

11 – EXPERIENCE THE ABUNDANT LIFE

Dear Friend,

By the time you read this letter, you will have already been sent a gift worth well over a million dollars. This gift is simply to help you become aware of a service that our company is offering to you and everyone else. We hope that you will take advantage of this offer so you may enjoy the lifesaving benefits we can provide for you. We hope that others will notice your relationship with our company and desire to become a partner with us also.

In simple terms, we offer you top quality health care that will enable you to experience the best possible life physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and socially. You will discover that your life will be full of meaning, hope, joy, energy, and long life - real long life. In fact, our experiments are revealing that people will be able to have life without end. Three people we are working with are still alive after 3000 years. You may have heard about them: Enoch, Moses, and Elijah.

When you get to know us and our company, you will discover that we are faithful in all that we do: we are honest and trustworthy and have your best interest at heart in all decisions that are made.

If you choose to invite us to manage your life, we will ask you to give us access to everything. We will give you directions concerning how to live and guide you as to what decisions we want you to make. We want you to experience abundant life in every area: physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and socially. We are confident that you will be satisfied with the overall plans we have for you.

Our confidence is based on several factors:

- We have much experience in working with people just like you.
- We have a keen ability to accurately know the future.
- Having been involved in the creation of the world, we provided the owner's manual for the human race.

Our plans for you are based upon careful analysis and evaluation of who you are as a person:

- Your likes and dislikes
- Your strengths and weakness
- Your personality and learning style
- Your history and genealogy
- Your needs, as well as the needs of everyone else

You will always have the freedom to choose to follow your own plans if you feel they are better. Many people have done that and have found themselves in a big mess and in a lot of pain.

We are always willing to help people pick up the pieces, to help them experience healing, and to reaffirm our love for them. Since the healing process takes time, we do not promise quick fixes or instant gratification. However, if you do choose to give us permission to manage all of your life, we can make the following promises:

- You will have peace that passes all understanding.
- All of your basic needs will be taken care of.
- Your life will make a positive impact on the lives of others.
- If you die, you will be resurrected with no more pain or death.

With love,

Jesus, The Creator and Savior of the world

TRUST THE SHEPHERD; TURN FROM THE THIEF

1. How does Jesus contrast His mission with Satan's? John 10:10,11

Satan _____

Jesus _____

The contrast is very clear: Satan steals and kills; Jesus gives life that is abundant. However, Satan is very clever. He doesn't present himself as a thief and a destroyer. His temptations and attractions appeal to our natural desires. He makes sin look enticing and pleasurable.

However, sin only brings temporary pleasure. In the end it leads to pain, broken relationships, and death (Heb. 11:25; Gal. 5:19-21). Satan loves no one. He tries to use people for his purposes and then destroy them.

On the other hand, Jesus loves us unconditionally (Romans 5:6-10). When we experience the pain and brokenness caused by sin, He says, “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest . . . for your souls.” Matthew 11:28-30. (See also Psalm 107.)

2. How else does Jesus refer to Satan? John 8:44

Satan creates many lies in order to deceive people. He also mixes truth with lies to create confusion and make his lies harder to recognize.

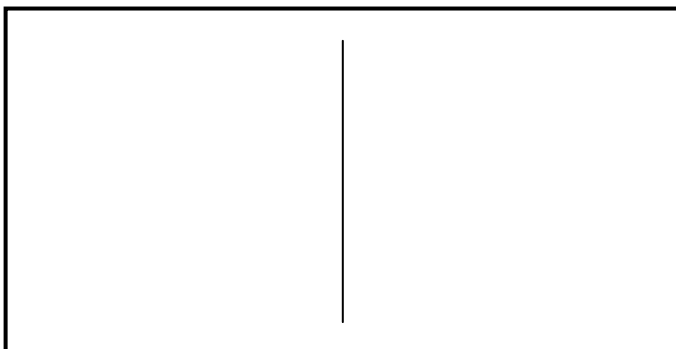
3. How can we discern what is truth and what is a lie?

