

LIVE YOUR ABUNDANT LIFE

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With Rev. Richard Maraj

MESSAGE

So this ambitious young boy buys a donkey from this farmer. And he's hoping to try to make some money off it, because he's very entrepreneurial. And so the farmer agrees to deliver it the next day to him. And when he delivers, the farmer says, *"I've got some really bad news and that is: the donkey died."*

And so the kid thought for a second and said, *"Well, then, can I just have my money back?"*

And he said, *"No, I'm sorry; I spent all the money already."*

And the little boy thought again and he said, *"Okay; why don't you just unload the donkey?"*

And the farmer said, *"What are you going to do with a dead donkey?"*

And he said, *"Well, I'm probably going to try to raffle him off."*

The farmer said, *"You can't raffle off a dead donkey!"*

He said, *"Yeah? Just watch me! I'm just not going to tell anybody that he's dead."* [Congregation laughs]

So a month later the guy sees the kid in town. And he says, *"Hey, so how did things turn out with the donkey?"*

He said, *"Well, I sold 500 raffle tickets at \$2 each; I grossed \$1,000 and I made a profit of \$998."*

He said, *"Didn't anyone complain?"*

He said, *"Yeah; only one person. The guy who won the donkey."* [Congregation laughs]

And so he said, *"So what did you do?"*

He said, *"Well, I gave him back his \$2."* [Congregation laughs]

That's not a great joke!

So today the message is entitled, "Live Your Abundant Life." How many people would like to live a more prosperous or abundant life and experience more prosperity than you are right now? But here's the bigger question: What is one thing that you could change or add or do differently that would make your life better? That would make your life happier? That would make your life fuller? What would be that one thing that you would do or change that would help you live your abundant life?

Would that one thing be some more money? Or a job? Or a promotion? Would it be a relationship? A bigger house? A nicer car? More friends? More travel? More free time?

I would suggest if you're looking at the long haul to have a more enduring experience of abundance, I would say the thing that would need to change is how effectively we use our mind energy.

In John 1, Verse 1, it says: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

Dr. Rocco Errico, who is an Aramaic scholar -- and Aramaic is the language that Jesus spoke -- said that the word "Word" actually meant in Aramaic "mind energy." In the beginning was mind energy, and the mind energy was with God, and the mind energy was God. That the mind energy -- the Mind of God; the power of God; the power of the Word -- is what created the world. That mind energy -- God -- said, *"Let there be light,"* and there was light.

This mind energy is the life force. It is the creative intelligence. It is the power of love and peace and joy, wisdom and healing and unlimited goodness. And the Word -- that mind energy -- is in us, because we are created in the image and likeness of God.

Paul said, *"Let the same mind that was in Christ Jesus be in you."* Let the same mind energy be in you, because the level of abundance and joy that we experience in our lives is connected to how we use that mind energy, that God energy, that creative force and that power.

The Bible has a number of Scriptures that affirm the availability of abundance. And there are numerous mentions and promises of prosperity. Let me just give you some.

Jesus said, *"It is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom."*

He said he came "that we may have life and have it more abundantly."

The 23rd Psalm says, *"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."*

2 Corinthians said, *"God is able to bless you abundantly so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."*

Book of Jeremiah says, *"'For surely I know the plans I have for you,' says the Lord, 'plans to prosper you not harm you; plans to give you hope and a future.'"*

And finally, Jesus said, *"Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."*

These are incredible promises of abundance that is available and accessible to all of us.

How many people would say you believe these promises are true and real? Okay. And now based on the fact that we say we believe that it's all true -- and based on the fact that we say we aren't experiencing as much abundance as we would like -- what do you think is the thing that's blocking us or preventing us or stopping us from living as full and abundant a life as we would like?

Paul Zaiter -- in his book, *Natural Abundance* -- says, *"There is a natural law of abundance which pervades the entire universe, but it will not flow through a doorway of belief in lack and limitation."*

See, many of our minds have been conditioned to believe and to see lack, scarcity and limitation. We grow up believing there is just not enough; there is never enough! Never enough time; never enough money; never enough love; enough happiness; enough jobs; enough good; enough opportunities. And this mindset of "not enough-ness" gets us into four mental patterns that I really believe misuses our mind energy -- our creative mind energy -- and it actually blocks the flow of abundance.

The first one is **WORRY**. How many people here worry? Anybody worry at all? [Congregation laughs] We human beings worry about everything! I mean, we worry about our problems; about our money; about our kids; about relationships; our health. We worry about all kinds of stuff. I know someone that worries so much that when life is going good, and there's nothing to worry about, they worry about that! [Congregation laughs] We worry a lot!

