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They are noted for their no-nonsense style, their clear illustrations, and their willingness to face controversial issues. From the dual perspectives of both academic and religious professions, they seek to be a bridge between the spiritual and the intellectual worlds.

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They have planned, led tours, and done research in all of the 50 states, Canada, Mexico, Europe, Egypt, Japan, and the Holy Land. In 1985, they were among a small group of Americans who were invited by Dr. Joseph P. Kennedy of the US/China Education Foundation and Bishop Ting, leader of the Three Self Movement, to participate in the First Symposium on the Church in Nanjing, China.

Now, they use their lifetime of varied experiences to write insightful sermons, essays, and books.

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Sermons for Special Days

Life More Abundant

LIFE MORE
Abundant

Maralene & Miles Wesner

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Preface

This book presents a psychological explanation of the gospel. It deals with the nine basic human needs that salvation fills.

Believing that we have acceptance, love, and value gives us peace and contentment: “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1).

Believing that we have security, forgiveness, and guidance gives us assurance and confidence: “All things can be done for the one who believes” (Mark 9:23).

Believing that we have support, purpose, and hope gives us meaning and significance: “We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor for the soul” (Heb 6:19).

People today want more than creeds and platitudes. Discovering that there are logical reasons for the positive changes that take place when we become a Christian helps us understand how and why a conversion experience makes such a real difference in our lives.

Part 1:

The Need for Abundant Life

Jesus said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

Many people live lives of “quiet desperation.” Shakespeare described such a pitiful existence in his tragedy *Macbeth*: “Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury—signifying nothing.”

Jesus, however, offers something much better. He offers the kind of life that fulfills not only our *eternal* needs, but our earthly needs. Furthermore, if our needs were truly filled, destructive addictions like alcoholism, drugs, gambling, promiscuity, and compulsive shopping would disappear. That’s because people who succumb to these vices are really attempting to satisfy legitimate human cravings. They are trying to eliminate their feelings of emptiness, abolish their misery, and fill their needs.

Unfortunately, these things don’t satisfy. They only create more problems. The psalmist said, “He satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things” (Ps 107:9). Paul, too, gives us a wonderful promise: “God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:19).

So what are these deep, unfulfilled needs that make us miserable and cause us to destroy our lives? More importantly, how does the gospel of Jesus fill these needs and give us abundant life? In this book we’ll examine these nine basic needs that must be filled in order to have the abundant life Jesus gives.

1. *Acceptance*: As human beings we tend to judge and rebuff each other. Because of this most of us have been so slighted and alienated over the years that we feel rejected. But Jesus offers total acceptance: “Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away” (John 6:37).
2. *Love*: As human beings we tend to criticize and revile each other. Because of this most of us have been so hurt and despised over the years that we feel unloved. But Jesus offers unconditional *love*: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; ... No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:9, 13).

3. *Value*: As human beings we tend to degrade and dishonor each other. Because of this most of us have been so disrespected and humiliated over the years that we feel worthless. But Jesus emphasizes our *value*: “Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matt 10:31).
4. *Security*: As human beings we tend to intimidate and threaten each other. Because of this most of us have been so put down and bullied over the years that we feel insecure. But Jesus offers absolute *security*: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.... Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid” (John 14:27).
5. *Forgiveness*: As human beings we tend to blame and accuse each other. Because of this most of us have been so shamed and condemned over the years that we feel guilty. But Jesus offers complete *forgiveness*: “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment” (John 5:24).
6. *Guidance*: As human beings we tend to have different opinions and get different advice. Because of this most of us have made so many wrong decisions over the years that we feel confused. But Jesus offers *guidance*: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13).
7. *Support*: As human beings we tend to withdraw and abandon each other in a crisis. Because of this most of us have been so let down and disappointed over the years that we feel helpless. But Jesus offers his presence and full *support*: “Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20).
8. *Purpose*: As human beings we tend to be apathetic and undisciplined. Because of this most of us have become so aimless and unfocused over the years that we feel frustrated. But Jesus gives us *purpose*: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19–20).
9. *Hope*: As human beings we tend to experience depression and misery. Because of this most of us become so discouraged and pessimistic over the years that we feel despair. But Jesus gives us *hope* and joy: “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11).

It's obvious that every individual has basic needs: acceptance, love, value, security, forgiveness, guidance, support, purpose, and hope. If any of these needs are unmet, we feel empty and incomplete. That's why Jesus offers salvation. Over and over during his ministry on earth, when the Lord met hurting people, he would declare, "You are made whole." He meant, "All of your needs are filled, and you lack nothing."

Once, an old minister responded to an atheist by saying, "Sir, if I discovered that there is no God and my faith was an illusion, I wouldn't change a thing. My Christian life has given me so many benefits that I don't regret my decision to embrace it."

Then he listed these nine basic benefits:

1. "I was *accepted* by my church family."
2. "I felt *loved* by God and my fellow Christians."
3. "My work in the church gave me a feeling of *value*."
4. "I experienced peace and *security* instead of anxiety and insecurity."
5. "I was *forgiven*, and my guilt was abolished."
6. "I was strengthened and *guided* in times of uncertainty."
7. "I had a loyal *support* group during sorrow and tragedy."
8. "My faith gave meaning and *purpose* to my life."
9. "I had *hope* instead of despair."

If something consistently produces such positive results, then it's *real*. When we realize these benefits, then we can experience the abundant life Jesus promised.

According to legend, the little boy who gave Jesus his loaves and fishes saw Jesus's miracle and said, "Wow! If he can do that with my lunch, what could he do with my whole life?" Each of us might ask the same thing: What if I gave him my whole life? What if I gave him my time? Would my day look different? Would he enable me to accomplish more of his work? What if I gave him my talents? Would I discover some hidden special abilities? Would he develop them more fully? Would he allow me to influence every life I encounter? What if I gave him my treasure? Would I be able to invest in things that will last throughout eternity? What if I didn't stop at time, talents, and treasure? What if I gave him my hopes and my dreams?"

That's the way to realize abundant life! Jesus said, "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it" (Mark 8:35b).

God can ease every pain, soothe every fear, and fill every need. That's what Jesus offered when he said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

Life is precious. If a medicine were produced today that guaranteed physical life, it would be in great demand. Suppose there was such a capsule. If a person was involved in a fatal accident, the medic could slip that capsule in the victim's mouth, and immediately life would return. If a patient died on an operating table, the doctor could administer the medicine, and all would be well.

If there was a pill that would ensure only one day of additional life, people would panic to get it. Just suppose a pill was produced that would give everlasting life. People would beg, borrow, or steal to get enough money to purchase it. No effort would be spared in order to mass-produce the product. Long lines would form in front of all the businesses that sold it. The demand would be overwhelming.

The doctor discovering it would be praised. His fame would make his name a household word. His popularity would be unexcelled.

Well, Jesus did just that! And he offers not only life, but abundant life!