

Renewing the Mind

THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR SUCCESS

by
Casey Treat



Harrison House
Tulsa, Oklahoma

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Renewing the Mind—

The Foundation of Your Success

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The Christian life is the most glorious life a human being can experience, but it is not always a bed of roses. God has provided salvation from spiritual death, sin and sickness, but He did not save us from our own attitudes, choices or the problems of this world. While we can never improve upon what Jesus has done for us, we must learn how to “work out our salvation” and live it in a successful and victorious way. (Phil. 2:12.)

Have you ever wondered why many “good” Christians sin? why good Christians backslide? why good Christian marriages fail?

The reason is that without a lifestyle dedicated to the Lord, the spirit of a Christian’s mind can drag him back into the behavior of the “old man,” and the old pre-conversion lifestyle can take over again. So there are many thinking patterns that must be “reprogrammed” when a Christian’s spirit man is born again. Paul calls this reprogramming a transformational process which takes place by the renewing of the mind. (Rom. 12:2.) In Ephesians 4:23 he says to **be renewed in the spirit of your mind**. James calls this process the “saving of our souls.” (James 1:21.)

In this book I go into much detail about this process in order for you to learn the biblical principles for renewing your mind and, as a result, learn how to live the highest level of life possible in His image.

The past twenty-three years of growing a family with Wendy and growing a church of over 6,000 members has taught me that to be born again is only the first step in successful Christianity. Many never take the next steps and end up divorcing their spouse, experiencing disease or living below their destiny.

Let's go all the way to God's perfect will on earth! **You will prosper and live in health even as your soul prospers.** (3 John 2.)

I remember thinking, *Be cool, drive carefully and don't attract any attention to yourself*, as I drove south on Interstate 5 on my way home to Tacoma. I had smoked a few joints and taken some other drugs, but I knew what was going on. I also knew that if I could just stay awake, I would be home in a few minutes.

Little did I realize that even while those thoughts were going through my mind, I had gone unconscious and driven the car into the median dividing the north and south lanes. My car sat stuck deep in the mud, wheels turning at 55 miles per hour, going nowhere. God only knows how long I sat there, my tires flinging mud into the air, while I thought I was being careful not to attract any attention to myself.

The next thing I remember was the flashing of lights and a man's voice yelling at me to turn the car off. At first I wondered why he was so upset. Then I realized, *Oh, no, not again! I've blown it the "one more time" I was warned not to blow it again*, and I knew what the results would be.

It didn't take the officer long to conclude that I was loaded, and we headed for the Pierce County Jail. I had been through the routine four or five times before: pictures, prints, strip search—then into the tank. The feelings were always the same—emptiness, hurt, fear, anger and every other negative emotion imaginable. I spent that night in jail and started the process of trying to get out the next day.

Why would a nineteen-year-old kid put himself through this time and time again?

Why did I want to stay loaded twenty-four hours a day?

Why, when my life was not *that* bad, was I so willing to throw everything away?

Since I had been in jail several times already, I was given a choice this time to either go to a state penitentiary for a maximum of one year or to the Washington Drug Rehabilitation Center. I knew I didn't want prison, so I chose the drug rehabilitation center. I hid as many drugs as I could in the lining of my clothes before I left. I was nineteen years old, depressed, scared and all alone. I felt like I was old enough to die, and I was afraid that if I did die, eternity might be worse.

Not long after I entered the center, I realized the people there were different. They had a spirit of joy and freedom I hadn't seen in any "square" person before. I wanted it—I had been looking for that kind of freedom for years. So I turned in my drugs and began to learn a new lifestyle.

I soon discovered that these people were all born again and baptized with the Holy Spirit. I didn't know what that meant, but if that was what made them so happy, I wanted it. And in November of 1974 I got it—I was born again. Jesus became the Lord of my life. I was also filled with His Spirit and began to pray in other tongues. A tremendous peace, joy and liberty came into my life. I had become a Christian!

At first I thought Christians had it all together, never had a problem and lived happily ever after. But it didn't take long to realize that this wasn't the case. Many of the drug rehabilitation residents who had been saved and filled with the Spirit ended up back on the streets in worse condition than before. I saw church members still bound in fear, bitterness, depression and other problems.

