

Life Abundant

Saving Private Ryan begins and ends with an elderly James Ryan walking through the American cemetery at Normandy. He collapses at the grave of Captain John W. Miller, whose squad sacrificed their lives in order to get Ryan to safety. Three of his brothers had died in the war and James was ordered home. As James visits the graves of his comrades, he ponders the question, “Have I lived a good life?”

Chuck Colson wrote *The Good Life* in 2005, pondering the fact that he had spent the first half of his life climbing the ladder of success only to be upended by the Watergate scandal. In prison he found Christ. At 43, Chuck was born again and began living the abundant life God promises.

Three Life-Changing Blessings that Come from Following Jesus:

1. _____ (Freedom) As You’ve Never Known

- a. *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:1-2.* Being set free from condemnation, sin, and death enables us to really thrive as never before!
- b. When Colson was born again, God turned the lights on so he could see his sins and confess them and experience God’s forgiveness. He also knew he had to make things right with others, including owning up to the crimes he had committed.
- c. Do you truly want to be free of sin and condemnation? Own up to your sins and as best you can, make things right. *“If I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will repay back four times the amount.” Luke 19:8.*
- d. Freedom lies in obedience to our calling. True freedom gives you the ability to obey God. Emily Colson writes of the joy of raising an autistic son in *Dancing with Max: A Mother and Son Who Broke Free.*

2. _____ (Fulfillment) As You’ve Never Known

- a. *“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.” Romans 8:5-6.*
- b. Dennis Koslowski climbed the corporate ladder and found worldly success that led him away from God. Which wall do you have your ladder leaning against? The wall of pleasing self or pleasing God? *“What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?” Mark 8:36.*
- c. We please God by first seeking his Kingdom (Matthew 6:33). *“Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm*

37:4. If you want to live a life that really matters, start by seeking God and then ask him to reveal your other priorities.

- d. Galatians 5:16-26 gives you a road map to pursue fulfillment in life. *“Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” Galatians 5:16.* Ask God to grow the fruit of the Spirit in your life (love, joy, peace, patience kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) and you will impact many with God’s love and power.

3. _____(Family) As You’ve Never Known

- a. *“Those who live by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him, we cry, ‘Abba, Father’. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” Romans 8:14-16.*
- b. Do you want to live a life that really belongs? Your church family consists of brothers and sisters who are living under the care of our Abba Father (“Daddy”). Two marks of the true Christian are: 1) You will sense God speaking to you (vs. 14), and 2) God will convict you when you sin.
- c. *“For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.” Romans 8:13.*

You can live a life that really thrives, really matters, and really belongs! In the midst of a 28-day hospitalization where he lost 30 pounds, Chuck Colson was still able to lead former CIA Director Bill Casey to Christ. God can use you, in even the darkest of situations, to impact the world for Christ. Do you want to live the abundant life that Christ promises?

Discussion Questions

Life Abundant

1. Did you see the movie *Saving Private Ryan*? What did you think as you watched James Ryan collapse before Captain Miller's grave, asking his wife if he lived a good life? As you review your life, do you think you've lived a good life to this point? Why or why not? Do you have a period in your life where you were climbing the ladder of success like Chuck Colson in his early years? What did you learn from this?
2. Read Romans 8:1-17. What is taught in the first two verses about being set free from condemnation, sin, and death? How does this allow us to live a life that really thrives? Have you observed or experienced how dabbling in sin can lead you into deeper sin? How did Chuck Colson experience this? How did Chuck attempt to make things right after he became a Christian? How did Zacchaeus make things right in Luke 19:8? Do you agree that "freedom lies in obedience to our calling"? What does it mean that "true freedom gives you the ability to obey God"? What can we learn from the life of Emily Colson as she learned to care for her autistic son?
3. Read verses 5-6. What does it mean to live a life that really matters? How did Dennis Koslowski come to the end of himself? Do you know anyone like that? What did Jesus teach in Mark 8:36 about living your life to please yourself? What is taught in Matthew 6:33 and Psalm 37:4 about living your life to please God? Have you ever asked God to reveal his priorities for you? What other priorities are important to you after putting God first? How is Galatians 5:16-26 a road map for living a fulfilling life? What does it mean to "live by the Spirit"? Have you ever asked God to grow the fruit of the Spirit in your life? What are the hardest fruit to live out day by day?
4. Read verses 14-16. What does it mean to live a life that really belongs? Do you see your fellow believers at church as your brothers and sisters in Christ? Do you see God as your Abba Father ("Daddy")? How did Jesus pray in Mark 14:36? Do you believe that a true Christian will experience God speaking to them (see Romans 8:14)? Do you believe that a true Christian will be convicted of their sin when they fall to temptation (see Romans 8:13)? Are you fighting the good fight against sin on a daily basis?
5. Do you think you are living a life right now that thrives, matters, and belongs? Why or why not? How was Chuck Colson able to minister in the midst of an excruciating 28-day hospital stay? How has God used you in the midst of adversity? Do you want to truly live the abundant life that Jesus offers?