

The Secret to an Abundant Life

I'm sure everybody desires to have a good life. But what do most people consider the good life? Many go after a bigger house or car, a better-paying job while others seek education, marriage or other achievements with great passion. And many are convinced these are the things that will give them happiness, peace and fulfillment.

But the truth is these things will not give the lasting peace and joy most of us really desire. Matt. 6:33 tells us to "seek first the kingdom of God..." And Rom. 14:17 informs us that "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (NKJV).

I want to encourage you to pick up your Bible and begin to study the kingdom of God. If you have a concordance, just look up the word "kingdom" and see all the scriptures there are on the subject.

Seeking the kingdom simply means to desire God crave an intimate relationship with Him. It's about wanting to know God and not just what He can do for you. There is quite a difference between seeking possessions and seeking God.

I'll never forget one time the Lord spoke to my heart and told me, "Joyce, seek My face and not My hand. If you seek My face, My hand will always be open." In other words, God was telling me to seek Him above everything else, and He would always provide for me.

God was saving me from myself in a sense, because while I had things that I wanted, I was beginning to realize I still was not a very happy person. That was because of what was happening inside. I didn't really know who I was in Christ, and I certainly didn't have any peace or joy because I was

still living with the effects of childhood abuses. But I had my things. Well, that didn't really mean much, because no matter what you have, if you do not have righteousness, peace and joy, then you are not living in the kingdom of God.

Righteousness

I believe we all want righteousness, peace and joy in our wouldn't? But how do you get them?

I think a good first step is to stop trying to get things and start learning who you are in Christ. Our pursuit of things like more money, fame, a big house or a promotion at work has a way of distracting us from our pursuit of Christ. When that happens, we can begin to feel guilty about not doing the things we think we should. We may begin to wallow in condemnation and forget that Jesus died for our sins, and we have been made the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. And because of that, we do the right thing simply to please Him and not to get something from Him.

When you know how much God loves you and all He's done for you, it makes you want to sin less. The thing is, Jesus already knows everything we'll ever do, right or wrong, and He loves us anyway. He has already paid for every sin we will ever commit.

Peace

When you know who you are in Christ, you will experience peace. Because being peaceful is not based on the things that happen to you; it comes from abiding, or living, in Christ. You have the Prince of Peace living inside of you! You can decide to have peace in the storms of life because you know there is victory on the other side of every one.

Peace is vital to us because life is unpredictable. I get up every morning and decide to have peace. I do that because I never know how somebody else is going to act. We can't control

other people, but we can control our responses to them. A cranky co-worker, someone cutting you off in traffic, a clerk making a mistake at the of that can keep us upset when we have the peace of Christ.

Joy

God wants us to enjoy our lives. That used to be a big problem for me. Because of the sexual, physical and emotional abuse I endured growing up, I never really got to be a kid. So, when I married Dave, I thought he just wanted to goof around all the time! He wasn't irresponsible, but he was determined that whatever he did, he was going to enjoy it. I learned a lot from that.

Neh. 8:10 tells us that "the joy of the Lord is [our] strength." Joy can range from calm delight to extreme merriment. It's not necessarily about being upbeat all the time, but instead, being secure in your faith and trusting in God enough to just be yourself and enjoy and share the precious life He has given you.

Life in Abundance

The bottom line is this: "The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance..." (John 10:10). God wants His children to have a good life. Because of everything we have in Christ, we should be the example of what good living is. You really can have lasting joy and peace in your life. It just begins with putting God first.

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