

Finding the Abundant Life

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Foreword by
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Foreword

It's been years since the Feminist Movement robbed women out of their rightful roles and blessings of how God designed women to be. Though it's goal was to give women the same rights as men, it has served to cause women to have no choice but to become single mothers, provide not only for themselves but often their male cohabitant. Women have not freed themselves from men, as it said it was set out to accomplish, but instead, women have become obsessed with having a man, any man at any cost. Not surprisingly the Bible's prophet said times like this would come. Isaiah 4:1 The Message (MSG) says, "That will be the day when seven women will gang up on one man, saying, 'We'll take care of ourselves, get our own food and clothes. Just give us a child. Make us pregnant so we'll have something to live for!'"

It's women like Michele who have been called to blaze the trails for women who will soon find themselves, alone, without a husband or children or family. In this five book series, Michele takes us along on her journey that didn't lead to her regaining what she lost, but finding a relationship so strong, so fulfilling and so peaceful that she is an inspiration to all of us.

Much of what I read in this book, when it was first only available to women in her church, I've used to help the women in my own ministry. Each of us needs to glean the unspoken truths, wisdom and freedom that Michele has experienced and has shared with us in this dynamic book for women.

I'm honored to call Michele my friend, and it's through what she has transparently shared with us in this book that will help us each discover how we can rise above every situation He calls us to go through.

Erin Thiele

Restore Ministries International

———— Chapter 1 ————

What is the Abundant Life?

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;
I came that they may have **life**, and have it **abundantly**.
—John 10:10*

What is the Abundant Life?

The abundant life is the life that I am finally living. It is a life that is “joy unspeakable” because it is full of God’s glory! It is a life that, I believe, Jesus died to give us, but very few ever reach in their lifetime! In the Amplified Bible, it defines this life as “abundantly [attaining yet greater perfection in living this life].”

Over the last few months, the Lord has brought me into a new life, a life of abundance. This life seemed something that was unattainable for me and for most Christians. My life was a life of struggle, not a life of ease that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 11:29. “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find **rest for your souls.**”

Though my journey toward the abundant life is not at all complete, I can tell you that I have attained the **rest** for my soul and joy unspeakable, full of glory!!!

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen,

*ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice **with joy unspeakable and full of glory**: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:7-9, KJV).*

We read verses like John 16:33. *“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace, In the **world** you have tribulation, but take courage; I have **overcome the world.**”* All we ever focus on is *“in the world you have tribulation,”* since that is how we live day in and day out.

This life of tribulation, of struggle, of pain and of sorrow is not God’s plan. It is not why Jesus came to this world to live and die for us. I believe that we are to live a life of joy that is so incredible you can hardly describe it—a **joy** that is *unspeakable* because it is full of God’s glory!!

Just as Jesus’ power came through the cross, I believe that it is in our cross that we, too, will attain the power to live this kind of life that is to be envied by the world. Our lives are to be a life that will illuminate the darkness in today’s world; a life that becomes a beacon of light to guide the lives of women who are lost in darkness. In the midst of their darkness, our light can point the way to the One who can give them their own abundant life. *“For whatever is born of God **overcomes the world**; and this is the victory that has **overcome the world**—our faith” (1 John 5:4).*

May you never forget that *“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).*

Must we wait until we get to heaven before *“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4)?*

I used to think so, but not any longer.

Since finding this life, I have had the insatiable urge to share this life with every woman I know! It is beyond freedom, it is far beyond finding peace—it is a life that makes you want to burst out in song and dance!!

This life was not attained through any means that is unavailable or unattainable to anyone. That means that what I have now, you can have, and you can give it to your friends, your daughter, your mother or your

sister! Surprisingly, it is not in what I attained, but was, in fact, when I lost everything!

Didn't Jesus tell us that? Were we not listening, or did we not have the right ear to hear it? "*For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it*" (Matt. 16:25).

As Christians, it seems that we often have a "head knowledge" of this principle and many other principles that Jesus told us about when He ministered to His apostles or when He shared the Beatitudes to thousands—but we don't live that life. We don't walk it out. We have the faith to *believe* that it works, but we don't walk out that faith; therefore, "faith without our works is dead" (James 2:26).