- A. John 7:17 _____
- B. John 8:31,32 _____
- C. John 16:12,13 _____
- D. Rom. 12:1,2 _____

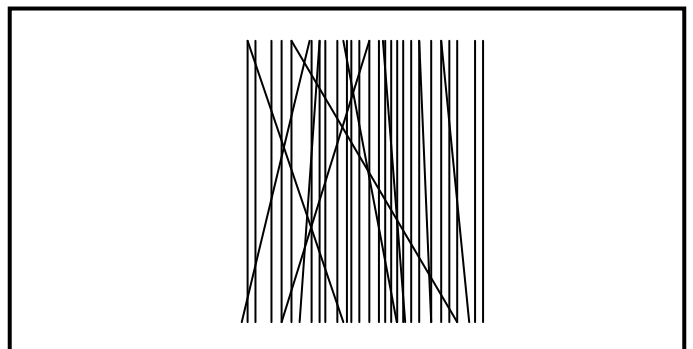
When we choose to surrender to God’s will, Jesus assures us the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. As we replace lies with the truth from the Bible, our lives will be transformed from within.

4. An Illustration: The boxes below are the same size and shape. The box on the right has the same line, in the same position, as the box on the left. Can you identify which line it is in the right box?

The Line Represents God’s Truth



Lies Mixed With Truth



Through measurements a person can discover which line in the right box is the same as the one in the left box. Also, when we prayerfully study the Bible and surrender to God's will, the Holy Spirit will be able to lead us into all truth and help us to discern the lies of Satan (John 16:12,13).

WHAT DOES THE ABUNDANT LIFE LOOK LIKE?

Jesus promised "life. . . more abundantly" John 10:10. If we misunderstand what the abundant life is like, we might expect Jesus to give us something He hasn't promised. If our expectations are wrong, we will think Jesus has failed us and that He isn't trustworthy.

5. Read the story in John 4:4-42

A. What did Jesus need? What did He offer the woman? 7, 10

B. What did Jesus know about the woman's past history? 17,18

C. Why was the woman excited that Jesus knew all about her? 29

D. After being with Jesus, how did the Samaritans describe Him? 42

Jesus offered "living water" that would truly satisfy and be "a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" John 4:10,13,14.

The Samaritan woman responded, "Give me this water that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw" John 4:15. She wanted Jesus to make her life easier on earth. She wanted less work to do. We often want the same thing: An easier life, less work, more time to relax and play. We think this would be the "abundant life," the life that is truly worth living.

Jesus didn't give the woman what she asked for. He also doesn't promise us a life of ease. He knows we need something far more significant: inner peace, unconditional love, joy in serving others, patience, forgiveness when others have hurt us, and hope for the future.

6. Who does John say the living water represents? John 7:37-39

The living water represents the Holy Spirit. (See also Isaiah 44:3). Through His perfect life and death, Jesus earned the right to give the Holy Spirit to all who ask (Luke 11:13; John 1:33; 14:15-26).

7. Read Galatians 5:22,23-Do you like being around people who have the fruit of the Spirit? Would you like these fruits in your life?

These are the qualities everyone is longing for. We can't produce them on our own. However, we often seek for them in unhealthy ways. For example, people seek love through sex, joy through entertainment, peace through pleasant circumstances, and being good to others so they will be good to us. The counterfeits will always leave us feeling empty and hurt.

Below there are questions that reveal what the fruit of the Spirit is like (+ sign). There are also questions that reveal the opposite (– sign).

Contemplate how God has manifested these qualities in His relationship with the human race. Thank Him for what He is doing to produce these in your life. Acknowledge those areas where you have fallen short. Give Him permission to transform you in those areas you need to grow in. Remember He will complete the work He has begun in you. (Phil 1:6).

Love

___+ Do you choose to love others as Jesus has loved you?

___– Have you built “walls” around your heart to protect yourself from getting hurt? The walls keep you from giving or receiving love.

