

# How to Thrive...Not Just Survive

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning again, and we are two weeks into our brand new year. And so the question, was last year a good year? Was it a mediocre year, poor year?

That's the question we ask ourselves as we are preparing for our new year. How can next year be better? How can we change? How can we set proper goals to make this next year a better year? Did you have dreams that were fulfilled? Did you have dreams that were dashed? Are you expecting a good upcoming year? Those are things that we think about. And as we look at the title of today's message, I trust that our desire is to thrive in 2018, not just merely survive.

And what we're going to do is look at a few things this morning, but we know that Jesus came to earth and he came to give us what kind of life?

[ 1 : 04 ] An abundant life. Let's look at that verse in John chapter 10, verse 10, where the Bible says, The thief does not come except to steal and to kill and to destroy.

I have come. This is Jesus speaking. He says, I have come that they may have life and they may have it more abundantly.

Jesus Christ came that we would have life more abundantly, that we would be able to live a full life, a complete life with him as we are empowered by his Holy Spirit.

He gives us abundance in the forgiveness of sin. He allows us to rise up from our failures and to ultimately be victorious as we allow him to work through us.

He gives us abundant power for a great future as well. And this morning in our next few moments together in God's word, we're going to look at five daily disciplines that can make 2018 our greatest year ever.

[ 2 : 24 ] So you have your note sheets, get ready to write. We are going to look in Scripture and see how we can maybe engage in, incorporate these five daily disciplines into our life to make this our best year ever.

And the first thing that we're going to look at, the first discipline, is if we can get into this habit every single morning is to do this, is to rise thankfully.

First thing we do before our feet ever hit the floor, as the moment we wake, we have our first conscious thoughts of the day, is to be able to rise thankfully.

Let's look at Philippians 4, verse 6. Be anxious for nothing, and let not anxiety take over your life, don't worry about anything, but in everything.

By prayer and supplication, or that is simply asking for something. With what? With thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God.

[ 3 : 34 ] So we are to rise thankfully. I believe that's a very, very important discipline. If we look at Psalm 92, and verse 1, the psalmist says it is, what?

Good to give thanks. It's good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to your name, O Most High. Now one of the things that we can do as we begin this daily discipline is to discipline yourself to thank God for the day.

And I've said this a few times, my normal or typical prayers in the morning. I say, thank God. Thank you for this brand new day. Thank you for the opportunities that you are going to provide.

God, I thank you for your mercy. I thank you for your grace. I thank you for your forgiveness. I don't deserve your forgiveness. I thank you for the blessings that you provide. God, I thank you for your provision.

Most of those, I pray that before ever my feet ever hit the floor in the morning. So Lord, thank you for all these things. And think of things. Maybe one exercise would be to try to think of something each morning that we typically take for granted.

[ 4 : 47 ] You know, God, I thank you for the rain that we had yesterday. God, I thank you for this cold weather. You know, maybe we'll have less love bugs come the springtime.

I mean, there's always something to be thankful for, right? And we take certain things for granted. God, I thank you for whatever it is that you might realize that we have that we normally don't thank him for.

Father, thank you for being alive today. Father, thank you for a roof over my head. Thank you that I have food to eat for breakfast. Father, I thank you that I have clothes to wear.

God, I thank you for all of these things, a car to drive. Thank you for a job. I thank you for our children. I thank you for my spouse. Thank you for my friends. Thank you for... And the list goes on and on and on and on.

Let's look now at 1 Timothy. As we, the things we take for granted, we realize that they are a blessing to us. And we can be content with what we have.

[ 5 : 50 ] 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 6 says, Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we have brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we carry nothing out.

And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. Because what else do we really need? We're clothed. We're fed. We have family. We have friends.

We have relationships. And we have Jesus. What more do we really need? And we can also give thanks for our salvation. Psalm 103, 1 through 6.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul. And forget not all His benefits. And the psalmist lists a few of those benefits.

Who forgives our iniquities. That's what we receive in salvation. Sin's forgiven. Heals all your diseases. Who redeems your life from destruction.

[ 6 : 49 ] Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies. Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles. And verse 6. The Lord executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.

We don't necessarily see that justice immediately, but that justice will come. God takes care of those who are oppressed. Also, as we pray, we can give thanks for the privilege of being able to pray, and that God hears us.

Philippians 4, 6. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything. How? By prayer, supplication, asking God for the things we need.

With thanksgiving. Be thankful. We are not necessarily a thankful people. We go through our day sometimes without thinking about the people that we are to thank.

The things that we are to thank God for. Rise thankfully. Let your request be made known to God. Prayer is our lifeline to God, is it not?

[ 7 : 57 ] When we are in trouble, when we are happy, when there's no one around, we have something we like to share. God is our lifeline. We can reach up to Him when we are down.