For most of us, our existence is a life that is dead or dying. Yet, Jesus died so that we could have LIFE and have it abundantly! That word *abundantly* means to me a life that overflows with good things—beginning with joy!

Ladies, this life is attainable to each and every one of us. I have found over the course of these past few months that it is found in losing the life that we all struggle to keep. It is in truly surrendering our lives and living out the principles that are all found in the Bible, but are never really lived, that bring that joy that eludes most of us.

In the course of my first restoration, I walked out the principles found in the *Restore Your Marriage* book and attained a restored marriage. However, I walked these principles out with so much fear and trepidation because of the level of my faith at the time. What was worse, however, was that I was seeking the life that I wanted. It never occurred to me that I could be happy (let alone joyful) if God did not restore my marriage. So I prayed specifically (as we are taught in Bible studies to do) and followed the principles (that our ministry has always encouraged a woman to do). Since finding my abundant life (when I lost everything), I realized that Jesus also told us how we were to pray, which was "Thy will be done."

What got my attention was when I began to see the women whose marriages were restored, but were living lives of struggles, pain and heartache, and that motivated me to move from where I had settled in—this side of the Jordan. This side of the Jordan is just next to the desert but

sits on the banks of the river. It appears green with abundant water, but it is not the land promised.

Because of the questions sent to me from restored women which were mingled with struggles, pain, fear and bewilderment that I also was experiencing, I set out once again to seek God for what He wanted to do in my life:

“For thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land . . . The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘and in this place I will give peace,’ declares the LORD of hosts” (Hag. 2:6, 9).

Honestly, I had no idea what I was searching for, but God was calling me to come higher and to again set off for new and uncharted territory in order to bless His daughters who He had entrusted to me.

What I found was the fountain of youth, the inner peace, the true meaning of life, the secret of life and why we were created—all in an instance. I found it in this verse below that the Lord had given me more than ten years ago but has baffled and confounded me until just weeks ago. I read it almost every day and even spoke to others about what they thought it really meant. I knew God had given it to me, and it just may be the key to unlock the mystery of the abundant life I was searching for.

*“Therefore, thus says the LORD, ‘If you return, then I will restore you—Before Me you will stand; And if you extract the **precious from the worthless**, You will become My spokesman. They for their part may turn to you, But as for you, you must not turn to them” (Jer. 15:19).*

It may seem simple enough, but its true meaning had eluded me for years. I reread it, added parts to help it make more sense and even wrote two words to the end of the verse when I asked God to give me more understanding. Here is what I would read “Therefore, [Michele], thus says the LORD, ‘If you return, then I will restore you—Before Me you will stand [alone]; And if you extract the precious from the worthless, You will become My spokes[wo]man. They for their part may turn to you, but as for you, you must not turn to them [for hope or help]” (Jer. 15:19).

It was the “**precious from the worthless**” that had me the most baffled. I kept looking at different things in my life and tried to compare them to see if it was *precious or worthless* to sort out if I should *extract* it from my life. It took me so many years to discover what I really knew in my head, but I had to discover it in my heart. Ladies . . .

He is precious—everything else is worthless!

You may think that you know that and think I must be incredibly stupid. However, unless you are living a life that shouts that principle, it is just head knowledge!

I knew that once I “got it” God would call me to be His spokesperson! Prior to this revelation, I was a woman who was happy if she never left her home—now I am traveling around the world! It is this principle, I believe, that changed Jesus’ apostles from hiding in an upper room to being men who would be martyred and even hung on a cross.

The abundant life is one that is surrendered. Surrendered to all the wants that we think will make us happy and all the control that we think we need to have on our lives (and the lives of all the people around us). I, like you, thought that this was the life that I was living. I had made Jesus Lord of my life, but I never really contemplated finding the life that I was created for, which I am now finally living.

The first reason we are all created is to fellowship with God. When I began to yearn deep in my soul to walk with God in the “cool of the day” like Adam did, walk with God like Enoch did and see Him face to face as Moses did, I had no idea how to do it. So I asked God to show me how, since all wisdom is from above and He will give wisdom to anyone who asks.

