

THRIVE!

Cultivating a Healthy Spirit



If your spirit is a plant, how are you doing: are you wilting or flourishing? Are you dying inside, or are you blossoming?

1. Believe this: You can thrive! Take hope!

Our culture says that you must get the circumstances right in your life in order to be happy. But circumstances do not determine your level of thriving. You do!

This is bad news for people who want to remain in victim mentality or who like playing the blame game. But this is great news if you want to thrive. Thriving does not come from trying to control your circumstances. *Thriving comes from submitting to God.*

2. According to Psalm 46, thriving is two things.

Imagine two plants in the same area. Imagine that a brutal wind and a fierce hailstorm tear through this area. One plant is uprooted and torn to pieces. The other plant remains firmly in the ground and loses not even a little leaf.



How could this be? This could happen if one of those plants was in a sturdy greenhouse, fully sheltered from the harshness and the rough, destroying elements raging all around it.

- ♥ *Thriving is a sheltering issue.* Psalm 46 says that God is our refuge. In verses 4 and 11, God says that He is our fortress. Because of that, we do not fear.

“God is our refuge and strength,
 an ever-present help in trouble.
 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
 and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
 though its waters roar and foam
 and the mountains quake with their surging.” (NIV)

We are sheltered in Christ. We are hidden in Him (Col. 3:3). He takes our hits.

Imagine 2 identical boxes. Imagine that both receive an equal pressure on them. One box is crushed while the other one remains undamaged by the pressure. What makes the difference? The undamaged box is filled with something stronger than the pressure.

♥ *Thriving is an internal issue.*

“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
 the holy place where the Most High dwells.
 God is within her, she will not fall;
 God will help her at break of day.” (Ps. 46:4-5)

The city of God was Jerusalem, but Jerusalem did not have a river. Jerusalem’s enemies did have rivers flowing through their capital cities: Ninevah, Babylon, Thebes, and Damascus all had rivers within them. In the city of God, however, there was a spiritual river, “the continual outpouring of the sustaining and refreshing blessings of God” (NIV Study Bible footnote).

What is the significance of “break of day”? This was the time when ancient armies would launch their battle attacks against the cities such as Jerusalem. God was specifically promising to be strength—to be *ezer*—when the enemy attacks.

In ancient times, God brought His Presence in a special way to the temple in Jerusalem. Where is the temple of God today? What is “the holy place where the Most High dwells”? It is you! You are the temple, the holy place where God Almighty lives.

"She will not fall." Why? Because God is within her! God says that you will not fall under the enemy's attack because God is within you.

Isaiah 58:11: "The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs **in a sun-scorched land**
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail." (NIV)

Where are we well-watered? In the sun-scorched land!

"And the Lord shall guide you continually and satisfy you **in drought and in dry places** and make strong your bones. And you shall be like a watered garden and like a spring of water whose waters fail not." (Amplified)

Where are we satisfied and like a watered garden? In drought and in dry places!

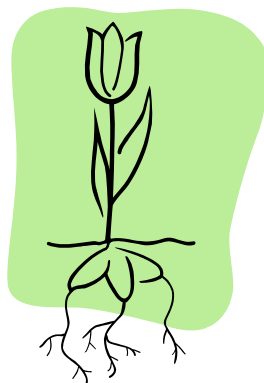
"Your lives will begin to glow **in the darkness**,
your **shadowed** lives will be bathed in sunlight.
I will always show you where to go.
I'll give you a full life in the **emptiest of places**—
firm muscles, strong bones.
You'll be like a well-watered garden,
a gurgling spring that never runs dry." (The Message)

Where do we glow? We are radiant in the darkness!
Where are we bathed in sunlight? In the shadows of our lives!
Where do we have a full life? In the emptiest of places! Here is where we are like gurgling springs that never run dry.

We are like plants in a sun-scorched land, whose roots provide internal nourishment. These roots are stabilized and nourished in the soil of God's lavish love for us (1 John 3:1).



