

Lesson 5:

How to be Abased and How to Abound

Life is full of ups and downs. Some seasons are of ease and others are of struggle. But the things that happen here on earth are part of a larger plan of our sovereign God.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

- ¹ To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.



Acknowledging the greater plan of God helps us to nurture a spirit of reverence and contentment in all seasons and in every situation.

1 Timothy 6:6

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain.



But contentment is not something you can *acquire* like a comfortable bed or chair. Contentment must be *learned*. Paul *learned* to be content in every situation.

Philippians 4:11

¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want:
*for I have learned,
in whatsoever state I am,
therewith to be content.*



Such understanding comes to those who seek it.

Psalm 25:4-5

- ⁴ Shew me thy ways, O LORD;
teach me thy paths.
- ⁵ Lead me in thy truth,
and teach me:
for thou *art* the God of my
salvation;
on thee do I wait all the day.



It is not that the stormy seas of life were miraculously calmed for Paul. Some days were high; others were low. But Paul learned to be content in any situation. In times of plenty and in times of lack, he maintained his faith and serenity.

Philippians 4:12

¹² I know both how to be abased,
and I know how to abound:

every where and in all things
I am instructed both to be full
and to be hungry,
both to abound
and to suffer need.



The source of Paul's contentment is found in one of the most misinterpreted verses in the Bible.

Philippians 4:13

¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.



Paul didn't say he could turn every bad situation to good through the power of Christ. He could be content in whatsoever state he found himself, because he knew that Christ would see him through it.

Philippians 4:13

¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.



The Lord's strength would sustain him through every challenge he faced.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

- ⁹ And he [the Lord] said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.
Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
- ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Learning to be content “in whatsoever state I am,” begins with recognizing two fundamental truths:

First, it is not Lord who makes the rich and the devil who makes the poor. The Lord makes them both.

Proverbs 22:2

- ² The rich and poor meet together:
the LORD is the maker of them all.



Second, there is no secret formula you can apply, or any promise of God you can claim, that guarantees you long life and wealth. Time and chance happen to all.

Ecclesiastes 9:11-12

¹¹ I returned, and saw under the sun,
that the race *is* not to the swift,
nor the battle to the strong,
neither yet bread to the wise,
nor yet riches to men of understanding,
nor yet favour to men of skill;
but time and chance happeneth to them all.

It may seem difficult to reconcile the concept of *chance* with a sovereign God. We equate chance with good or bad *luck*.

But Solomon was speaking from the human perspective.

Ecclesiastes 9:11-12

¹¹ I returned, and saw under the sun,
that the race *is* not to the swift,
nor the battle to the strong,
neither yet bread to the wise,
nor yet riches to men of understanding,
nor yet favour to men of skill;
but time and chance happeneth to them all.

¹² **For man also knoweth not his time:**
as the fishes that are taken in an evil net,
and as the birds that are caught in the snare;
so *are* the sons of men snared in an evil time,
when it falleth suddenly upon them.

Man doesn't know his time.
But God certainly does.

We don't know why we
was born to a certain age
or society, but God does.

We don't know what day
we will die, but God does.

Ecclesiastes 9:11-12

¹¹ I returned, and saw under the sun,
that the race *is* not to the swift,
nor the battle to the strong,
neither yet bread to the wise,
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and as the birds that are caught in the snare;
so *are* the sons of men snared in an evil time,
when it falleth suddenly upon them.

Why would an all-powerful God ordain seasons of plenty and want?

If the race is not to the swift,
and the battle is not to the strong;
if the bread is not to the wise,
nor riches to men of understanding –
and yet God is sovereign –

there must be a higher purpose to life
than acquiring a life of ease.

What is God trying to teach us?

Proverbs 3:5-6

- 5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart;
and lean not unto thine own understanding.
- 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him,
and he shall direct thy paths.



The ups and downs in life are lessons in trust.

We cannot love a God we do not trust.
We cannot serve a God we do not love.

