



## LifeSpot ... Thriving on life

### Stand in joy

If you want joy in your life, there's nothing better than genuine Christian faith to do it. But if you don't discover the real thing—if instead you develop an experience focused on yourself—you will descend into sadness. When our religion consists of trying to meet expectations and doing our best to obey a defined set of rules, we become unhealthy emotionally. We look like misery, and we drive people away. "When you attempt to live by your own religious plans and projects, you are cut off from Christ, you fall out of grace." Galatians 5:4 (MSG). But here's truth: "Through faith in Jesus we have received God's grace. In that grace we stand. . . . We are full of joy even when we suffer." Romans 5:2–3 (NIRV). Today, will you renew your stand in God's amazing grace, and let the joy burst out?

### Encounter God

"Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eyesight was sharp; he still walked with a spring in his step." Deuteronomy 34:7 (MSG). This is amazing! After all the man had been through—training in proud privilege, rashly committing murder, banished to a desert, called to a daunting mission, rejected by those he was trying to save, stuck with rebels for decades in a wilderness, and dying before his life-long goal could be realised. This was his secret: Moses *encountered* God—face-to-face on occasion, and through eyes of faith all his life. Exodus 33:11 – 34:8; Hebrews 11:24–27. Like Moses, will you spend direct friendship time with God today? Tomorrow? For the rest of your life? These God-encounters will keep a spring in your step, even when your journey is difficult.

### Turn it over

Here's something easy. Find a friend who's weighed down with stress and anxiety, and say, "Trust in God. He's with you and will keep you." But now here's something hard. When you yourself are weighed down with stress, rest in conviction that God is with you and will sustain you. When life caves in, it's a challenge to go against our natural feelings to assert faith over our circumstances—but in God's strength we can do it. "Turn your worries over to the LORD. He will keep you going. He will never let godly people fail." "He carries our heavy loads day after day." Psalm 55:22; 68:19 (NIRV). The heavy load you carry today—will you turn it over to God this very moment, and each moment beyond?

### Feed your soul

If you feel flat in spirit or remote from God, your diagnosis could be a famished soul. "We work to feed our appetites; meanwhile our souls go hungry." Ecclesiastes 6:7 (MSG). Some people go through most of their lives in spiritual hunger, while Heaven's food surrounds them. Every day, are you feeding your soul? You feed your soul by spending intentional time with Jesus. "I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me will ever go hungry." John 6:35 (NIRV). Scripture reading, prayer, Christian worship, godly fellowship, the wonders of nature, and service for others—these are the tables God sets with soul food. They are loaded with Jesus the bread of life. Today, give your hungry soul a feast!

## Value the hours

From thousands of years ago comes advice that fits modern life exactly. “On a good day, enjoy yourself; on a bad day, examine your conscience. God arranges both kinds of days so that we won’t take anything for granted.” “Each day is God’s gift. . . . Make the most of each one!” “Take delight in each light-filled hour, remembering that there will also be many dark days.” Ecclesiastes 7:14; 9:9; 11:8 (MSG). This is a priceless perspective. Life is not one big picnic, but we can make many picnics along the way—inviting others to join us. What’s in store for you today? Some things you can’t control. But still, the character of your day is significantly up to you. “Take delight in each light-filled hour!”

## Choose God’s blessing

It’s been well said that you can’t sow wild oats through most of your life, then blame God for a crop failure. Each of us is a product of the ingredients we’ve chosen for our lives. Cause and effect. We are today what we’ve allowed ourselves to become in all our days to this point. No wonder the God who made us says, *Put good stuff in! Guard your life!* “Love God, your God. Walk in his ways. Keep his commandments, regulations, and rules so that you will live, really live, live exuberantly, blessed by God.” Deuteronomy 30:16 (MSG). Jesus assures us it’s never too late to choose God’s blessing. “I have come so they can have life. I want them to have it in the fullest possible way.” John 10:10 (NIRV).

## Decide on your pleasure

“You’re addicted to thrills? What an empty life! The pursuit of pleasure is never satisfied.” Proverbs 21:17 (MSG). Through childhood, teenage years, and into adulthood, this is our hardest lesson. From birth, we discover that pain is a problem. Sometime before death, we must discover that Earth-bound pleasure is never the answer. “Deal as sparingly as possible with the things the world thrusts on you,” counsels Paul. “This world as you see it is on its way out.” 1 Corinthians 7:31 (MSG). This world is on its way out, but a new Heaven and a new Earth are on their way in! What’s your pleasure today? Why not make this your response to God —“You will fill me with joy when I am with you. You will give me endless pleasures at your right hand.” Psalm 16:11 (NIRV).

## Define your success

Would you like “a robust, praising, good life in God”? Isaiah 45:25 (MSG). When you die, would you like people to be able to say you did not live a small and narrow life—you lived a life that was “open” and “expansive”? 2 Corinthians 6:12–13 (MSG). It’s a wonderful goal, a great tribute to receive. Most people in our society don’t live this way—but some do. The difference is that a few good people here and there make a choice not to grasp, but to give. Not to set themselves up, but to step down and serve. Not to exhaust themselves in comfort, but to expend themselves in sacrifice. Will you be one of these robust and praising people, defining your success God’s way?