Joy

___+ Do you find joy in being with Jesus and choose to rejoice in the midst of trials because you know He will help you through them?

___+ Do you find joy in being led by God to be a blessing to others?

___– Is your joy based on entertainment, circumstances, activities, possessions, or people that are around you?

Peace

- ___+ Do you have peace as a result of trusting God in all circumstances?
- ___- Do you live with anxiety, fear, and guilt much of the time?
- ___+ Do you surrender your life to Jesus each day and have assurance you will live forever with Him based on His perfect life and death?

Patience (Longsuffering in dealing with people)

- ___+ Do you have an inner security that enables you to look beyond the faults of others and minister to their needs?
- ___- Do you easily get offended or irritated by what others say or do?
- ___+ Are you able to be patient and concerned about others even when you are mistreated, misunderstood, or ignored by them?

Kindness

- ___+ Are you focused on serving God and being a blessing to others?
- ___- Are you more focused on satisfying your own needs and desires?

Goodness

- ___+ Do you choose high moral, ethical & Biblical standards to live by?
- ___- Do you take advantage of others in order to benefit yourself?

Faith / Faithfulness

- ___+ Have you experienced the love and faithfulness of God that leads you to trust Him in all areas of your life, without murmuring or complaining, while you wait for Him to lead and provide?
- ___- Do you find yourself looking to God only when you are in trouble or are in need of something that you want?
- ___+ Having been created and redeemed by God, everything we have and are really belongs to Him (1 Cor. 6:19,20). Can God trust you to seek His wisdom each day so you may learn how to use your time, energy, talents, and resources that you may be a blessing to others?

Gentleness

- ___+ When others criticize you, do you seek to understand them in order that you may grow and also that you may learn how to love them?
- ___– When others criticize or hurt you, do you criticize or hurt them back? Do you hold onto resentment and try to avoid them?
- ___+ Are people able to share honestly with you without fearing you will react negatively by withdrawing, getting defensive, or retaliating?
- ___+ Are you able to honestly share with others and speak the truth in a spirit of love and concern, even if they react negatively?

Self-control

- ___+ Do you choose to surrender to God’s will for your life, knowing that He loves you and that His will is always best in the long run?
- ___+ Do you confess and repent to God and others when you recognize you have strayed from His will or hurt someone in any way?
- ___– Do you satisfy cravings in unhealthy ways, experiencing temporary pleasure or relief, but then more guilt, shame, and pain later?

SUCCESSFUL ON EARTH, EMPTY ON THE INSIDE

8. What questions did a rich young ruler ask Jesus? Matt. 19:16-26

v. 16 _____

v. 20 _____

9. Thought Question: What do you think the young man lacked? v20

10. What role did the young man have among the Jews? Luke 18:18

11. What did Jesus invite the young ruler to do? Matthew 19:21

Jesus assured the rich young ruler that keeping the commandments perfectly was the only way he could “earn” eternal life. The man thought he had done this, but he knew he lacked the love, joy, and peace that he saw in Jesus’ life. He was successful on earth, but empty on the inside.

If he had followed Jesus, he would have discovered He was “the Savior of the world” John 4:42. He would have experienced “the living water” that truly satisfied and never ran dry (John 4:10,14). The truth would have set him free from his selfishness, pride, and love for money (John 8:31-36). He would have received what money could never buy—abundant and eternal life with God. He chose instead to walk away.

12. How did Paul describe His life before His conversion? Phil 3:6

Just like the rich young ruler, Paul described himself as “blameless” in relationship to the law. But when He came to know Jesus, he realized that everything he relied upon to make himself acceptable to God was worthless (Philippians 3:7,8).

13. What are the two different ways of relating to the law? Rom. 7:6

A. _____

B. _____

Paul compares the letter of the law with the spirit of the law. The letter of the law relates to our outward behavior. The spirit of the law includes our thoughts and also has love as the motivation of all our behavior.