After twenty-one months of residency, I became the assistant director of the center and held that position for four years. During that time, I attended a Bible college in Seattle and received a bachelor's degree in theology. When I graduated from the school and the drug rehabilitation

center in January of 1980, my wife, Wendy, and I started Christian Faith Center, which I still pastor.

Since those days in the rehabilitation center—after four years of school and now twenty years of pastoring—I have gained a much greater understanding of why so many Christians never walk in the peace, joy and freedom of their salvation. So many try to break free from the hold of the world and its hurts, but they never succeed. It isn't that they haven't been truly born again or that they didn't really believe. For these struggling believers, the problem isn't in their spirits; it's in their souls. Their minds haven't been renewed. Though their spirits have been recreated, their minds are still old.

If you are like most in the church today, you're thinking that there is more to God's plan for your life but you're not sure how to get to it; take hope. There is more.

You have been predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus, and you will get there. You will experience change as your mind is renewed to God's Word. You can walk in the freedom of God's blessed, abundant life through the renewing of your mind. If you will take the time to allow the Holy Spirit to work with you as you read through the following pages, I believe you will grow spiritually, mentally, physically, financially and socially.

As you study and work through the truth in the chapters that follow, don't just look for interesting information. Examine those areas of your life that have been difficult, limiting or negative, and see how you can begin to change the spirit of your mind in those areas. The many renewal steps and questions you will find in every chapter have been provided to assist you in this process so you can experience God's very best in every area of life.

I have provided the steps to personal transformation following many of the chapters to help you record and work through the crucial process of

spiritual mind renewal. After each chapter studied, please plan to answer the questions and review the chapter material as a time of reflection.

Decide within yourself today to receive God's truth that will set you free into the joy of the Spirit's new birth!

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

John 8:32

—Pastor Casey Treat

The greatest day of my life was September of 1974, and I found myself sitting in the hallway of the Washington Drug Rehabilitation Center. I was in shock because I had just been given a choice by the county judge to either go to prison for a minimum of a year or enter rehabilitation for at least two years. As I sat there, I thought, *I'm really not that bad. I've just had a few unlucky breaks that keep landing me in jail. It isn't my fault. It's the police or the school administration or society or something, but not me. Just ask my mom, and she'll tell you; it's the crowd I hang out with.*

But reality began to sink in as I went through a very difficult interview and was finally accepted into the program. While I was scared, mad and embarrassed that I needed to be put away to get my head together, I was also excited and desired a new life. By nineteen, I had ruined my health both physically and mentally, filled several file folders with various reports at the county jail and alienated my family and friends. Though I denied it on the inside, I really wanted to change; but how could I?

Somehow I had bought into the concept that you are what you are and there's nothing you can do about it. I was doing a miserable job of living my natural, physical life, and I certainly had no idea of the abundant spiritual life God had made available to me through the Cross of Jesus Christ. But I soon learned that I could change and make my life into whatever I wanted it to be. It wouldn't be an instantaneous experience, but with God's help it would be a miraculous one, full of abundance and excitement.

As my life began to be reshaped, rebuilt and renewed, I found I had a destiny in God that involved a rewarding lifestyle with a purpose. I also found out that most people are like I was in that they don't like some part of their lives but feel unable to do anything about it.

Today, twenty-five years after that day I sat in the rehab center, I spend all of my time with those I pastor and minister to daily, sharing the wonderful blessing of God's abundant life. And there has never been a more crucial time for the Church to grow up into its fullness. In the late fifties, sixties and seventies God began to remind the Church about the importance of faith. It was also during this time that the Charismatic message hit many traditional churches, and large independent congregations like ours in Seattle began to spring up.

God was saying, "You've got to walk by faith, you've got to be filled with the Spirit and you've got to pray with the Spirit." He was bringing us revelation upon revelation, insight upon insight, line upon line from the Word of God to stop us from being a bunch of traditional, religious people. Jesus died and rose from the dead to birth a people who could live at God's level of spiritual life—people who wouldn't feel at home in the world. So He reintroduced His Word and ways to us during those years to inspire us to become the Church He wants us to be.