Difficult circumstances in our lives threaten to wither us.



God's lavish love stabilizes us as we are rooted in Him.



The Holy Spirit nourishes and refreshes us as we drink Him in.

Ephesians 3:17 says that we are rooted in His love.

But these roots also reach down to the fresh, flowing waters of the Holy Spirit, like an underground aquifer. As we yield to Him, we drink continually of the Holy Spirit. In John 7:38, Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." Verse 39 explains that Jesus was referring to the Spirit of God.

The Amplified Bible quotes Jesus as saying, "He who believes in Me [who cleaves to and trusts in and relies on Me] as the Scripture has said, from his innermost being shall flow [continuously] springs and rivers of living water."

Here is Jeremiah 17:8 in The Message:

But blessed is the man who trusts me, God,
 the woman who sticks with God.
 They're like trees replanted in Eden,
 putting down roots near the rivers—
 Never a worry through the hottest of summers,
 never dropping a leaf,
 Serene and calm through droughts,
 bearing fresh fruit every season.

The NLT puts it this way:

They are like trees planted along a riverbank,
with roots that reach deep into the water.
Such trees are not bothered by the heat
or worried by long months of drought.
Their leaves stay green,
and they never stop producing fruit.

These green trees—that’s us! Circumstances, husbands, and marriages do not determine our level of thriving, for we are sheltered in Christ, and sustained by an internal source.

3. “Do not conform any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2, NIV). We are changed when we replace the lies in our thinking and start believing truth instead.

♥ You can be grateful for “pushed buttons.”

We like to blame other people for causing our anger or irritation. But they haven’t caused it; they have simply revealed it. When someone pushes our buttons, it reveals to us what is already on the inside of us.

When you push the button on a vending machine, and a candy bar comes out, you didn’t create that candy bar—you simply brought out what was already in that machine. If there was no candy bar in the machine, no amount of your pushing or banging would cause one to appear! You can bring out only what is already on the inside.



In the same way, others cannot create our anger or impatience. They can bring out only what is already inside us. So...when others push our buttons and junk comes out, we can actually be grateful to them for revealing this to us so that we can get rid of it!

And the way to get rid of revealed junk in our hearts is—not to conform to the patterns of the world—but to repent! We tend to think that what others are doing to us is what is harming us. But what destroys us is not what others do to us. What poisons us is not the unkindness or even the blatant

evil of others. What poisons us and destroys us is our own hearts reacting to others with bitterness and resentment.

We want to focus on what our own hearts are doing, and repent of the sin that we find there. Others did not cause that sin; they merely revealed it for us.

♥ You have an unfailing Need-Meeter.

2 Peter 1:3 says that "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him."

Ephesians 1:3 says that we are "blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

Philippians 4:19 says that "God will meet all your needs."

Remember the secret of the umbrellas?

You have an absolutely unfailing Need-meeter. It is not your husband; it is the Lord. God can use your husband ... or not. Your welfare and well-being are not in jeopardy; you are in God's unfailing hands of care. Rest in those loving hands.



Psalm 23 says that if God is your Shepherd, you have everything you need! Is that really true? Do you have everything you need? What about the neediness that we have in our lives? We can't deny that, can we? How can this be?

Here is the amazing truth: if I am living a yielded life, then *the neediness I have in my life is exactly what I need!* If we are submitted believers, then even our neediness is just what we need!

I am not saying, "You deserved this tragedy in your life." I am not saying, "You brought this on yourself." But I am saying that even this difficulty enters your life to serve you and to provide what you need in order to be more fully blessed.

This is why James dared to say that we should "count it all joy" when we suffer. Our God-ordained suffering brings us into greater happiness.

When Mary came to the tomb, she cried, "Oh, no!" But as we watch her, knowing more of what God had been doing, we want to say to her, "Oh,

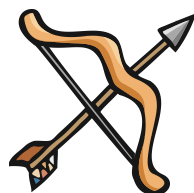
yes!" If we are submitted believers, then everything in our life can be received with "Oh, yes!" because we know that God is working, controlling, and using this for wonderful purposes.

