Abundant life is what everybody wants and needs. We would like to have abundant life that undergirds, overflows, satisfies, and lasts. We seek life with a capital “L.” It is this very life that Jesus promises.

Some of us can remember when we saw our first pressure cooker. It was a marvelous new cooking convenience that enabled food to be cooked in perhaps half the normal time. This pressure cooker has become a symbol of the world in which we live—a pressure cooker world of noise, confusion, hassle, and commotion. We feel the pressure boiling in us as though we lived, indeed, inside a pressure cooker.

In recent years the three best selling drugs have been Tagamet for ulcers, Inderal for hypertension, and Valium for nerves. It is reported that more than a hundred million people are on tranquilizers. Two-thirds of all the people who will be sitting in a doctor’s office tomorrow will be there because of stress, nervousness, or mental reasons. Half of all the people in hospital beds at this moment are suffering from mental or nervous disorders. The Center for Disease Control says that 52 per cent of all the deaths in America, from age one to age sixty-five, are caused by stress-related symptom. We are born into a world of stress. We must live and die in it.

I want to share with you the very best way I know to live an abundant life in a world of stress. As Peter gave us instructions on how to suffer, he said, “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). The best way to have abundant life is to follow Jesus. Paul said, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

The one person who lived the abundant life to the fullest was Jesus. How did He do it?

An Optimistic Outlook

Jesus maintained an optimistic outlook. He knew what it was to suffer and have pain. He knew what it was to cry. In three passages we are specifically told that He wept,1 but He must have wept on other occasions as well. The world of which He was a part was a tyrannical, terror-filled world. Jesus grew up in a world where a man could be snatched

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away by Roman soldiers, and no one could ask a question about it. He lived in a world that was economically depressed. Yet, He always looked upon life optimistically.

As Jesus approached that awful death that He would die on the cross, He did not mention the cross a single time without referring to the crown. That is, He did not speak of His death without speaking of His resurrection. He was saying, “But just look what is beyond My death.” As He neared the end of His life, He was very positive. He said, “I go to the Father. I lay down My life that I might take it again. I will come again. I will receive you to Myself, and where I am you will be also.” He always had an optimistic view of life.

If we get up in the morning on one side of the bed, we have a list of reasons why we are happy today. If we get up on the other side of the bed, we have a list of reasons why we are sad today. We have to choose which side of the bed we will use to get up. There was more than enough to make Jesus the saddest person that we have ever met, and there was more than enough to make Him the gladdest person we have ever met. He chose to be the gladdest, not the saddest.

Recently, I had the opportunity to be with one of our finest gospel preachers. I had known him by reputation, but at this time I had the opportunity to hear him preach. What I had not known before, but discovered then, was that his wife had been mentally ill for twelve to fifteen years. Through the years that they were rearing their teen-age children, she was mentally ill, and her personality totally changed. She became confined to a mental institution. But whenever you hear this man preach, or wherever you see him, he is always a humorous, happy person. I believe the reason he can have this attitude is because he has the abundant life in Jesus.

**Helpful Relationships**

Jesus lived an abundant life because He maintained helpful relationships with others. From the very beginning of His ministry, He associated Himself with good people. He was with Lazarus, Mary, Martha, Mary Magdalene, Nathanael, Philip, Peter, James, and John. He had good people on every side of Him. I believe that will be helpful to us.

We read, “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals!’ ” (1 Corinthians 15:33); “Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not proceed in the way of evil men” (Proverbs 4:14). Suppose we leave the worship service and go immediately into the midst of people who have no love for our Lord, and they are our companions. The result is that we will be dragged down. We follow Jesus in abundant living as we choose to surround ourselves with God’s people.

**Effective Management of Time**

Jesus had abundant life because He learned the secret of managing His time. Most of us do not learn this lesson. Jesus had more to do and less time in which to do it than any of us. He lived only thirty-three years, and He had only three years to do His work. He said, “We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

Even though He had much to do, Jesus had time for people and for frequent interruptions. He had time for a woman who was tugging on the hem of His garment (Matthew 9:20). He had time for a blind beggar who sat in the dirt by the side of the road in Jericho (Mark 10:46). He had time for a short fellow who was in the top of a sycamore tree calling down to Him (Luke 19:5). He had time for a dying thief who said, “Jesus, remember me” (Luke 23:42). Somehow, if I am to live the abundant life, I must learn to make time for God, for others, and for eternal things.

**Appropriate Physical Care**

Jesus lived an abundant life because He cared for Himself physically. He did not develop habits that would destroy His life. He believed in exercise. He walked continu-
ously. In fact, during the time of His ministry, as He walked from Capernaum to Jerusalem, it was close to a hundred miles. A hundred-mile walk! We know that He made that walk at least four times.

Jesus also believed in rest. He said to His apostles, “Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). Jesus believed in caring for His body, and so should we.

**A Spiritually Disciplined Life**

Jesus lived the abundant life because He had a spiritually disciplined life. The Bible says, “And in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there” (Mark 1:35). “He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12).

Jesus had many moments of private devotion. He had already been in heaven, and He was going back in a few days, but He felt the need every day on earth to be with God. Those who would live the abundant life are those who take time every day for God to speak to them through His Word, and for them to speak to God through prayer.

**A Consistent Life**

Jesus lived the abundant life because He lived a consistent life. The Bible says He did no sin. He was tempted at all points like as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Christ had no regrets. He came to the end of His life with no bad feelings about what He had done.

Few things in this world can destroy the abundant life more completely than a soiled conscience—to know that you have done wrong and to go on doing wrong, to know that you are lost and to go on being lost. The Bible says the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest (Isaiah 57:20). If you have ever been on a troubled sea, you know what that means. You toss this way and that way when you live a wicked life. Christians are new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). The old man is crucified, we are buried in the water, and then we are raised to walk a new life (Romans 6:4).

The grandfather of a young boy I baptized told me what the younger brother of the boy said after they got home. He looked at his parents and asked, “Does this mean that my older brother is not going to treat me mean anymore?” That was a good question. That is what it ought to mean. When one is baptized, it ought to mean that he will be a different person. We do not go out with the same gossiping tongue or lustful mind tomorrow because, having been buried with Him, we walk in newness of life.

**Conclusion**

I wish for you, your family, my family, and myself, an abundant life. The way to have it is to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ.

Not too long ago, I had the opportunity to visit one of the oldest church buildings among the churches of Christ. It is the Philadelphia church meetinghouse located in Warren County, Tennessee. It was built in 1830 and is still in use. Underneath that structure are huge cedar beams that have lasted 130 years and look as if they will last another 130 years. The scars made by the ax marks are clearly visible all around the building. I was impressed by the two doors. As was true of all respectable church buildings years ago, it has a door for the men and a door for the women. The women go in and sit on their side, and the men go in and sit on their side. I also noticed that the doors had no knobs and no latches. They seemed to say, “Come in. There is nothing to stop you. There is nothing to hinder you. No latch, no lock, no key, not even a handle. If you want to come in, just open, push the door, and come in.”

That is how it is with the abundant life. One can stand outside thinking about it all of his life. He can stay outside saying, “The reason I do not have it is. . . .” and point to a relative or somebody in the church who is not living right. Or he can do what I did at the old Philadelphia church—just push the door and enter. “I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.”