But we will not live the life Jesus died to give us if we hold on to old, traditional, carnal or negative ways of thinking. Even though it's a new millennium, we've still got a long way to go.

It's time to make some changes in the body of Christ today, because very few of us are experiencing the abundant life which God sent His Spirit and Word in order to give us. So in this book, we will examine those biblical processes of change that allow God's purpose and Spirit to dominate our lives and bring us to His perfect plan for our lives.

ABUNDANT LIFE

Every believer is called to live a life that is abundant, increasing and always expanding. Words like *growing*, *improving*, *expanding* and *increasing* are the vocabulary of God's abundant life. Abundant life is about always moving forward and rising higher. When life on earth started in Genesis 1, the Spirit of the Lord started moving across the earth, and He has never stopped since then.

Jesus said, **“And these signs will follow those who believe”** (Mark 16:17).

The abundant life of God is a life that grows and moves forward every day. Jesus says in John 10:10 that the devil, the thief, comes to steal, kill and destroy. He wants to keep you from living. He wants to rob from your life. Everything that's negative, everything that removes, everything that stops and kills is of the thief, the devil.

But Jesus said, “I have come that you may have life and that you may have it more abundantly.” Oh, I love that thought! So in our first look at God's spiritual process of victorious transformation, I want to put God's thoughts of abundance in your mind. I want to inspire you with His thoughts of increase and thoughts of moving forward and upward.

These thoughts may not be normal to many of you. I know this because we live in a world in which many people are trying just to survive. Many of you reading are just trying to make a living and trying to make it through to the end.

So many in the Church today have lowered their vision and are trying just to hang on until Jesus comes. So many are trying just to survive and are moping and hoping the Antichrist won't put the mark of the beast on them. Many Christians are so defeated that they wish Jesus would come back tonight. They have no vision for tomorrow, and they're like prisoners, waiting for an escape.

This is not the abundant life of God; it is the life of religion and the expectation of tradition. This is the attitude of people who don't know

the life that God has called them to. So many “pew warming” Christians have been raised so long in the religious culture of just making a living and trying to hang in there that they don’t know God’s abundance even exists. The negative, sick, sorrowful environment they were raised in keeps them constantly confused. They’re always wondering what’s happening. Their lives are not what God willed. Their vision is not what God planned. What they see for tomorrow is not what God sees for tomorrow.

What God sees for tomorrow is what He sees every day: exciting, progressing, abundant life. Jesus said, “**I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly**” (John 10:10).

So let’s look at God’s gift of abundant life that Jesus came to offer, because everything that follows in these pages is intended to help you realize the truth of this gift.

The Greek word for life spoken by Jesus in John 10:10 is *zoe*.¹ It means “absolute life, the purest kind of life, life in its very essence.” I like what the margin note in my Bible reads: “the God kind of life.”

Jesus didn’t say, “I’ve come for you to *exist*.” You can exist without Jesus. He didn’t say, “I’ve come for you to *survive*.” You can survive without Jesus. He didn’t say, “I’ve come for you to *make a living*.” You can make a living without Jesus. No, Jesus said, “I’ve come that you might have the God kind of *absolute life, the purest kind of life, life in its very essence—zoe*.”

Anything that’s alive on God’s green planet is growing. Because God created it, anything that’s living will get bigger and better. Every living thing in His magnificent creation blossoms and reproduces after its own kind. (Gen. 1:11,12.) So the very essence of God is life.

Theologically, we debate the essence of God. You know, theologians sit around in their cemeteries—uh, excuse me, I mean *seminaries*—and discuss the deep things of theology that mean absolutely nothing! But

for the sake of proving how smart I am, humor me, and let's discuss God's theological essence just a little bit.

THE ESSENCE OF GOD

When raising the subject for discussion, some theologians would say the essence of God is righteousness. Righteousness, or justice, is at the heart of God. "There's nothing but justice," some would say. Others would say, "It's holiness—everything emanates out of the core of holiness." Still others would say, "Love is at the very core of God's being."

None of these are bad. But I'm telling you, you can't have righteousness or holiness or love if you're not alive. And you can't love anyone if you're not alive. So the true essence of God is life. The Bible says God is life. "**I have set before you life.... For He is your life.**" (Deut. 30:19,20.) The very heart of God's being is pure, absolute life! That's why when people touched Jesus' cloak, everyone who was sick got healed.

