

THRIVING IN A SEA OF CHANGE

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(Philippians 3:13–14 NRSV) Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, {14} I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

How would your life be different if instead of just getting by you really started to thrive – no matter what curve ball life threw at you

In Webster's Dictionary, the definition of thrive is:

"(v) (1) to be healthy or do well: flourish.

(2) to be successful: prosper."

In the field of positive psychology, thriving is defined as "reconstructing life's meaning in response to life's most destructive occurrences."

It's not as if the people who thrive go around unrealistically whistling a happy tune all day long.

"Don't Worry Be happy"

Rather, they are conscious creators of their lives, not mindless acceptors.

They know their power lies within.

If you do some research on the word thrive – you will find that until recently, thriver was a little known word used primarily in the medical profession to denote a group of people who, when faced with major life challenges, choose to get a grip and get on with making it through the tough times rather than simply caving in.

Dr. Paul Pearsall, who wrote a great book about thrivers called the *The Beethoven Factor* quoted one thriver he interviewed as saying,

"think of thriving as the 5 C's. Think of it as the ability to transform a life Catastrophe into a Catalyst for a Creative Change of Consciousness."

A word that is very much in vogue today is the word SURVIVOR.

Webster's defines survive as:

"(v) to continue to live or exist.

(2) to live longer than: outlive. – survival (n) – survivor (n)".

Why would you want to just "exist", when you could "flourish" in your personal and professional life?

Studies done by researchers in the field known as "positive psychology" show that 75% of Americans between 25–74 do not fit the criterion of "flourishing in life". Instead a full 75% of us are seen to be languishing – "emotionally and spiritually fatigued from trying to keep up -- generally devoid of highly positive and optimistic feelings towards living", as defined by Dr. Pearsall.

We'll never move ourselves, our families, our communities, our nation and our world forward as long as so many people live in such a state.

But the good news is that it is possible for each of us to shift out of that mode of thinking – that defeatist way of operating.

I believe that there are three ways that we can thrive

- Emotionally
- Spiritually
- Financially

Research has shown that we can all cultivate the attitude of a thriver.

It starts with a willingness to do so.

In *Attitudes of Gratitude* MJ Ryan writes:

"Our attitudes are our mental stances, the positions we hold vis-à-vis life. In some ways our attitudes determine everything because they are the glasses through which we see the world."

Dr. Wayne Dyer, the noted psychologist and author, says,

"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."

The Bible is very clear that Life in Christ consist in Abundant Life.

God wants us not to survive, but too thrive!

Let me offer to you 10 secrets to success according to Gail Stone founder of Creative Mastery Coaching.

1. Thrivers don't moan and groan, they make things happen.

As the noted playwright, author and satirist George Bernhard Shaw noted, "The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want and if they don't find them, make them."

I asked on FaceBook this week → How do you thrive in the midst of Change - and throughout the rest of this sermon I will share a number of different people's thoughts.

Christina Bolas noted:

I guess I thrive in two ways: sticking to the grindstone and plowing through, and having faith that everything will turn out fine (and if it doesn't, I will learn what I can from the experience and the heck move on!). People have a tendency to grip too tightly onto the "known," so tightly that the possibilities of the unknown (i.e. change) feel too scary. Life is about change. Embrace it. Love it. Tuck it to bed at night and give it a nice warm {glass of} milk.

2. Thrivers have the ability to laugh and find humor in things.

They know instinctively what research now shows, that our ability to assign a positive meaning to whatever happens to us makes all the difference.

Psychologist and author Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's notes, "thrivers' happiness is not dependent on external factors or life circumstances alone. It derives from their chosen state of consciousness and ability to cheer themselves up when things are looking down."

3. Thrivers don't get stopped in their tracks in the face of adversity.

They pause and catch their breath and then start making plans on how to get through it with their hearts and minds intact. Positive psychologists call this "creative construing" - the art of reframing the events in our lives and assigning a meaning to them that pulls us forward and helps us thrive rather than worry.

4. Thrivers consider life's challenges "growth opportunities" rather than hassles.

Thrivers are able to creatively "compartmentalize" each challenge in their lives as a temporary blip rather than a permanent situation. They also use what Dr. Pearsall calls "their mental delete key" and to let go of bad things when they are over – what scholar Alan Watts calls having a "forgettory", which is the opposite of memory.

Joette Conger noted:

I have decided to embrace change, to thrive on change. If I wasn't changing, I'd be dead. It's a decision.

5. Thrivers have an attitude of gratitude.

Because they have faced many unpleasant and usually life-threatening challenges in their lives, they are thankful for all the riches they receive. They don't walk around thinking life is a death sentence; they realize its LIFE and are grateful to be living theirs.

6. Thrivers are optimistic and hopeful, not just some times, but all of the time.

They look for the bright side and always assume that things will get better somehow, if they just keep believing. "Positive psychologists see hope and optimism as essential to surviving, recovering from and eventually thriving because of adversity", writes Dr. Pearsall.

7. Thrivers trust that there is a plan and a point to life.

They believe in some greater force for good which guides us all, whether they call that force God, Yahweh, Allah, Great Spirit, Divine Mystery, the Universe or any of the myriad of names that people have for what we might call Universal Consciousness.

Marion Ray noted:

I thrive on change. (I don't like to drive back from the store the same way I went.) Life without change is boring. And when I get bored, I get in trouble.

Kasie Tenbarga noted:

I can thrive in the midst of change by staying focused on what is the goal or purpose of the change. Change usually happens for a reason, and it is helpful to stay focused on a course.

8. Thrivers act "as if" and trust that sooner than later, they will become what they envision they already are.

Some people call this the "fake it until you make it" approach. Dr. Paul Pearsall calls this the "great pretenders" trait. Whether it's being applied to reach a specific goal or just make it through a very tough time, thrivers use their imagination in creative ways to enhance the quality of their lives in the current moment.

Nathan last week talked about the need to vision the desired result before we do things.

9. Thrivers know that you can't go it alone.

They realize that it's not only important but imperative to have a team of people around them who love, support and encourage them in their efforts. Thrivers reciprocate in kind. They know the sum is greater than its parts and they facilitate teamwork everywhere they go – at home, in the office and in their communities.

10. Thrivers dream big, they believe in their dreams and they invest their time and energy into creating a way to make those dreams come true.

They know that what they envision can come true. As Napoleon Hill so aptly stated in his landmark book, *Think and Grow Rich*, "Verily, there is nothing, right or wrong, which belief, plus burning desire cannot make true. These qualities are free to everyone." So, thrivers hold their goal in sight and keep believing that it will happen. And they are also willing to "let go and let God" handle the final outcome.

Jessica answered this way:

I thrive way better during change than during sameness. The change forces me to be on the ball and to be alert. When things stay the same too long, I get lost in the patterns and become lazy and loose myself to the monotony. P.S. This is my way of telling you I plan on moving out of the country upon graduation :)

So, how would becoming a thriver affect you and your success in life?

Who would you rather do business with or be around – a person flourishing or one languishing through life?

Think about that -- -- and start cultivating some of these qualities.

I'll leave you with a quote from Marianne Williamson to inspire you to start thriving.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same."