In my search, my heart began to change toward what was motivating me to find out how to have this type of intimacy with the Lord. Instead of wanting it for what intimacy would do for *me*, I found that I soon wanted deep intimacy for Him, my Beloved. I wanted above all to be the woman He created me to be—His companion! I wanted to be so close that we could fellowship together and be as deeply in love with Him (because He deserved that) as He was with me.

The discovery of precious and worthless was found when a missionary visited our church and told a story of a little girl that he had found who was living on the streets and dying. The missionary was called to leave India to come to the states. He had to say goodbye to this little girl, and he knew it would be the last time he would see her alive. When he hugged her, he was so broken and sad when she said, “You do not need to be sad for me, because I have Jesus. Jesus is all I need. He is everything. I have everything that I need.” This year was the second time I had heard the story, but this time it changed my life forever!

I began to tell the Lord that He was all I wanted, He was all that I needed and that if I had Him I had everything I needed! The more I said it, the more He became the love of my life. What I was speaking became what was in my heart! When troubles came against me, I would tell the Lord that He was all I wanted and all I needed. Immediately, whatever came against me no longer mattered, and it lost its sting and its affect over me.

This mindset changed my heart to be able to not just endure, but more than overcome the destruction that came against me (our family and my ministry) with my husband announcing he was divorcing me. It is in the midst of these kinds of crises that you will be brought to heights of joy that become unspeakable!

You will have Him as this little dying girl had Him and how I have Him now. If that were not joy enough, “and all these things will be added unto you,” the little girl that was dying was healed, whole and healthy when the missionary returned. She had Jesus, and He was all she needed to live. I am not dying, though my husband just divorced me a month ago, and I am now the single mother of six. But I, too, have Jesus and He is all that I need to live the abundant life!

I hope that this first chapter has increased your thirst and desire to have more of Jesus—to know Him intimately as He becomes everything you want and need. You do not need to let go of anything but simply do what God led me to do. Begin right now to tell Jesus that He is all you want, He is all you need and if you have Him you have everything. When trials come against you say these words over and over again until what is happening (or what has happened) no longer matters.

Say these words when you wake up every morning and when you lay your head down on your pillow at night. Say them out loud, in your heart and when you go into your prayer closet.

When your head knowledge becomes a heart condition nothing will hurt, nothing will bring you to fall apart, and nothing will shake you. If you are hurting, if you are falling apart, if you are shaken or trembling then you need **more of Him**. Precious one, more of Him is not found in reading *about* Him in your Bible, quoting Scriptures or rebuking the devil. It is found in intimacy *with* Him.

That does not mean you no longer read your Bible (these are your love letters and your promises from Him.), and it does not mean that you do not quote Scriptures (since these renew your mind so you think like Jesus does), nor does it mean you no longer pray (just begin to pray by sharing your heart and hurts but leaving what should be done to Him—**Thy** will be done!). As far as the kind of praying that I used to do (the spiritual warfare kind), I have discovered that with the Lord as my Husband He loves to fight my battles for me. My position is by His side, as His bride, to focus on my love and cherish Him as He longs to be cherished.

If you are a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit and a wife who has been rejected, Jesus is calling you to become His bride! Will you? Will you leave it all behind (the worries, the pain, the questions and the burdensome relationships) and pursue Him alone?

“For the LORD has called you, Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, Even like a wife of one’s youth when she is rejected,’ Says your God... For your Husband is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth” (Isaiah 54:6–5).

About the Author

Michele Michaels came to Restore Ministries International when she was facing divorce. At the time she was the mother of two small boys. After reading *How God Can and Will Restore Your Marriage* and *A Wise Woman* and she began helping Erin Thiele with her books, soon after they met while each were in Orlando, Florida. Very soon after Erin visited Michele in her home in Colorado, her marriage was restored.

Almost exactly fourteen years later Michele found herself facing divorce again while helping to update and revise a small Facing Divorce booklet for her church. After returning to RMI to Refresh her mind, Michele began to realize He had planned to use this trial for much good. It was during this new chapter in her life when Michele discovered the real reason God allowed another divorce to happen again and what she had been missing: The Abundant Life.

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