Think about this. Grab some of God's thoughts. Take a new look at John 10:10 now. When Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life," He was saying, "I have come to give you God's being—His essence." Jesus came to put the essence of God's being into your being. He came to give you *zoe* in every area of life. God wants to walk and talk in your home through you as you raise your kids. He wants to put His life in that checking account and in those finances. He wants to walk and talk through you in your marriage and on the job, because God came that you might have life!

God came to give you life, not some kind of survival existence. You don't have to mope around, just hanging on.

So to make sure we understand: Jesus said, He brings life more abundantly. *Whoo!* That's the way He is. *More abundantly!* Everything God does is big, good and abundant. He didn't create some small, ugly little planet and put you on it. He created a gigantic, abundant earth and

said, “Welcome to earth, Adam. This is where you’re going to live and take dominion. Think big.”

God doesn’t give His born-again children some narrow, little destiny and survival mentality. He called us to a glorious life of abundance. When Jesus goes fishing, it’s a net-breaking, boat-sinking load of fish! (John 21: 4-6.) When Jesus holds a luncheon, He feeds 5,000 people with two fish and five loaves and twelve baskets left over. (John 6:7-13.) So where did we get this small-living mentality? Where did we get this competitive, jealous, poverty-stricken mind-set? From sick and tired folks who are sick and tired.

It’s so sad to see born-again Christians who are just about to give up, but trying to hang in there and meagerly survive till the end. It’s time to start living the abundant life. The Greek word for *abundance* is “perissos,”²² and it carries with it the sense of being beyond. It means “superabundant in quantity and superior in quality.” Oh, I like that! Do we want the best? Do we want the most? I do. I want the best quality of life God has to offer!

God didn’t tell us to take either abundance or just enough. He called us to have abundance, which also means by implication *excessive*. Now, excessive is a tough word for some because they were raised by sweet little ol’ parents who lived through the Depression. So their attitude is to cut back, save, hold on to what they have and be careful.

So many Christians have that spirit. They have a conservative mind-set. I’m not talking politically; I’m talking about the way they view life. They have been programmed from early in life to have a this-is-good-enough mentality that sees excess as evil and wrong. But I’m telling you right now, if this bunch doesn’t get their minds renewed in this life, they’re going to get a headache in heaven!

The reason we think those kinds of thoughts—thoughts which tell us, *This is enough. This is good enough. Excess is wrong. Abundance is bad*—is that the only thing on our minds is ourselves.

When someone says, “This little bit is enough for me,” that’s fine, as long as he’s the only person on his mind. But God didn’t call us to live for ourselves. God didn’t say, “You are the center of this universe, so just stay focused on yourself.” That is selfish thinking.

Some time ago a person came to me and said, “Pastor Treat, I don’t agree with your preaching on prosperity.” So I said, “Well, first of all, it’s not mine. I’m just reading it out of the Bible.” But I was curious, so I asked, “Why don’t you agree?”

“Well, I’m living a good life,” he answered. “All my needs are met, and I’m happy just the way I am. I don’t need any more.”

I said, “That’s fine if you’re the only person on this planet. But what are you doing for hungry people in South America? How are you going to help the suffering, struggling Church in China? And what was the last thing you did for sighing, crying, dying people in the Middle East who don’t know Jesus? I’m glad that all your needs are met, but when are you going to think about someone else’s needs?”

I want people in my church to prosper so they can help the Bulgarians we visit every year who are believing God for heat! I want the congregation I serve at Christian Faith Center to understand and live in God’s abundant life so they can go over and touch a billion Chinese who don’t have the car, the home, the kitchen or even the closet our church members have.

We need to get off this, “I’m doing okay, so let everybody else go jump” mentality and get a hold of the life Jesus died to provide! Abundant life! We’re not the only people on this planet. We’re called to go out there and spread this thing around and make a difference in our world. God is counting on us to show the world’s people His love and goodness.

Having the God kind of life—that which is superabundant in quantity, superior in quality, in effect excess—is what life is all about. I want to live an extreme life: I want to have an extremely good marriage.