Both the rich young ruler and Paul (before his conversion) had a shallow understanding of the law. They thought that outward actions were all that mattered. That is the way it is with human laws. Police will not arrest us for thinking unhealthy thoughts, for they have no way of knowing what we are thinking. But if we act on those thoughts and do something wrong, then we are seen as lawbreakers. As humans, we can also fall into the trap of thinking we are “righteous” as long as we look good on the outside or don’t get caught doing something wrong.

God's perspective is different. He "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. . . . All things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account" Hebrews 4:12,13.

In Matthew 5 -7 Jesus revealed how the spirit of the law goes much deeper than the letter of the law. Love is what matters, not simply looking good on the outside. The empty life focuses on behavior. The abundant life focuses on the inward qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Love or Murder In The Heart-“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘*You shall not murder* and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” Matthew 5:21,22.

Purity In Thought or Lustful Adultery - “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘*You shall not commit adultery.*’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” Matthew 5:27,28.

Forgiveness or Desiring Revenge - “You have heard that it was said, ‘*An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.*’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” Matthew 5:38,39.

Being a Blessing Or Embracing Bitterness - “You have heard . . . , ‘*You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.*’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” Matthew 5:43,44.

Loving God or Loving Money - “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,. . . . For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... You cannot serve God and mammon” Matthew 6:19-24.

Living For The Glory of God or Practicing Lawlessness – Jesus said some people will make a profession to follow Him, but He will say to them, “Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” Matt. 7:21-23.

OUR ENEMY - THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH

14. What law helped Paul understand what sin is? Romans 7:7

Some might think Paul was denigrating the law when he said we were delivered from the law. However, Paul says the law of God is not the problem. In fact, the law is what helped him understand what sin really was. The commandment against coveting pointed out that sin included selfish thoughts and desires and not just outward actions.

15. Read Romans 7:8-12

A. How does Paul describe himself “without the law?” (v. 9)

B. What happened “when the commandment came?” (v. 9)

Before Paul understood the spiritual nature of the law, he thought he was spiritually alive. He thought he was righteous and worthy of eternal life. He described himself as “blameless” as far as the law was concerned (Phil. 3:6). But when he understood God’s perspective and saw the spiritual nature of the law, he recognized how great a sinner he was. His proud heart was humbled. His self-esteem, based upon his performance, was destroyed. He realized he was actually spiritually dead.

The deeper meaning of the law revealed to Paul that all he had done to “earn” eternal life was worthless (Phil. 3:7,8). He realized he was far from righteous and deserved death. He discovered he was “dead in trespasses and sins” and helpless to do anything about it (Eph. 2:1-5).

16. Read Romans 7:13-23

A. What was Paul sold under and captive to? (v. 14, 23)

B. What did Paul find himself doing? (v. 15,16,19)

C. What did Paul discover was the problem? (17,18,20-23)

D. How did Paul describe himself? (v. 24)

Paul describes the frustration we have when we understand the deeper significance of the law and honestly try to follow it *in order to earn acceptance with God*. When this is our motive, God allows us to attempt to obey on our own. For if He helped us fulfill our selfish motive, we would think we had earned salvation partially through what we have done. This would encourage a spirit of pride within us. (Eph. 2:6-9).

Having tried to obey in his own strength, Paul discovered the real problem was “the law of sin” that dwelt within him (Rom. 7:23). The law of God was not the problem, for it is “holy and just and good” Rom. 7:12. He learned that he had a sinful nature that was wretched and selfish and unable to do anything that was good.

Our wretched condition is not a surprise to Jesus. He never expected us to earn His acceptance and salvation through our obedience. In His letter to the church in Laodicea, He tries to help people see their true condition, as well as the solution He has for each of one of us:

“You say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see” Revelation 3:17,18.

We are spiritually blind. Without the Holy Spirit we are unable to understand the truth about ourselves or the plan of salvation. He is the eye salve that enables us to see. He is given to all who ask for Him.

We are spiritually naked, for “all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” Isaiah 64:6. Jesus invites us to “buy” His white robe by “exchanging” our filthy garments for His perfect one.