Remember when Jesus said, *"Why do you worry? How does worry add even a single hour to your life?"* And he was saying look at the birds of the air; there's abundance everywhere ... and yet you're worrying? Why do you worry so much? There is an abundance available!

The word "worry" comes from a word that actually means "to choke off." Even though there's abundance everywhere, we choke off the flow of abundance when we constantly worry and misuse our mind energy.

The next one is we **FOCUS ON THE NEGATIVE**. Often we focus on what we don't like; what we don't want; what isn't working; what is wrong. We focus on the pain of the past. We focus on things and we just complain ... like, *"This is too hot; this is too cold. This is too loud; this is too hard; this is too soft."* We go all over the place, and what we do is we keep focusing on the negativity.

The third one is we **AFFIRM LACK**. *"I am just always broke."* [Congregation laughs] *"And I always pick the wrong kind of person to date. I can't afford this!"* We just keep affirming that it's not enough; that it's bad. And we affirm lack and limitation.

The final one that blocks our abundance is **WE FEEL LIKE WE'RE NOT WORTHY**. *"You know, I'm just not good enough for that level of success or money or that level of relationship or love."* Sometimes even

when we have enough money, we will be cheap with ourselves and not buy ourselves something good. We'll buy somebody nice tickets to a concert, but then we'll buy ourselves the slight-obstructed-view tickets [congregation laughs] and not really treat ourselves as sometimes we treat other people. Sometimes we don't feel worthy of it.

I will tell you, without a doubt, the struggles that we have of abundance are not related to money and they are not related to our circumstances, but to our **CONSCIOUSNESS** of abundance. Our **CONSCIOUSNESS** of our own self-worth. And so poor use or misusing that mind energy -- that creative energy that said, *"Let there be light."*

And so, one of the good things is: even though we haven't used it as well, that we can still transform it and do better. Paul said, *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

How many people know you could use your mind energy to create more abundance, and use it more intentionally, more positively? How many people would agree with that?

Okay, so here are some ways we can do that: to renew our minds so that we can live an abundant life.

The first one comes from a line in Scripture and it's to **PROSPER YOUR SOUL**. Let me just read it to you from the Book of John. It says, *"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."*

What he's saying is: the most important thing for an abundant life is to prosper your soul first! It's to make sure you're nurturing your spirit; that you're feeding your soul with prayer; with silence; with being still; with spiritual study; with meditation. With opening your heart and surrendering to God's Spirit. To open your heart and to trust God and turn to God in all things.

That's why it says, *"Seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."* It's the same as saying prosper your soul and then your life will prosper.

So much time a day do you spend prospering your would? And feeding your spirit? How many people believe in the power of prayer, but have ever been too busy on a day and you didn't have time to pray? Anybody ever have that? I love Deepak Chopra's response to that. He says, *"If you're too busy to pray once a day, pray twice a day."* [Congregation laughs] Because the point is: it's important! And we're not taking time to do the very best thing -- the most powerful thing we could do to open our lives to greater peace and joy and abundance in all ways.

As we meditate and seek God with all of our hearts, it opens our hearts and minds and spirits, and we tend to receive guidance and clarity. We tend to know what is best to do. We meet the right people at the right time. Things begin to open up and flow. Because when we open our spirit, our lives begin to open up to receive greater things.

Jesus prospered his soul. He took time five times a day, praying and meditating and turning to God in all things. And it worked incredibly through him: through miracles, teaching. You know, he wore a seamless robe. He didn't have a job! And that was an expensive thing: a seamless robe. Always had food; attracted the 12 right people. I mean, amazing things happen! They flow from the inside out. When we prosper our soul, our life prospers.

A fabulous Scripture in Psalm. 1 Psalm. It says this: *"if you meditate and pray on the laws of God day and night, you will be like a tree planted by a stream whose roots are watered and whose leaves flourish and grow. They will never wither. And in all you do, you will always prosper."*

So what would it be like if we took a few minutes every day to meditate, even on the line, *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."* Or if we were to meditate on: *"With God, all things are possible."* I mean, could you imagine how different our lives would be if we put first taking time to prosper our souls? Because when we prosper our souls, our lives will flourish and blossom in amazing ways.

And that's the first way to use our mind energy to live your abundant life.

The next one is to connect with what I call the **PROSPERITY OF PURPOSE**. You know, when Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it more abundantly, the first thing we think about is more. We

think of quantity. But I would suggest that when he said that he came that we might have life and have it more abundantly, I think he was also talking about quality. A deeper, richer, more meaningful life.

And so an abundant life, to me, is not just about money. And there's nothing wrong with money! There's nothing wrong with status or power. Nothing wrong with those. But I'm also saying it's about something deeper. And it's about fulfillment. It's about feeling like what we're doing is what we've been called to do. It's like feeling like what we're doing is actually making a difference and adding value. And being who we came here to be.