I want to have extremely good times with my family. I want to have extremely happy kids. I want to have an extremely good church. I want to have an extremely effective ministry. I want those in my church to have extremely prosperous businesses. This is what our extreme God is all about.

If you barely have enough resources to pay your own kids' tuition, how are you going to reach the kids of this earth? If you barely have enough gas to get yourself to church, how are you going to fund traveling expenses for the missionaries of this world? If you're struggling to believe God to pay your bills, how are you going to pay the bills for ministries all over the planet?

Come on! Get out of your barely-get-by, self-centered world! Come on into God's great big world, where life is good, and it's more abundant.

ABUNDANT IN FINANCES

Second Corinthians 8:9 says Jesus became poor to make His Church rich:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

The Amplified Bible says:

For you are becoming progressively acquainted with and recognizing more strongly and clearly the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (His kindness, His gracious generosity, His undeserved favor and spiritual blessing), [in] that though He was [so very] rich, yet for your sakes He became [so very] poor, in order that by His poverty you might become enriched (abundantly supplied).

There's that phrase again—*abundantly supplied*. And for those who get nervous about taking Scripture out of context, read chapters 8 and 9

of Paul's second letter to the Corinthian church, and you'll see there is no question that the context is finances.

Yes, thank God that He brings abundance in the spiritual realm—that's the traditional interpretation of this verse. Yes, He brings abundance in the soul realm. But 2 Corinthians 8:9 says He became poor so you could also have abundance in the financial realm. He even goes so far as to say that through His poverty you might be *rich*.

God sent His Son, and He became poor so you could become rich. So don't tell me you're "poor for the Lord." You have it backwards: He became poor for you. Don't think that your lack or your poverty is glorifying God. No, it's when we prosper financially in abundant life that God is glorified. God gets no glory when we walk around with a religious image of God. There is no glory in being whipped, sick, poor, sad and in despair. This doesn't show the world what Jesus did for them.

I know I'm kicking some sacred cows and religious tradition. But I'm only teaching what's in God's Word.

Let's look at some more of what Paul had to say about God's abundance in Philippians 4:19:

My God shall supply all your need *according* to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Paul is telling us here that God will supply everything we as His Church need to live an abundant life, everything we need to fulfill His will, everything we need to fulfill our destinies.

God doesn't fulfill our needs according to the condition of the stock market. It's not according to what your boss wants to pay you. It's not according to the contracts your union fought for. It's not according to your company's profits. It's according to *His* riches in glory. You may want to trust in the Dow Jones industrial average or in the Teamsters or in your boss and company. But I'm going to trust God. He is the

One who promises to meet all my need and yours according to His *riches* in glory.

The Amplified Bible says, **My God will liberally supply (fill to the full) your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.** You won't find any of this "barely enough" stuff in Scripture. What you will find is phrases like, *liberally supply...fill to the full...according to His riches*. If Paul were just talking about what we need to survive—air, water, food and shelter, we wouldn't need to call on His riches in glory. But Paul is talking abundant-life talk. He's talking about God's giving you what you need to live this abundant life so you can fulfill your destiny. And to do this, the apostle says that God will use His riches in glory to make sure you have a liberal supply.

Now please understand: This book isn't just another prosperity message book. God hasn't called me to write prosperity message books. God has called me to write on the subject of mind renewal and spiritual change. But if you can't even see His will in natural things, you will never realize His will in spiritual things.

Many Christians think of church as small, poor, kind of silly and certainly not cool, certainly not current and certainly not abundant. So I want to challenge your thinking about church. One of the most common comments we get from people visiting Christian Faith Center is that it's so big. They say that because they think of a church as a little white building with a steeple and a little bell in it, you know.

It's okay for our local Seattle Seahawks football stadium to have sixty-thousand seats.

It's okay for the Seattle Mariners baseball park to have fifty-thousand seats.

It's okay for rock-and-roll concert auditoriums to have twenty-thousand seats.

But for church, the image most have of us is just a little group. We've got Sister Beulah on the organ and Brother Sam leading praise and worship with about thirty to eighty adults. And when we reach into our pockets, moths fly out. So as a first step in mind renewal, the Church today must develop a new mentality about church.

