



# True Abundance

Barbara Dahlgren

Christ came so we might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). Some preachers want us to believe this refers to wealth and prosperity. They encourage people to go boldly before God and claim this promised abundance. These “health and wealth” or “name it and claim it” preachers measure faith by how much God blesses us materially. That is not what this scripture means. God is not some big “sugar daddy” in the sky anxious to fulfill our every request.

The primary focus of the Christian life should not be on getting things. It would be difficult to find scriptures that focus on Christians getting instead of giving. The Bible leans more towards contentment than wanting more, more, more (1 Timothy 6:8-9, Philippians 4:1-3, Hebrews 13:5).

In fact, Jesus said that a man’s life does not consist of the abundance of the things he might possess (Luke 12:15). If we seek first the kingdom of God, we won’t have to be overly concerned about such matters (Matthew 6:31-33). If we humble ourselves before him, he will exalt us when the time is right (1 Peter 5:6-7).

I’m not saying an abundant life precludes riches or worldly success, but it does not depend on it either. Paul knew this better than anyone. He knew how to be abased or exalted, have a full tummy or an empty one, to abound or suffer—and through it all be content and give thanks (Philippians 4:11-13; Ephesians 5:20). In other words, we can experience the abundant life even if we are going through major trials or poor as church mice.

The first part of John 10:10 tells us thieves come to steal, kill, and destroy. The world’s focus on physical possessions can actually rob us of the abundant life Jesus refers to in this passage. People try to fill up the emptiness in their lives with fame, fortune, and success. It never works. They always feel a void.

Actor and comedian Jim Carrey once said, “I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it’s not the answer.”

What is the answer? Jesus! Only Jesus can fill that void.

If we read the whole passage of John 10, we see it’s about Jesus being our Good Shepherd, about we his sheep hearing his voice, and about his door always being open for us. The context is about Christ-followers having access to Jesus and having a positive relationship with him.

The life referred to in John 10:10 is eternal life, everlasting life, or life now without fear of death. The phrase “more abundantly” is the Greek word “*perissos*” meaning “beyond, more, and above measure.” It refers back to the word “life.”

And that, my friends, is what the more abundant life is all about. Not only do we receive eternal life, but as an added bonus we can have the opportunity to participate in a relationship with Jesus Christ—the One who makes it all possible. Not only did Jesus come to give us eternal life, but even more than that, he lives his life within us right now.

His presence in us adds something immeasurable or abundant to our existence. He is what makes our life worth living in spite of how much money we have or don’t have in the bank.

Humanity views abundance in terms of physical possessions. God has a different perspective. His abundant life is filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, compassion, humility, character, enthusiasm, dignity, optimism, confidence, honesty and a close relationship with him. No matter how much money we have, we cannot buy more patience, wisdom, hope, self-control, or salvation. ***In other words, the more abundant life is full of all the things money can’t buy.***

Money cannot buy us the more abundant life, but God is willing to give it to us if we let him. The more we open our hearts to God, the more abundant our lives will be. Abundance is not always about having more possessions— sometimes it’s about having enough. □

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*The photo above is from Monte Wolverton’s blackberry patch, which he refers to in his column on the next page.*