We are spiritually poor. We have nothing to offer others until we are born again and find security in Christ through His unconditional love. His love is the gold that enables us to love others as He has loved us.

17. How does Paul summarize his internal conflict? Romans 7:25

A. With his mind he chooses to serve: _____

B. With his flesh he serves: _____

Paul could choose to “serve the law of God,” but He had no power to carry out that choice. He discovered his “flesh” would always “serve the law of sin.” He knew He needed a Savior to transform Him on the inside.

18. What truth does Paul share that gives us hope? Romans 8:1

There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Remember there are two levels of being in Christ. (See page 75.) God placed everyone in Christ when Jesus came to earth as our Savior (1Cor. 1:30). As the last Adam, Jesus represented the human race and redeemed us from the curse and condemnation of the law (Gal. 3:13). Everyone is now free to choose to receive Jesus as their Savior or to cling onto sin. Those who love sin are the ones who will be condemned (John 3:19).

In Romans 8:1, the phrase, “. . . who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” is not included in many translations. Why? Most Greek manuscripts do not have it there. All manuscripts have the phrase in verse four. There is evidence that some scribes took the phrase from verse four and added it to verse one thinking it should be there.

19. What sets us free from the law of sin and death? Romans 8:2

The law of sin could be likened to the law of gravity. It is always pulling us down. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus could be likened to the law of aerodynamics.

Utilizing the law of aerodynamics, airplanes are able to overcome the law of gravity and fly. As a result, people are able to experience something that is impossible on their own.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit overcomes the law of sin within us and enables us to experience the abundant life that consists of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These are the qualities that truly make life worth living.

An illustration – Try holding a book in your hand with your arm straight out to the side. How long can you hold it there? Eventually the law of gravity overcomes our muscles and causes us to bring our arm down. The law of gravity is a constant force; our muscles are not. In the same way, the law of sin is a constant force. Our will power is like a muscle trying to overcome the law of sin. Eventually the law of sin will prevail. Fortunately *the law* of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is able to set us free from *the law* of sin.

20. How did God deal with the “sin in the flesh?” Romans 8:3

“Sin in the flesh” refers to our sinful natures that are selfish. Our love is focused on ourselves. Our sinful nature is also referred to as “iniquity” in the Old Testament. The root meaning of the Hebrew word translated iniquity is bent or crooked. Our love is bent inward. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” Isa. 53:6.

Our sinful nature needed to die, not simply be refined. God condemned our sin in the flesh and laid our iniquity on Jesus. He took it to the cross.

21. What is fulfilled in all who walk according to the Spirit? Romans 8:4-6

Jesus fulfilled the law FOR everyone through His perfect life and death. The Holy Spirit fulfills the law IN all who receive Jesus as their Savior.

22. What happens when we are connected with Jesus? John 15:4-8

The focus of the Christian life is not about trying to be good. We are invited to abide in Jesus and let Him abide in us. The fruit of the Spirit will then be produced within us [super] naturally.

The abundant life will then be experienced by all who recognize they are wretched and choose to surrender the lives to Jesus day by day.

DISCOVER THE POWER

By Clinton Meharry, © 1998, 2009

Discover the power,
The gospel power,
Of Jesus' love for you.

When helpless you feel,
Before Him you kneel
And surrender your life today;

Discover the power,
The dynamite power,
When Jesus lives in you.

He'll give your heart
A brand new start,
And transform you day by day.

There's nothing to fear,
When Jesus is near.
His death has made you free!

Discover the power,
Compelling power,
Of Jesus' love for you.

There's no need to hide
With Him by your side.
He redeemed you at Calvary.

Discover the power,
Miraculous power,
When Jesus lives in you.

Discover the power,
The healing power,
Of Jesus' love for you.

In a world of pain
The mission is plain,
Love others as Jesus loved you.

Discover the power,
Transforming power,
When Jesus lives in you.

Discover the power
In this final hour –
What love and truth can do!