The church in Jerusalem had 50,000 members when the apostles began to spread out! The church in Antioch had approximately 35,000 members when they sent Paul out on his first missionary journey. This wasn't a ragtag band of barely-hanging-in-there Christians hiding out in a little white building. This wasn't a bunch of unimportant religious people hiding from the devil. No, this was a church full of Christians whose attitude was, *We're going to turn the world upside down!*

This was the church Paul talked about in Ephesians 5:25-33 when he used the analogy of marriage and the Church.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

This passage really isn't about marriage, although we use it to teach about that. It talks about the Church and Jesus. We know this because

Paul literally says this in verse 32: “I’m speaking about the Church and Jesus.” So he teaches, “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.”

When Jesus offered Himself for the sins of the world, He gave the Church everything heaven had to offer. He gave us His grace, the Holy Spirit and God’s richest blessings. Why? Verse 26 tells us why: **That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.**

Jesus gave the Church the best heaven had to offer to clean us up and straighten us up! We get clean by the Word! We get sanctified by the Word! We get better by the Word! We get stronger by the Word! We get bigger by the Word! But it can’t and won’t happen unless we renew our minds ourselves with the Word.

You don’t need guilt, abuse, poverty, lack or sickness to be cleansed. You don’t need religious retribution to be cleansed. “Well, the Lord gave me this cancer to try to clean up my life” someone might say. No, that doesn’t clean up your life. In fact, it will kill you if you don’t know God’s healing power. The Word sanctifies the Church so **that He might present it to Himself a glorious church.**

Now this brings another word into our discussion—*glory*. The word *glory* implies “the presence of God.” A Greek dictionary says *glory* “carries the connotation of His dignity, His blessing and the manifestation of His will.”³ It is the Greek word *doxa*, and it literally means splendor, brightness, dignity, kingly honor.⁴

God meets all our life needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. God uses His glory to help us live. This is the same word Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 3:18 when he says we are changed from glory to glory. This is God’s plan for the Church. We are to be a glorious, bright, splendid Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any blemish, and full of God’s superabundant life. We should be shaking our fists at the devil and making him run, not the other way around.

Now somebody may say, “Well, all that’s going to happen when we get to heaven.” But they’re wrong, because it’s got to happen *before* we get there. That’s when we get presented to Jesus—when we get to heaven. So before we can be presented, we’ve got to become glorious, spotless, without wrinkles.

We can’t be a bunch of poverty-stricken, sick and barely-hanging-in-there vagabonds staggering into heaven, complaining, “Thank God we got off that planet! Man, the devil was beating us up and down! We’re so sick, and we’re so poor. Thank God we don’t have to go through that anymore!” No! That’s not how it’s going to be when we go to heaven.

WELCOME HOME, TROOPS!

When we get to heaven we will be a glorious Church, living an abundant life. All our needs will have been supplied according to His riches in glory. We will have victoriously fulfilled our mission on earth. Our going to heaven will be a victory march. It will be a sight that eclipses the sight of American troops coming home from World War II. We will be marching home after destroying the enemy, not the other way around.

But until we become like that, we aren’t going anywhere—we’re too wrinkly and spotted.

Somebody might say, “The Lord’s coming back tonight.” Okay, but if that’s true, you must be glorious, because that’s what He’s coming back to receive. Are you glorious? Are you an example of abundant life? Are you everything that God wants you to be? Or is your idea of the Lord’s return some kind of rescue, because you’ve never come up to the place of life that He planned for you?

READY OR NOT, HERE WE (DON’T) COME!

I understand the trials we all go through with this. I go through the same thing. We all want to believe what we heard on a Christian TV

show—that He’s coming back tonight. If He comes back tonight, we don’t have to make any more car payments, and we don’t have to pay off our credit cards.

“Hallelujah! Free, free at last!” we say. No more mortgage payments. No more worries about putting our kids through college. No more spiritual preparation. No more faith building. No more being honest business people. No more renewing our minds and developing our character—because we get to escape! We get to get out of here and go to heaven! Hey, hey, hey!

