

Who doesn't want an "abundant life"? Most people want to be happy. They want to experience a meaningful and joyful life. They want to live without things like fear, guilt, pain, and bad experiences. Most want their lives to have meaning and purpose. And people all over the world are looking for answers and trying to attain that kind of life. In our culture, we are bombarded with opportunities for pleasure, wealth, knowledge, and all kinds of experiences. And yet, more and more people are coming up empty in their pursuit of a peaceful, meaningful and significant life.

Is it even possible? Can we actually have an "abundant life"? What was Jesus talking about when He said that? How do we get that kind of life? What does God have to do with all of this? Is God even interested in us? Does God care about me personally?

God is real. He is also very interested in you. He wants you to understand what is true, and He wants you to experience an abundant life! He wants you to be able to live your life to the fullest!

BUT... there are some things you need to understand if you're going to be able to experience the life being described. The most important and beneficial thing you can ever do in your life is to get to know God, personally. A relationship with Him is the greatest thing you can have. It's what He has created you for. Jesus called it eternal life! It is full, abundant, and it will last forever!

The Bible is what God has given to us so that He can communicate truth with us. (John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is His word to us, His message for us. And the Bible tells us some very important things about what it means to have a relationship with God –

1. God loves you and wants you to know Him, and experience His love

God is good, and He loves you. He wants you to have a wonderful and meaningful life. The Bible talks about God loving people with "an everlasting love." He wants us to know Him personally and experience "eternal life."

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. – John 3:16

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. – John 17:3

If God truly loves us, and wants us to know Him and experience an abundant and full life, then why are so many people not experiencing that?

2. Mankind is sinful and separated from God

By nature, we are selfish. Pride. Ego. Rebellion. Arrogance. The Bible calls it sin. All of us are born with it. As a race, humanity has rebelled against God, is now separated from Him, and is not experiencing a relationship with Him.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. – Romans 3:23

The wages of sin is death. – Romans 6:23

As it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one." – Romans 3:10-12

Mankind was created to have a relationship with God, but because we have rebelled against God, that relationship was severed. Whether active rebellion, or passive indifference, the result is separation from God.

The Bible says the result of our sin (our nature) and our sins (our actions) is death.

- Physical death is the body being separated from the spirit.
- Spiritual death is separation from the source of spiritual life -- God.
- Ultimately there will come a "second death" which means being forever separated and facing God's judgment and wrath for our sin.

It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment – Hebrews 9:27

Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead – Acts 17:31

This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire – Revelation 20:14-15

The question is then, "How does someone 'get right' with God? How is that relationship with God restored?"

Many have tried to rebuild and restore that relationship through their own efforts. Trying to be "good," giving generously, living a "good life," being religious, thinking rightly (philosophy), or simply being sincere, are some of the ways that mankind tries to unite with God.

Inevitably, all attempts fail. No one can reach God, because no one can meet His righteous and holy standard. Everything that mankind tries comes from a foundation of our sin.

So, what is the answer?

The bad news is that we are separated from God. The good news (gospel) is that God has provided a way for us to be reunited with Him.

3. Jesus Christ is God's one and only provision for man's sin. Through His death on the cross, we can be forgiven and come into a personal relationship with God.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us – Romans 5:8

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit – 1 Peter 3:18

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." – John 14:6

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 6:23

God did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

His righteous standard demanded that sin be penalized, and that justice be met. His love for us prompted Him to offer to pay that price Himself, by offering His own Son to die in our place.

It is not enough simply to know about God's plan and provision of salvation – One must decide to repent and through faith receive Christ as Lord and Savior.

4. We must individually receive the gift that God has offered us. By faith we believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, and we receive Him as God's gift to us, and payment for the penalty of our sin.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name – John 1:12

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. – Ephesians 2:8-9

(Jesus speaking) "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me." – Revelation 3:20

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. – Acts 2:37-38

What a person does with the person and message of Jesus Christ is the most important decision they will ever make.

Unlike any other religious founder, Jesus Christ claimed to be God in the flesh. He claimed to offer an atonement and redemption for those who would believe in Him, taking Him at His word. He was raised from the dead to prove that His message was true. Buddha is dead. Mohammed is dead. Confucius is dead. Moses is dead. As significant as any one of them was in his time, they were unable to conquer the grave. They were also unable to pay for their own sin, let alone for anyone else.

Jesus' death satisfied God's wrath for sin. Jesus lived a sinless life. He fulfilled God's standard of righteousness, fully. Buddha, Mohammed, Moses, and Confucius by their own admission, were not perfect. They did not possess righteousness. Only Jesus Christ the Righteous, possesses the very thing we need to be able to stand in a Holy God's presence.

When someone turns from their own sinful life, and by faith receives Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, Jesus takes their sin upon Himself (at the cross) and gives them His righteousness!

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. – John 14:6

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. – 1 John 4:10 (propitiation = atoning sacrifice; satisfied God's wrath)

To repent is to change one's thinking and behavior. It means to turn from the false things of this world, to the one true God. One becomes a Christian through faith, by trusting in Jesus Christ and what He offers us. It's not by going to church, getting baptized, doing good things, giving

to the poor, being sincere, or even being born into a Christian family, as significant as all those things are. One must make a conscious choice to accept what God has offered us in Christ.

The only way one can become a part of God's family is to believe in Jesus Christ. Faith, or believing, is not merely cognitive belief or intellectual assent (cf. James 2:14-20). The Scriptures refer to believing and confessing that He is Lord. This involves one's intellect, will, and emotions. Perhaps the best English equivalent of biblical faith is to entrust oneself.

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. - Romans 10:9-10

One must receive Jesus Christ, as they would any other gift. To "receive" Christ as one's Lord and Savior is an act of faith. It involves accepting the Gospel message and acting upon it. Confession (agreeing with God about sin), and repentance (turning to God from sin), are evidences of a true and saving faith.

Do you recognize your need for forgiveness from God?

Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

Do you realize that He is the only way to receive forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and eternal life?

The following prayer is an example of the way in which one can receive Christ. If you have not received Christ, and this expresses the desire of your heart, you can express it to God, and receive Christ by faith, trusting in Him, and His word.

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I confess my sin to You and thank You that You died on the cross for me. I receive You now by faith, and I trust in you as my Savior. Teach me to follow You as Lord, and to walk in the new relationship You have offered me. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.

The Bible says, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Did you call on the name of the Lord? God says if you call on the name of the Lord you'll be saved. Remember, it's not about how you feel, it's about what is true. And what is true is Christ's promise.

As a new believer, one does not understand everything about the Christian life. One must grow as a Christian. That's one of the goals of our church. We are here to help each other grow in our relationship with God as we are following Jesus together.