God is the one that takes care of us. So rise thankfully. Secondly, when we pray, I believe we are told in Scripture that we are to pray expectantly.

What about if we pray this way every day of 2018? Pray expecting God to answer the prayer.

Rather than praying, Well God, I hope you do this, and I don't know that you're going to do this for me, but maybe in the odd chance, odd likelihood that maybe you might answer this prayer.

You know, a lot of Christians pray that way. But rather, maybe if we pray, God, thank you in advance for answering this prayer.

Like Jehoshaphat in the Old Testament. Remember when Jehoshaphat, the army, Israel's enemies were coming against them, five enemy nations coming against Israel.

[ 9 : 04 ] They were vastly outnumbered, and they prayed, and actually they thanked God in advance for the victory before they ever met with the enemy.

So praying expectantly. Again, verse 6, Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God.

Worry about nothing. Pray about everything, expecting the answer. You see, we can pray, and believe, and receive, according to James, in chapter 1, verse 6 of the book of James, he says, But let him, or her, ask in faith, how are we to be asking God?

With no doubting. Don't doubt, just ask, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. We're double-minded.

We think, Well, maybe, maybe so, maybe not. Maybe so, maybe not. It's like that little kid, or the teenager, with the little flower, the petals.

[10:21] He loves me, he loves me not. He loves me, he loves me not. She loves me, she loves me not. Well, you know, maybe God will answer. Maybe, maybe God won't. So we can pray, or we can doubt and go without.

Think about it. We can either pray, or we can doubt and go without. Verse 7 of James, chapter 1, For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.

He is a double-minded man, meaning our thoughts are divided, unstable in all his ways. Do you ever try to think of something and do something else?

It doesn't always work out that well, especially something that requires a lot of intense concentration. Our minds wander off, and then we're careless, and something bad happens. We're unstable in our ways. So when we ask, we ask God expecting. We can pray, or we can doubt and go without. You see, God is able to answer our prayers.

[11:25] That's why we pray expectantly, because we have a powerful God. We have a God who wants what is best for us. Now we have a God who knows what is best for us, and our prayers are not always or what is best for us.

That's where the rub comes in. We want what we want, but God knows what we need. And so sometimes we confuse God not answering our prayer with God not being a powerful God, or God not wanting to answer our prayer.

The reality is, God wants what is best for us. He's able to answer our prayers. Let's look at the Old Testament. Book of Jeremiah 33, in verse number 3.

This is how God is speaking to His people. This is what the message God wants us to get. He says, Call to me, and I will answer you.

And get this. And show you great and mighty things which you do not know. What God is saying is, Call unto me, and I'm going to answer you, and I'm going to reveal myself, and I'm going to show myself real in so many ways that even surpasses your imagination.

[12:42] So when we pray, don't pray for little things, pray for big things. Don't settle. Because God wants to bless us above and beyond measure. Just like the prayer of Jabez in the Old Testament.

God bless me beyond measure. Enlarge my borders. May your hand be with me. And keep me from evil. Keep me from hurting others. And God answered Jabez's prayer.

A prayer in one verse in the Old Testament. And then it goes on back to the genealogies or back to whatever God was talking about during that period of time. We often miss that little one verse where Jabez asked for these and God answered and God gave him that for which he asked.

So rise thankfully. First discipline in making 2018 our best year ever. How not to just, how to thrive, not just survive.

So rise thankfully. Start with prayer, thanksgiving on our lips. It's going to change your attitude throughout the day. Rise thankfully.

[13:49] Remain thankful. Secondly, pray expectantly. Pray for God to answer the prayer. Thank him in advance. And then thirdly, as we speak, this will also change our life and can potentially change the lives of others around us, is to speak kindly.

So rise expectantly every day. Excuse me, rise thankfully. Remain thankful. Pray expectantly. But also, as we go through our day, speak kindly.

We are prone as individuals, are we not? When we get frustrated, or when we don't feel well, or when we don't have a lot of time, and something happens, we tend to get angry, or we tend to lash out at those around us.

Or just simply, we're not, we're not kind in our speech. We look at Philippians, chapter 4, and verse number 8.

This is what the New Testament, this is what Paul tells us. He says, finally, brethren, this is what things are supposed to be on our mind. These are the kind of things we're supposed to be speaking. Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is anything praiseworthy, what does Paul tell us to do?

[15:29] Think on these things. Meditate on these things. Allow these things to saturate our mind. When do we speak? We need to speak that which is true, that which is kind, that which is pure, that which is worthy of repeating.

You know, there are a lot of things that people say during the day that really aren't worth repeating. I mean, think about it. That's what Paul says. If it's not worth repeating, don't say it.

If you can't say it in mixed company, don't say it. So whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there's any virtue in it, and if there's any praise, that if you can praise, if you say something that somebody else can say, oh, I want to share with you what so-and-so said.