So my question is: What does your life of prosperity look like? What is your life with meaning look like? What does a life of purpose look like for you?

Although culture will sell us this way, everybody's not looking for \$1 million and the bigger house and the nicer car. Sometimes some are called -- and what's much deeper and abundant for them -- is a simpler life. A more contemplative life. For some, it's more social; it's more active; and it's more engaging. For some, it's more about doing research. And helping and nurturing. For some it's working with children or animals. For some it's sports or arts. The real question is: What is your calling? What is your purpose? What is your soul calling you to do? What's the difference you're here to make? What is the thing that satisfies and gives you a great sense of meaning.

Mark Twain said, *"The two most important days in your life are the day you were born and the day when you discover why."* And we may sometimes might not be on that level of clarity yet about what our purpose is, but every day we can give meaning to our lives. If we were to wake up today and say, *"Today it is my purpose to be kind and encouraging to everyone I meet."* Or, *"Today I will bring more joy and smiles into the world and in all my relationships."* That is something powerful.

If we really want an abundant life, it's not just about more in terms of quantity. It's about quality. It's about meaning. It is about purpose and doing what we are called to do to make a difference.

The next one is to **SHARE YOUR GOOD**. To be a giver and to circulate that mind energy. That God energy.

Here's what Deepak Chopra said. He said, *"The Universe operates through dynamic exchange ... giving and receiving are different aspects of the flow of energy in the Universe. It is in our willingness to give and practice giving that keeps the abundance of the universe circulating in our life."*

Here's another one I really like from Proverbs 11: *"One person gives freely yet gains even more; another withholds unduly and only comes to poverty."*

Someone gives and they gain! But someone withholds and they lose. Anytime we withhold in our lives -- withholding love or withholding kindness or support or serving or helping or lending a helping hand or giving of our money and our time and our talents and our attention ... Anytime we constantly withhold, it will always lead us to lack. But when we give; when we share; when we are willing to support each other, something magical happens.

Isn't a good feeling when you help somebody? Isn't that one of the greatest feelings in the world? You know why? Because when it says, *"It is the Father's good pleasure to give"* -- it is God's good pleasure to give -- it means because that's the nature of God: to give. And if we're God's children, and created in that image, the reason it feels so good when we give is because it's connected to our nature. It means we're caring and sharing and expressing that love and goodness and kindness and support to other people. And that's what makes it so worthwhile.

You know, there's a book called *29 Gifts: The Giving Way to Happiness*. It's about a lady named Cami Walker. And she was struggling, having a difficult time with her health and her career. Things were not rocking along well for her. And her therapist said, *"Here's what I want you to do. For 29 days in a row, give someone something. Be a giver."*

And so she started giving. And giving is a lot simpler than you think. Sometimes letting someone in in traffic. Or giving someone a tissue if they're crying or a cup of coffee. Or lending a helping hand. Or a compliment or a smile or a hug. Or sending a card. There are a million little ways!

She started doing that. Within 14 days, she started feeling a little better. And by Day 29, she had business opportunities; her relationships were better; her health and energy got better. She wrote a book, and then things got really better! Because she was giving and expressing and then wanted to share it. And then more abundance came to her.

I've given this example, and I really love it, about giving and the difference it makes. Remember Jim Hensen, everybody? And so he was trying to sell his Muppets and that whole concept, and it wasn't going well. And he heard a sermon by Rev. Dr. Normal Vincent Peale. And the sermon was called "Give First."

So he did that. He gave away shows to children and for festivals and fairs. Everywhere he could: he kept giving away; giving away. And then after a year, then he was called about a new show that was starting called Sesame Street. And things just broke through amazingly. Why? Because he was giving! He was circulating.

When Jesus said, *"Give and it will be given to you,"* it means giving is an activating force that moves energy. It really does amazing and wonderful things. Share and circulate our good.

The last one is to **CELEBRATE OUR ABUNDANCE**. Celebrate the good that's in our lives right now. Because sometimes we overlook what's already here right now.

A line in Scripture that I love, it says: *"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."* It says this is the day. Today; now! Today! This is what we need to celebrate: the day. Not keeping looking forward to the future; not keep looking back. Celebrate this day today!

And to rejoice and be glad in it means you've got to be present to it. You've got to be thankful for it. And you've got to be joyful. That's how we celebrate each day. Be present in the here and now and be thankful and grateful for it.

One of the things we're *really good at is putting off being happy and celebrating until it's done; until that project is done. You know, "I'll put off happiness until I meet that right person ... Until I get that promotion .. Until I make my first million ... Until I get married ... Until we have kids ... Until the kids leave the house ..."* [Congregation laughs] Until we retire ... I mean we've got all kinds of things like that. But what he's saying is: the truth is to enjoy it now. Enjoy the journey now. Celebrate life now. And there are all kinds of little and wonderful ways for us to celebrate.