Proverbs 3:5-6

- ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart;
and lean not unto thine own understanding.
- ⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him,
and he shall direct thy paths.



Trust is confident and steadfast
dependency.

We trust in God because we know he
cares for us and will not abandon us in
our hour of need.

Psalm 71:1-3a

- ¹ In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust:
let me never be put to confusion.
- ² Deliver me in thy righteousness,
and cause me to escape:
incline thine ear unto me,
and save me.
- ³ Be thou my strong habitation,
whereunto I may continually
resort:



There are two components of trust:

- 1) God is trustworthy
- 2) We should trust in him.

If we want our trust in God to grow past head knowledge, both truths must be put to the test. We must test God. He must test us.



In order to show us his trustworthiness, and to develop in us a lifestyle of trust in him, God will take us through seasons of plenty and times of need.



I Know How to Be Abound

Perhaps you have never considered that God would test your faith by giving you *more* than you need. But it is one thing to abound, and quite another to know HOW to abound – how to keep your faith when your mind tells you that you don't need it anymore.



I Know How to Be Abound

When an increase comes,
our challenge is to not set our heart
– our trust – upon that increase.

Psalms 62:10

¹⁰ Trust not in oppression,
and become not vain in
robbery:
if riches increase,
set not your heart *upon them*.



Wealth can be a blessing...

Ecclesiastes 5:19

¹⁹ Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this *is* the gift of God.



...or it can be an evil disease.

Ecclesiastes 6:2

² A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it:
this *is* vanity,
and it is an evil disease.



I Know How to Be Abound

What “power” allows a man to enjoy his portion when others cannot?
That power is trust in God.

How much better it is to trust in God than to glory in worldly riches.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

- ²³ Thus saith the LORD,
Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, **let not the rich *man* glory in his riches:**
- ²⁴ But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.



I Know How to Be Abound

Remember, money is not the problem.
Trusting in money is the problem.

1 Timothy 6:17

¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world,
that they be not highminded,
nor trust in uncertain riches,
but in the living God, who giveth us
richly all things to enjoy;

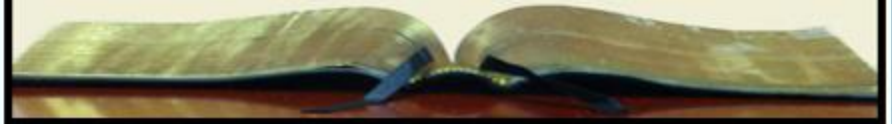


I Know How to Be Abound

God charges the wealthy to avoid being high-minded (*I have more money than you because I'm a better Christian*), and warns against trusting in uncertain riches (*Now that I have money, my problems are over*).

1 Timothy 6:17

¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world,
**that they be not highminded,
nor trust in uncertain riches,**
but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;



I Know How to Be Abound

The Lord expects those he enriches to use those riches for good.

He will reward their generosity in the next life.

1 Timothy 6:18-19

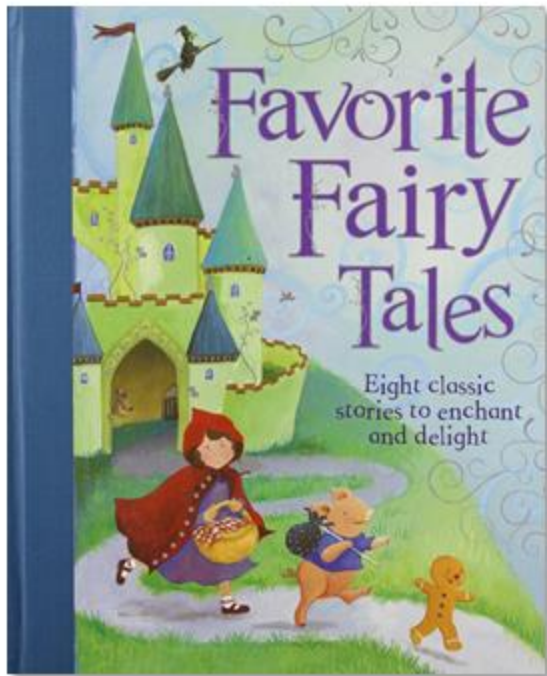
- ¹⁸ That they do good,
that they be rich in good works,
ready to distribute,
willing to communicate;
- ¹⁹ Laying up in store for themselves
a good foundation against the
time to come, that they may lay
hold on eternal life.