And while we’re waiting to go to heaven, you hear some say, “I just pray that I might hold on until the end, because it’s all going to be okay on the other side.” We sing a popular song, “When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be. When we all see Jesus, we’ll sing and shout the victory.”⁵ The message of that popular church song sounds good, but what it really means is, “Until then, we have no victory and just a little bit of rejoicing. We’re just a sad bunch.”

So many of us have been raised to believe that sort of beggarly nonsense. But that’s not the Bible! He’s not coming back for that kind of Church. He’s coming back for a victorious Church. And by the way, the Bible says we are to test, or judge, all things. (1 Thess. 5:21.) So when you hear someone saying, “The Lord’s coming back real soon,” examine what they’re saying, and you’ll notice it’s usually tied with, “Buy my book or send an offering to my ministry, because the Lord’s coming back. We don’t have much time. So let me give you my book on the beginning of the end, the last days and the ramifications of the mark of the beast.”

Come on, we want to be childlike, but we don’t want to be a bunch of childish guppies. Check it out. Use some spiritual sense. That same guy who said Jesus is coming back this year is building a new building with your donation! And the book he sent you as a partner gift for your donation says the Lord’s coming back this year. So something’s up!

I heard with my own little, ol' ears one of these last-days types say, "This could be the last year that you'll be able to give into this missionary outreach. So if you'll send your offering now, we'll be ready for the coming of the Lord by the end of this year." This same group is out buying new television stations! What are they doing all that for? I mean, if their predictions are true, those stations won't even be on the air until next year! And if the Lord's coming back *this year*, what are they going to do with the stations they're building with that Second Coming money you gave them that won't even be on the air until next year? I'd say there is something rotten in Denmark with this deal!

In the Lord's prayer Jesus did not teach us to pray, "Thy kingdom, I'm coming..." He said to pray, **Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done *in earth*** (Matt. 6:10 KJV). We are not called to escape from the earth; we are called to establish God's will and God's kingdom on earth: **...that we may have great boldness in the day of judgment because *as He is so are we in this world*** (1 John 4:17).

Yes, we believe the Lord is coming back, but we've got to wake up. He's not coming back for a poor, sick Church who is waiting to escape the world's mess. No! He's coming back for a *glorious* Church. So we have a ways to go, and I wouldn't worry about His return very soon.

Before Jesus returns we're going to have to get our minds off ourselves and on that world out there. We're going to have to rise to a new level of life—God's kind of life.

Before Jesus returns, His Church must rise to the place in God's abundant life where we are spending more time getting other folks healed than we are trying to get healed ourselves.

Before Jesus returns, the Church must rise to the level of spending more time giving to the poor than being poor ourselves.

Before Jesus returns, the Church must rise to God's abundant level of life, at which point, our needs are met according to His riches in glory

and we are the glorious Church Ephesians 5 talks about. When we are shining in His glory, the world will look at us and say, “How do you do it? How do you have that kind of marriage? How do you raise those kinds of kids? How do you live that kind of life?”

So we will tell them, “You’ve got to get in the glorious Church.”

“Well, what kind of church is that?” they will ask. “I thought churches sang old songs. I thought preachers just got up there and talked a bunch of rubbish that didn’t make a difference in everyday life. I thought you just needed a crutch to make it through life while you waited for Jesus to rescue you off the planet!”

“Well, you were wrong,” we will say. “We’re changing the planet, not escaping anything. The devil’s hoping *he* can get raptured, because we’re beating the hell out of him! We aren’t leaving! The earth was given to the saints! And WE AREN’T LEAVING until we possess it! WE AREN’T LEAVING until we subdue this planet. WE AREN’T LEAVING until we take dominion over this planet!”

Abundant life will rally the Church toward battle, not away from it. We’re not to be like Jonah, trying to run out of town and get away from Nineveh, the city God sent him to. No, we’re called to march right into the middle of Nineveh, with signs and wonders following the preaching of the glorious, abundant message Jesus died to bring.

The Church is called to take dominion over the devil’s works in Jesus’ name. And we can and will do this as we allow our minds to be changed. So that is what this book is about: spiritual change, the kind that makes us shine as glorious lights of God’s reflection in the world.

In the next chapter we will look at the glory of God’s image and see how a healthy view of who He is affects our own image of ourselves.