

Thriving Not Surviving

Life today is getting more and more difficult. We are distracted by tough financial times and political turmoil among other things. This can make us focus on just getting through each day. Stay with us as we talk about thriving not surviving.

Introduction

it is easy to get overwhelmed in this fast-paced world we live in. The challenges we face can seem insurmountable. Whether it is trying to stretch our paycheck to buy groceries and gasoline or that bad luck seems to be at every turn, it can feel like we are surrounded by mountains and there is no way out, but there is.

It is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day things of life. We start to lose sight of the big picture and God's plan for our lives. The world starts to surround us and make us feel trapped. Real or imagined, it is a scary perspective to have. It is so easy to drop into survival mode and stop thriving.

Dropping Into Survival Mode

There are so many ways that people drop into a survival mode that we see every day. We see it and experience it because of finances, relationships, and circumstances. These are all the things that cause us stress, and the devil uses them to take our focus off Jesus and put it on what is going on around us.

When we are in survival mode, we get tunnel vision for whatever is right in front of us. We lose sight of the big picture. It is so natural to drop into survival mode. But that's the thing; if you are just surviving you are not thriving.

Many people have gotten to the point financially where they don't have any money saved in case of an emergency. Worse yet, they aren't able to make it from paycheck to paycheck without help. This causes us to lose focus on Jesus and focus on finances. We drop into survival mode.

We surround ourselves with people. That's a good thing. But when we surround ourselves with people who drain us emotionally and do not help feed us emotionally and socially, we can fall into survival mode again. If we are constantly giving emotionally and socially and not refilling ourselves with the things that are focused on Jesus, we run dry. This can lead to depression and a feeling of surviving instead of thriving.

Of course, the most common distraction is circumstances. Circumstances can draw our attention away from Jesus and cause us to focus on what is right in front of us. These circumstances can seem so big that it is like standing in the middle of a deep forest and you can't see the forest because you are surrounded by trees. Again, this drops us into surviving instead of thriving.

The Devil Destroys You

You know you are just surviving when all you think about is getting through today, or just getting to that next paycheck. You are only surviving when your circumstances consume you and all of your focus. You are not thriving at all when you get to his point.



Jesus has something to say about this. He warns us and encourages us all in one verse found in John 10:10.

We're going to read the New King James Version of this verse today because I like the way it words this.

John 10:10 (New King James Version)

(10) The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Jesus paints the devil as a thief in this verse, which he is. Satan's whole purpose is to steal you from God, plain and simple. It started with deceiving Adam and Eve, and it continues to this day. The whole message of God can be summarized like this.

God created us for fellowship. We sin, at the devil's enticement, and separate ourselves from God. God sent Jesus to redeem us and bring us back to him. The gospel is really that simple.

The devil comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. He will stop at nothing to achieve this. The only thing he wants to steal is us from God. He does this only to hurt God. The devil doesn't want us; he just doesn't want God to have us.

Satan wants to kill us before we can say yes to Jesus. He wants to destroy us even after we have said yes to Jesus. That is what the devil wants. He wants to separate us from God to hurt God, nothing more and nothing less.

When we are falling prey to the devil's schemes we are in survival mode. We are just surviving instead of thriving.

Jesus Saves You

But Jesus came and redeemed us! John records Jesus saying it. He says he came to give us life. He didn't give us just enough life to survive. He gives us life in abundance! He wants us to live life and enjoy it!

In other words, he wants us to thrive!

As some of you know we live in the desert of Washington State. We have tried to grow different fruits in our backyard over the years. We have tried blueberry bushes, apricot trees, a cherry tree, and more.

They barely hang on for a year or two. The leaves turn brown and the fruit rarely appears and when it does it is small and shrivels quickly. I think the desert sun may be too much for them. On the other side of our backyard we have a fig tree. It likes the hot desert sun. It continues to grow and flourish and it gives us amazingly sweet figs each year without any cultivating or care at all.

The devil wants to see us shrivel up and die. Jesus wants to see us flourish and grow and share the sweet fruit of a life in Christ with everyone around us.

You may find yourself saying, "But you don't know my situation. My electricity is about to be turned off. I don't have food for my kids. I don't have any transportation to get to and from a job or church." You may be thinking that there is no way out of the dead-end job you are in. There may be no appreciation for all the hard work you do for others.



There are mountains all around you and you can't seem to do it. Well, you are right, you can't. You see, surviving is a natural thing. It is natural things that put us into survival mode. What does it take to get out of the results of natural things? Supernatural power! Look at Philippians 4:13

Philippians 4:13

(13) I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

We cannot do it on our own. We can't do it under our own power. Do you know what we call it when we try to accomplish things under our own power? Surviving!

Jesus has redeemed us! We are called and equipped to thrive! He has already given us the strength to look past our current circumstances. We see the trees around us and know it's only a forest that we can navigate with Jesus' guidance and get out. We can find ways to feed our family and enjoy it. Our focus must remain on Jesus and off the distractions the devil tries to put in our way. To thrive and not just survive requires the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Gives the Power to Thrive

When we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit and the life given to us by Jesus, we thrive! Jesus promises us the Holy Spirit to guide us and then to empower us.

John 16:7 says:

John 16:7

(7) But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

And Acts 1:8 says:

Acts 1:8

(8) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus promises us that he has sent the Holy Spirit to guide us and empower us. We have a mission, and the devil is trying to distract us from that mission.

Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Accept the power the Holy Spirit gives you and use the gifts the Holy Spirit equips you with to continue to spread the love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ around the world.

Conclusion

Because Jesus lives, we have a tomorrow. Because Jesus lives, we do not have to fall to the devil's schemes, tricks, and lies.

The supernatural power we receive by being a child of God makes it so we can thrive not just survive. Jesus has called us all to thrive and live a life more abundantly. Don't allow the natural to pull you down when you have access to the super-natural in Jesus Christ.

How have you gone from surviving to thriving? We'd love to hear your story.

