



Live Life Well | Pastor Mike Fairburn | September 6, 2009

A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

Introduction: Many Bibles print the words of Jesus in red. The term “Red Letter Day” in modern times has come to mean “it’s your lucky day” or “things are looking up.” **John 1:1-5** says, *“In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.”* Jesus is the living, breathing, loving, creating, and all-powerful word of God. What Jesus said and did is completely connected to who He is: God’s son. He is the promise, made and kept. His light is more powerful than the darkness that tries to engulf our world—and us. So when Jesus speaks, and we respond, it really is our Red Letter Day. One Red Letter Day Jesus told those who were with Him: *“The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”* (**John 6:63, NLT**) Jesus is talking about eternal life—life now and later. Jesus’ words have the power to give us life because the power of God’s Spirit is behind everything He tells us, everything He promises us, and everything He commands us to do. Jesus gives commands, but none of them are about religious dos and don’ts. His commands give us direction; they keep us from getting stuck in our own personal pursuits. That is why Jesus says: “Human effort accomplishes nothing”. Human effort creates some amazing things but we have never created a path to God. Jesus struggled with people who were trying to be good enough, but that is not the kind of life Jesus came to give. Let’s see how we can live the abundant life Jesus promises and live life well.

1. **To live life well, start with Jesus.** In **John 10:10** Jesus tells us how the universe works, what we are up against, and where we can find life at its best no matter what. *“The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.”* Jesus says that He has come to bring a rich, full, abundant, meaningful, fun, connected, God- and people-filled life. Good relationships and meaningful purpose are the normal by-products of the life Jesus brings. Jesus also promised, *“There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.”* **John 14:2-3 (NLT)** Forever is for this moment forward...when our bodies die, if we have a relationship with Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we will go to be with Him forever. But forever starts now. Now is where life’s heavy lifting takes place. Many good-willed people live stuck. They go to church, read their bibles and pray, even help in some ministry or another but they are stuck. When we live as though God’s love is conditional on our behavior or our peace and well being depend on the behavior or another human being or circumstances to be just right...the thief wins and we will be waiting forever. God wants to lead us simply to His Son.
2. **To live life well, don’t let anything come between us and Jesus.** When we begin to follow Jesus, we might assume things will come together quickly. But, most often, it takes time, and God is kind, despite our failings. David started as a Shepherd and became a King who expressed God’s love and favor in his life. **2 Samuel 7:18-20** records that: *“King David went in and sat before the Lord and prayed, ‘Who am I, O Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And now, Sovereign Lord, in addition to everything else, you speak of giving your servant a lasting dynasty! Do you deal with everyone this way, O Sovereign Lord? What more can I say to you? You know what your servant is really like, Sovereign Lord.’”* David had been given some disappointing news. His dream had died because God said no. But

despite David's disappointment, he was overcome by the love and goodness of God. David knew God loved him when he was a shepherd just as much as he did as a king, and that love was not based on performance. David lied, slept with another man's wife, and committed murder. He was far from perfect but David knew the love of God was not based on conditions. And God knows what we are like too. Do you ever feel your performance is not enough to merit God's love and acceptance? God tells us to come to Him no matter what. Jesus says, "*Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.*" **Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)** Jesus tells us to trade the heavy weight of sin and difficult circumstance of our lives for His yoke. When we do, we will experience gratitude and contentment, just like Paul who wrote: "*I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*" **Philippians 4:11-13 (NLT)**

3. **Live life well, in the light of Jesus.** All of us experience struggles and temptations, but this is where church helps. Church is about healing and honesty, a place where we don't have to pretend everything is okay. The devil is a thief, murderer, and destroyer who lives in the secret places of our life. If we allow something to stay hidden in the dark, we are stuck. Jesus said in **John 8:12**, "*I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.*" To live life well, we start with Jesus. We make a relationship with Him our first priority. We spend time with Him, every day praying, reading the Bible and journaling. To live life well don't let guilt, shame, or circumstances get between us and Jesus. We come to Him because He already knows what's going on. And finally, to live life well let Jesus shine His light on our secret places. It hurts, but it will heal.

C. Life Group Questions (select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes)

1. When you hear the phrase "live life well," what comes to mind? Jesus says in John 10:10 that His purpose is to give us "a rich and satisfying life," or as the NIV says, "Life to the full." When has your life been the richest and most satisfying (thus far)? What factors caused it be this way?
2. What causes all of us and you in particular to get stuck or trapped in a dissatisfying life, in a life without much contact with Jesus?
3. When have you ruthlessly eliminated something from your life in order to prioritize Jesus' presence with you?
4. It's the nature of this world to sidetrack us from Jesus, every day! So how do you or can you consistently rearrange the priorities of your life right now to make Jesus first? (E.g., what gets in the way of PBJ?)

D. Personal Application (1-3 Minutes)

- Take a personal inventory. What types of things in your life are keeping you from drawing close to Jesus? Give them to God, and let a brother or sister in Christ help you. Don't let guilt, shame or anything else prevent your "life to the full" from becoming reality.
- If you know of someone who is stuck, offer them unconditional, non-judging love to help them and direct them to Jesus.
- Prepare to join a life group...challenge and be challenged by others in our next series, *The Hole in Our Gospel*.

E. Prayer Time (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4: 10-15 Minutes)

- Reprioritize your life to put Jesus first. Read Psalm 139:23-24 and pray this prayer to God, ask Him to search your heart and reveal the secret places of your heart.
- Pray for anyone you know who is under attack by the devil or who are struggling with things that come between them and Jesus.
- Pray for other concerns or items that came up during the discussion.