You know, I had a check-up and everything came out great. The doctor's really happy about how things are going. I feel thrilled about that; grateful. And then I started working out with a trainer. I've been working out so hard that yesterday I could not lift my arms. It was so much pain; I'm in pain right now! [Congregation: "Awwwww."]

And I'll tell you, last night the only way I could brush my teeth was to put the toothbrush on the counter and just move my head back and forth. [Congregation laughs] That is how much pain! I am so sore, and so in pain ... and I'm so happy! You know why? It's good sore; it's happy sore. Like, I'm working out; I'm taking care of my body. We should celebrate and be thankful for all that kind of stuff.

The weather! Isn't the weather so good? [Congregation applauds] I ate breakfast outside; I ate lunch outside. I love my backyard and enjoying it more. Everybody knows that I'm close to my family; I love and adore these people. We have a "What's App"; we communicate every single day. Every single day! I'm going to go to Jamaica with them in January; I'm so excited and so blessed about that.

This week two people cooked me healthy, delicious, fabulous food that I loved. Because I love food and I love even more when someone cooks it for me! [Congregation laughs] It was so good! I could go on and on; we all could go on and on! You know why? We're so blessed. There is so much abundance and goodness in our lives if we take time to celebrate it; to pause and appreciate it and be thankful for it.

So what are the things in your life that you are celebrating and appreciating now? And what are the things in your life that you could probably celebrate and appreciate even more?

One of the single greatest questions about living an abundant life I always say is: How much are you enjoying your life right now? And how much more could you enjoy your life right now? How much are you enjoying being who you are right now? And how much can you enjoy being who you are even more right now? And how much can you love your friends and family, and express your love to them now? How much more could you do that? How much can you enjoy your money more? Your activities? Your home?

You know, we have so much to be thankful for! Sometimes we take it for granted, but we need to celebrate it and rejoice in it every day.

Tomorrow right in here at 2 o'clock we're going to do a Celebration of Life for a young man, 23 years old, who was tragically killed last week. He was a member of this church ever since he was a baby. And it's been devastating for his mom. And he was an amazing kid. He was kind and generous and gentle. He was a deep thinker. He was very witty. He loved animals. And he had a heart condition. He was at heart camp, and they asked him on a little survey: Who is the person you admire most? And he said, "*My mom.*"

And last year's Mother's Day he didn't give his mom a card. And his mom said, "*Hey, Cooper, I want you to do that.*" And he said, "*Oh, does that really mean something to you?*" She said, "*Yeah! It means a lot to me.*" So this year he wrote the most beautiful poem about his mom and a tribute to her in the most clever, rhyming way. It touched my heart so deeply. I'll read it at the service tomorrow.

He had his alarm, and his alarm went off five days a week and said, "*It's time to be a big boy!*" [Congregation laughs] Saturday he had no alarm. Sunday his alarm said, "*It's time to go to church.*" And Cooper loved going to church. He grew up in all the different Sunday Schools; graduated from Y.O.U. He and his mom and his brother, Carson, would attend service in here. Just four years ago he was standing where that candle is as we honored him for graduating and looking forward to his future.

There's going to be a lot of tears at that service. But there's going to be a lot to celebrate, because that young man -- for 23 years -- touched a lot of lives. Touched a lot of lives! And we will celebrate and honor his life and his soul.

Things like this remind us how precious life is and how important it is to enjoy every moment. How important it is to bring forth our best; to be our best; and especially to tell the people in our lives who we love that we love them.

Let's not put off happiness or say, "*We'll celebrate when ...*" Let's celebrate along the way. Jesus said, "*You say three or four months until the harvest; I say lift up your eyes and see that the fields are already ripe for harvest.*" And what he's saying is: Every day is a harvest! Every day, if you lift up your eyes, you can see how blessed you are and we can rejoice and appreciate and celebrate the wonderful, wonderful gift of life that we all get to experience.

We all want more abundance and prosperity. And it is available to us; it's accessible to all of us. But we have to learn how to use our mind energy in a more focused, positive and intentional way. First, by prospering our soul: by nurturing our spirit and turning to God and connecting at that deeper level. Connecting with the prosperity of purpose: say your intention; what gives you meaning. And set it every day and fulfill the work you came to do to make a difference in this world. Share your good by circulating; by giving; by sharing. And finally, appreciate the good life you have now: today and every day. That will help us not only think about a prosperous life, but it will truly help you live your abundant life.

God bless you all! [Congregation applauds]