It was so awesome. If it's worthy of praise, meditate on it. Think on those things and let those things saturate your mind. Because we say, I mean, think about it.

We say what's in our mind. We say what's in our heart. Otherwise, why would you say something you're not thinking? Why would you say something that's not important to you? Why would you say? So it's like a well.

[16:45] We dig down into the well and whatever comes up out of our mouth is what's in our heart. So if we say hateful things, what does that say about us? We're hateful.

If we use foul language and if we denigrate others and if we're saying, using language that is not pure, what does that say about us?

We're impure on the inside. So we need to speak kindly. Now sometimes we have to be stern.

Sometimes we have to be pointed and direct.

But we can do it for the other person's good. It's like a boss. It's like someone who has responsibility for others. You know, sometimes you have to be stern.

You may even have to be loud. But why do you do it? Because it's fun or because you want to hurt them? No. We do it because we want them to be better. We do it because we care about someone else and we want them to improve.

[17:49] And so we do it for the right reasons and we do it in a fashion that will build them up, not break them. And so we need to be speaking kindly.

Paul gives us a cure for a critical tongue. Paul gives us a cure for a cross and a critical tongue. He says, think on these things. Whatever is pure, whatever is just, whatever is right, whatever is worthy of good report.

He says, think positively about other people. Isn't that hard for some of us? Think positively about somebody else. Don't just immediately jump to the negative and focus on things that are worth thinking about.

I mean, there are things that we could think about that just are not what's best for us. It could be something as simple as we hear something about someone that maybe is not very good.

Maybe it's something they did or maybe they hurt someone. Rather than dwell on it, pray for them. Pray for God to bless them. Pray for God to show himself real to them.

[19:04] Focus on virtue. Focus on praise. And here's another thing. Refuse to focus on the faults of others. Refuse to focus on the faults of others.

Doesn't mean we dismiss them. It doesn't mean we trust them necessarily. But we're not going to focus on what's negative about someone. We're going to focus on what's positive. And people tend to respond in kind.

Because if we always harp on the negative, how are they typically going to respond? They're going to respond in a negative fashion or in a negative manner. But if we praise them for what they're doing well, I mean, you know, it's like, wow, you tied your shoes this morning.

That's great. About the best thing you can figure out about them. I mean, there's always something.

I mean, you don't dwell on the negative. Think about something positive and encourage others.

So, speak kindly. Rise thankfully. Remain thankful. Pray expectantly. Speak kindly. It will change your relationships with others.

[20:14] And it might mean the difference between another person having a good day or a bad day. You know, you hear about, you know, you come home from work, having a bad day. You kick the dog.

The dog bites the cat. You know, the cat kills the man. I mean, so, sometimes it spreads. So, our speaking kindly to someone else might change a number of people around us.

And then, fourth discipline. I believe this is very, very, very, very important. Is to forgive quickly.

Forgive quickly.

This is something, again, that's very, very difficult for us because we tend to hold grudges. We tend to think about what someone did over and over again and we seethe over it and it becomes worse

as we think about it.

And there's also a lot of misunderstanding around forgiveness. We think that in order to forgive someone, we have to let them off the hook. Or maybe if we forgive someone, that is somehow saying that what they did was not as bad as what it was.

[ 21 : 21 ] That's not at all what forgiveness is. Forgive quickly. We see in Colossians 3, verses 12 and 13, Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, show mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, bearing with one another and forgiving one another.

If anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, what should we do? So also you must do. Forgiveness is a call to love, a call to mercy, a call to humility, and a call to long-suffering.

So he says we are to forbear with one another. You know what that means? It means literally to put up with them. That's what Paul tells us. He says, if you have something against somebody else, and if they kind of rub you the wrong way, even if they're a fellow brother or sister in Christ, Paul says, put up with them.

That's not fun sometimes. Sometimes we just want to run away. Sometimes we just want to walk away and close the door behind us. But Paul says the way we ought to be is we ought to be forbearing.

We ought to be long-suffering. Put up with them. And I know that sounds kind of crude. Well, you mean, I thought we were supposed to love them. Well, yes, we love.

[ 22 : 57 ] We don't necessarily like someone. We don't like what they do. We don't like their actions. But he says we still should put up with them. Pray for them. Think kindly about them and pray that God will bless them and hopefully God ultimately will change their mind or change their behavior.

So, forbearing, putting up with one another and forgive as Christ forgave. That's the true to key forgiveness. But what's our model for forgiveness?

It's Jesus Christ. Imagine, put yourself in his position. The very ones that were calling him names, the very ones that were beating him, whipping him, pulling out his beard, who crushed the crown of thorns, the thorns upon his head, the ones who spit on his face, the ones who nailed him to the cross, and the ones who were putting him to death were the very ones that Jesus said, Father, forgive them.