To know how to abound is to know that no matter how much money you have, you should never put your trust in it. This wealth is not given you to hoard; it is given you to do good with.

I Know How to Be Abased

Paul did not say, “I know how NOT to be abased.” He said he knew how to be content even in times of lack. This is one of the things Paul said he could do “through Christ.”



The fairy tale says a Christian will never suffer need.

The Bible says that Christ will strengthen you in your time of need.



Anyone can be a “fair weather Christian.” Anyone can claim faith in God when his pockets jingle with coins.

It is the person you are in times of real need that shows the real, unmasked you. Where is your faith then?



I Know How to Be Abased

We can find contentment in times of need when we remember that having a little *with* God is better than having a lot *without* him.

Proverbs 15:16

¹⁶ Better *is* little
with the fear of the LORD
than great treasure
and trouble therewith.

Proverbs 16:8

⁸ Better *is* a little
with righteousness
than great revenues
without right.



I Know How to Be Abased

A little gained through honest work
is better than a lot gained through
deceit.

Proverbs 28:6

- ⁶ Better *is* the poor
that walketh in his uprightness,
than *he that* is perverse *in his* ways,
though he *be* rich.



Faithfulness is Required

Before God entrusts you with the greater, he will test you with the lesser.

Luke 16:10-12

- ¹⁰ He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.
- ¹¹ **If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?**
- ¹² And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?



Faithfulness is Required

Whether you have a little or a lot, God expects you to be a good steward.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

- ¹ Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.
- ² Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.



Faithfulness is Required

If God gives you money for one job and you spend it on something else, he is not obligated to replace it!

Proverbs 18:9

9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.



The seven years of plenty in Joseph's day provided for the seven years of famine that followed. God supplied their need *in advance*.



Faithfulness is Required

There are two times when people are likely to forsake God: when things are going very well, and when things are going badly. That is why a wise man seeks neither poverty nor riches.

Proverbs 30:7-9

- ⁷ Two *things* have I required of thee;
deny me *them* not before I die:
- ⁸ Remove far from me vanity and lies:
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with food convenient for
me:
- ⁹ Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say,
Who is the LORD?
Or lest I be poor, and steal,
and take the name of my God *in vain*.



Faithfulness is Required

The man gorged on his riches will say,
“I did all this myself! Why should I give
God anything?”

Proverbs 30:7-9

- ⁷ Two *things* have I required of thee;
deny me *them* not before I die:
- ⁸ Remove far from me vanity and lies:
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with food convenient for
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- ⁹ **Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say,
Who is the LORD?**
Or lest I be poor, and steal,
and take the name of my God *in vain*.



Faithfulness is Required

The man blinded by his poverty will say, “God didn’t help me in my time of need! Why should I give back to him?”

Proverbs 30:7-9

- ⁷ Two *things* have I required of thee;
deny me *them* not before I die:
- ⁸ Remove far from me vanity and lies:
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with food convenient for
me:
- ⁹ Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say,
Who is the LORD?
**Or lest I be poor, and steal,
and take the name of my God *in vain*.**



Faithfulness is Required

Paul knew how to be abased and how to abound. He learned that in situations good and bad, true contentment came only through reliance on God.

Philippians 4:11-13

- ¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.
- ¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.
- ¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.



Faithfulness is Required

There is no greater poverty than the absence of hope. There are no greater riches than the true riches of Christ. To know this is to know the secret to a contented life.

1 Timothy 6:6-8

- ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain.
- ⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.
- ⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.



Faithfulness is Required

Having food and raiment AND GOD,
we should be very content!

1 Timothy 6:6-8

- 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.
- 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.
- 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.





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