

The First Step to Truly Enjoying Your Life Again

Before the plane even backed away from the gate, the captain gave us a disturbing warning: "It's been a rough day in the air, folks. Prepare yourself for tremendous turbulence."

As the words tremendous turbulence seeped into my mind, I wondered if it was too late to make a run for the door. I had a tight schedule, and our flight was already delayed, so I knew waiting for another flight wasn't an option. Plus, it was unlikely I'd be able to get off the plane, given that we had already backed away from the gate. So I tightened my seat belt, took a deep breath, and said a prayer for safety.

All was well the first 30 minutes of the flight, but then the captain's warning became a reality.

It was the worst turbulence I'd ever experienced. The plane rocked back and forth, up and down. Heads were bobbing, necks were jerking, and I could hear luggage sliding around in the overhead bins. When the flight attendant began distributing sickness bags, I wondered if I would soon need one.

To make matters worse, the pilot could not land the plane because of the high winds and heavy rain. After flying in circles around the airport for over an hour, the plane was running out of fuel. We couldn't wait any longer for the storm to blow past, so air traffic control rerouted our plane to another state, and we were finally able to land.

Yes, I said "another state," not another airport. And, yes, I said "running out of fuel." Mercy.

I didn't really believe we would crash, but the possibility of that happening still made me a bit anxious. I knew that plane crashes are typically avoidable and highly unlikely and that

our captain and flight crew were experienced and capable of getting us safely to our destination.

But still ... what if?

What if the worst happened?

Was I ready to die? Had I lived life to the fullest? Did I have any regrets? Should I have done things differently? Should I have laughed more, loved stronger, hugged harder, and lived more abundantly? Should I have done more for other people? Had I let problems and busyness steal my ability to enjoy life?

That flight seemed to last forever and a day, and I had a lot of time to think. I thought about all my loved ones, especially my three precious children. What were my last words to them? Were they kind or were they harsh? Were they words filled with love or with detailed instructions of what they were to do during my absence? When was the last time I had told my parents, siblings and friends how much they meant to me?

Then my thoughts began heading in a new direction. Did I have any unfinished business, fences that needed mending, or people I needed to forgive and extend grace to? Were there friends I had been meaning to call or visit but hadn't taken the time to? Was there anything God had called me to do that I hadn't done because of lack of time, procrastination or a fear of stepping out in faith? What had I done lately to serve others and be the hands and feet of Jesus?

My thoughts continued to spiral. If I never made it back home, had I prepared my children spiritually and emotionally to be able to handle life, follow their hearts, trust God and walk in faith? Had I taught them life is precious and meant to be enjoyed? Did they know and believe it is possible to have a positive mindset and live an optimistic, joy-filled life in good times and in bad? Had I been a good role model for living

out these truths?

Had I lived as if I truly loved my life?

As I stared out my little oval window at the rain pelting the side of the plane, I intentionally began to fill my mind with new thoughts. All the things that had consumed my mind when I boarded the plane lost their urgency as I pondered the life I had been given and how I had been living it.

I began thanking God for all the gifts He had given me, starting with the small, everyday blessings I usually take for granted and ending with the people, things, pleasures, blessings, and faith that make my life worth living. I promised God and myself that if I ever got off that plane, I would intentionally and purposefully enjoy the life He had given me. I determined to be grounded in the truth, live the truth, and allow that truth to fill my mind with joy and contentment. To love my life every single day, even when problems or difficult circumstances raged around me, threatening to steal my joy.

I averted my gaze from the window and looked down at my travel bag, noticing my Bible sticking out of the top. I reached down and picked it up, determined to find a distraction from the storm outside and the one inside my head.

The first verse I looked at was James 4:14: "How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone." Wow. How timely. To say the least.

In this chapter, James was reprimanding the wealthy for making plans without acknowledging God's control over their lives and for their tendency to prioritize worldly things that rather than on what was important from God's perspective. They had gotten so caught up in "doing life" and carrying out their oh-so-important plans that they had forgotten how priceless the gift of life truly was and overlooked the importance of making

God the foundation of their thoughts, feelings, plans and actions. They had lost sight of what matters most—that life is a gift to enjoy.

We too can get so caught up in our to-do lists, striving to achieve success, reach our goals and acquire more stuff, that we forget to love the life we've been given. Or we can become so consumed with focusing on all the things in our lives that aren't going as we would like and allow our adversities to rob us of joy and optimism and gradually develop a bitter, negative outlook. All of this causes us, much like the people James was addressing, to inadvertently take the gift of life for granted, neglect to aim for living with God's perspective and forget all the reasons we have to be thankful for the life we've been given even when it's not the life we thought we'd have.

Sweet friend, you don't have to search for a different life in order to enjoy life; you simply have to embrace the one you have by putting Christ at the center and asking Him to help you enjoy life, despite life.

In Ecclesiastes 3:12-13, Solomon summarized what he learned in his search for a happy life: "I experienced that there is nothing better for them than to be glad and do good in their life. And also that everyone should eat and drink and experience good in all their labor. This is a gift of God." Simply put, Solomon realized we can't know how long we'll live on this earth. He discovered that life is a gift from God and meant to be enjoyed.

When was the last time you felt joyful about your life? Regardless of what may be breaking your heart and stealing your ability to feel happy and joyful, God's desire is for you to delight in the life He is allowing you to live, starting today. In fact, He has already equipped you to enjoy life even during those seasons when you feel broken, confused, frustrated, overwhelmed, underappreciated, disillusioned,

disappointed or just plain bored with the humdrum of your life.

If you're longing to love life again, I invite you to join me on a journey to start doing exactly that. Within the pages of my book *Unsinkable Faith*, you will find tips, tools and practical steps to help you live life to the fullest. Everything you do as you learn to love your life again will be a faith-fueled step in the right direction. You can't change how you responded to yesterday, but you can change how you respond to tomorrow. It's within your power to experience the satisfying life you've been hoping for.

The first step to loving life again is believing it is possible for you.

Today can be the first day of the rest of your abundant, joy-filled life. Are you ready? {eoa}

*To learn more about how you can begin experiencing this transformation in your life too, purchase a copy of Unsinkable Faith: God-filled Strategies for Transforming the Way You Think, Feel and Live by **Tracie Miles**.*