For they know not what they do. They don't know what they're doing. They don't know that they're killing your son. They don't know that they're killing their Savior. They don't know it.

They're just doing it out of hate, out of anger. Forgive them. So the true model for forgiveness is Jesus.

[ 24 : 21 ] So we say, well, what do we forgive people for? Jesus forgave for the worst. And you think, well, but what if, and we can think all kinds of worst-case scenarios, those, I think Jesus would still say, forgive.

He doesn't condone what they did. But do you realize that the one who suffers the most when we don't forgive is us? The person we are holding a grudge against may be going through life not worried about anything.

We're the ones who suffer when we choose not to forgive. You see, we can forgive without ever another person, we may not have the opportunity to tell a person that we forgive them.

But as long as we forgive, and forgiveness is basically choosing not to hold it against another individual and choosing not to let what happened run your life.

And so when we forgive, we don't have to forget. We don't have to engage in mental gymnastics and somehow figuring out how to get it out of our mind. It just means that when we think about it, we choose not to let it run our life or let it dictate our life.

[ 25 : 43 ] We choose not to hold it against an individual anymore. And then lastly, people don't think about this, but I think that if we rise thankfully every day thanking God for things we take for granted, remain thankful throughout the day, it's going to change the way we deal with things, it's going to change the way we speak, it's going to change our attitudes, and if we pray expectantly, pray, prayer warriors asking God, expecting God to answer our prayers, like praying for rain and taking the umbrella.

Speak kindly to others, forgive quickly, and work worshipfully. Work worshipfully.

Everything we do, whether it's doing the dishes, changing a diaper, working at the plant, teaching a class, whatever it is, work worshipfully.

We see Colossians 3, 17, and that's the key verse for this. And whatever you do, that is encompassing.

That covers literally everything we do in our life. And whatever you do, whatever you say, and whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

[ 27 : 11 ] Meaning, whether we're engaged in menial labor, whether we're engaged in doing something of a lofty magnitude, do it for Jesus.

Do it as if Jesus were the one that asked you to do that. Giving thanks to God the Father through Him. So everything that we do, what will magnify everything we do, is to think about, I am worshiping God as I'm doing this.

I have the opportunity to be busy. I have the opportunity to do something. Because God created us to be industrious. God created us to do things.

I have a friend that had some surgery a while back, and he was out of commission for about two or three months.

And we ride motorcycles together. And his wife was concerned that he was going to wax the paint off his motorcycle. You know what he did? He even waxed his lawnmower.

[ 28 : 32 ] I mean, dude, really? I barely rinsed mine. But you see, why? Because God created us to do. God didn't create us just to sit and do nothing.

We feel a sense of purpose when we're actively engaged in work, in doing something. And so when we work, we do it worshipfully. God, I thank you that I have the opportunity to do this.

God, I thank you that I have the opportunity. God, I thank you for the energy to be able to do this.

God, I thank you that I can do this for someone else. God, I thank you that you're providing an income, God.

So whatever we do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. And here's what we can do. Bring every area of our life into the arena of worship. Every area of our life, if we can bring it into the arena of worship.

And here's the thing. If we can learn how to make no separation between the sacred and the secular, secular, no separation between the sacred and the secular, meaning people say, oh, well, that's secular work and that's Christian work, or this is secular and that's Christian.

[ 29 : 46 ] You know what? If you're alive and the Holy Spirit's in you, everything's sacred.

Everything we do ought to be sacred. It's digging a ditch, it's unclogging a toilet.

It's sacred work. Why? Because the child of God's doing it. And so if we get that out of our mind and think, well, you know what? I'm not worshiping God because I'm directing traffic or I'm not worshiping God because I'm arresting someone.

I'm not worshiping God because I'm making something in a plant or whatever. And that's secular because I'm working for a paycheck. Who gave you the ability to have that?

So if we learn how to work worshipfully, learn how to make everything that we do God-honoring, everything that we do as an act of worship, I think it can change our entire life.

Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. And so as we close, when someone says, give me five, so we can say, okay, rise thankfully, pray expectantly, speak kindly, forgive quickly, and work worshipfully.

[ 30 : 57 ] So as we think about incorporating those five disciplines into our life in 2018, I believe we can learn how to thrive and not just survive.

If we incorporate, learn how to incorporate these into our daily life. Let's pray. Father, as we have opened your word this morning, Father, as we have been spending time in your word, please teach us today how that we may learn how to be thankful, more thankful, learn how to truly pray expecting without doubting, learn how to speak into others' lives, grace and truth, speaking kindly, learning how to forgive quickly as you forgave us and everything we do in work or play, that we may do it as unto you, thanking you, working worshipfully.

Teach us today, help us throughout this week, that we may honor and please you. For it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen. Amen. All right, this morning let's listen to the Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.