If you are walking in yielded obedience to the Spirit of God, then you have everything you need.

Be assured that if you needed something, you would have it. I sometimes say to my teenager or to myself, "If being more beautiful, or having a few different body parts would have blessed me, then God would have been the first to want to do that." If having more money would have truly blessed any of us, then God would have given that.

We could never bless ourselves better than the lavishly generous, perfectly loving heart of God.

People sometimes send sharp arrows into our lives, arrows which can strike us and cause us pain.



Although an arrow can hurt when it hits us, it cannot poison us or harm us at all because the shaft of the arrow is empty.

Always, always, always, it is empty!

You decide how it is filled. ***You can hand every painful arrow and circumstance in your life to God, and God promises to fill every one entirely with blessing.***

However, if you do not give an arrow to God, then it can function in your life as curse and as harm. You will suffer from the poison of resentment and bitterness and unforgiveness. But you filled the arrow with curse yourself.

Deuteronomy 23:5 says that the LORD our God turns curses into blessings for us because He loves us!

Genesis 50:20 says that what the enemy intends for harm, God intends for good. The enemy can send an arrow with evil intent, but God fills it with blessing.

Romans 8:28 says that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him and who have been called according to His purposes. Every single arrow can be filled with God's blessing.

Jeremiah 29:11 tells us that God has good plans for us, plans full of hope; and Job 42:2 tells us that not one of these good plans can be thwarted!

We need not fear or resent any arrow that comes into our lives. We need only to keep giving every arrow to God so that He can fill it with blessing.

♥ You can live completely in blessing.

Let me ask you this: what are some of God's best blessings to you?

Let me suggest another one that you may not have realized. Recognizing this blessing in your life is so powerful that, if you have not realized this before, your entire life could change from this point on.

One of the greatest blessings in your life may be the faults or even the very wickedness of your husband.

All of your husband's faults and all of his sins—little and big—all of these things can come into your life as blessings to you!

His faults do not threaten your well-being;
his mistakes do not hinder God's good plans for you;
his sins do not thwart God's perfect purposes for you.

We often believe the lie that someone else is ruining our lives!

But if we are living in obedience to God, then other people cannot mess things up for us. If we are yielding our spirits to the Spirit of God, then even the evil of other people operates in our lives only as blessing.

The little things in your husband that bother you, such as being late or being messy, and the big things in your husband's life that are painful to you, such as addictions to alcohol or pornography—all of these things can come into your life as blessing.

This does not mean that you do not take action to minister to your husband according to his needs and according to the wisdom that God gives you, but it does mean that you do not resent these things, that you are not bitter, and that you are not fearful.

Knowing that God turns the curses of others into blessings for you means that you are able to fully embrace what God is doing in your life.

All of your husband's faults can be used by God to bless you.

It may be God's best blessing when men do not meet their wives needs.

If a man sins, he stands guilty before God and must give an account for that sin. But that very same act of sin, as it enters the sanctified life of a yielded, obedient believer, functions as blessing and not as curse.

The Secret of the Pages:

The very same situation can come onto the page of someone's life as sin while it comes onto my page as blessing.

Situation X

EVIL	BLESSING
black mess	beauty
accountable to God for this sin	advancement of God's purposes

For example, when Joseph was thrown into a pit, this situation was sin in the lives of his brothers; but in Joseph's life, it was progress towards the palace. When Joseph was then thrown into jail, Potiphar's wife stood accountable before God for

her evil; but in Joseph's life, this was moving him toward the fulfillment of his dreams.

Judas' betrayal of Christ was evil on his page. But in Christ's life, it was the advancement of God's purposes.

Regardless of how awful the sin of others may be on their pages, when those situations come into our lives, they can function as blessing on our pages.