouble than it was worth."

Many people mistakenly think that challenges, difficulties, and problems are *always* a sign that your life is off track. 1 Peter 4:12 says that we shouldn't be surprised when trials come. Everyone is going to face blazing, fiery trials at some point.

Now, I want to be crystal clear. Many of the trials we face are a result of our own sin. We mess up, and we have to face the consequences. God doesn't want us to sin. He doesn't want us to waste

time paying the piper when we could be progressing on our spiritual walk (Ephesians 5:11-16).

An abundant life isn't trouble-free, but those heavy burdens are really the eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17) in disguise.

Maybe you get laughed at for what you believe or you get rejected when you invite someone to church. Perhaps you're trying to help a friend who has a lot of problems, and it's exhausting. You sacrifice a lot of your personal time to church stuff. You tithe even though it pinches your pocketbook. These are the kind of "troubles" that characterize an abundant life.

Let's Abound!

So, as Solomon says, "Let's hear the conclusion of the whole matter." You can't live an abundant life apart from Christ. Even though the world says, "Pursue your dreams," God is saying "I have something prepared for you that's beyond even your wildest dreams."

It doesn't mean that you're going to live this amazingly crazy life that looks different than everyone else's. But it means that you're going to experience God in such a way that your cup overflows and spills onto others (in a good way).

Instead of striving to achieve life's major milestones (graduation, career, marriage, kids) for their own sakes, seek the Lord's face. As it says in 1 Peter 1:7, when you arrive at that "genuineness of your faith" which is "much more precious than gold that perishes," and after your faith is "tested by fire," you live to "praise, honor, and glory" in Jesus Christ. That sounds abundant to me.

And the best part? You don't have to wait till you "grow up" to experience godly abundance. It's yours for the seeking right now.