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FIRST.

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(How your relationship with God changes everything)

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THREE-DAY WEEKEND

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Wake up!

STOP DAYDREAMING AND START LIVING YOUR LIFE.

KEEP YOUR CAR

HAPPY THIS WINTER

See our tips on page 51!

TOUGH QUESTIONS:

Aren't all religions the same?

College countdown

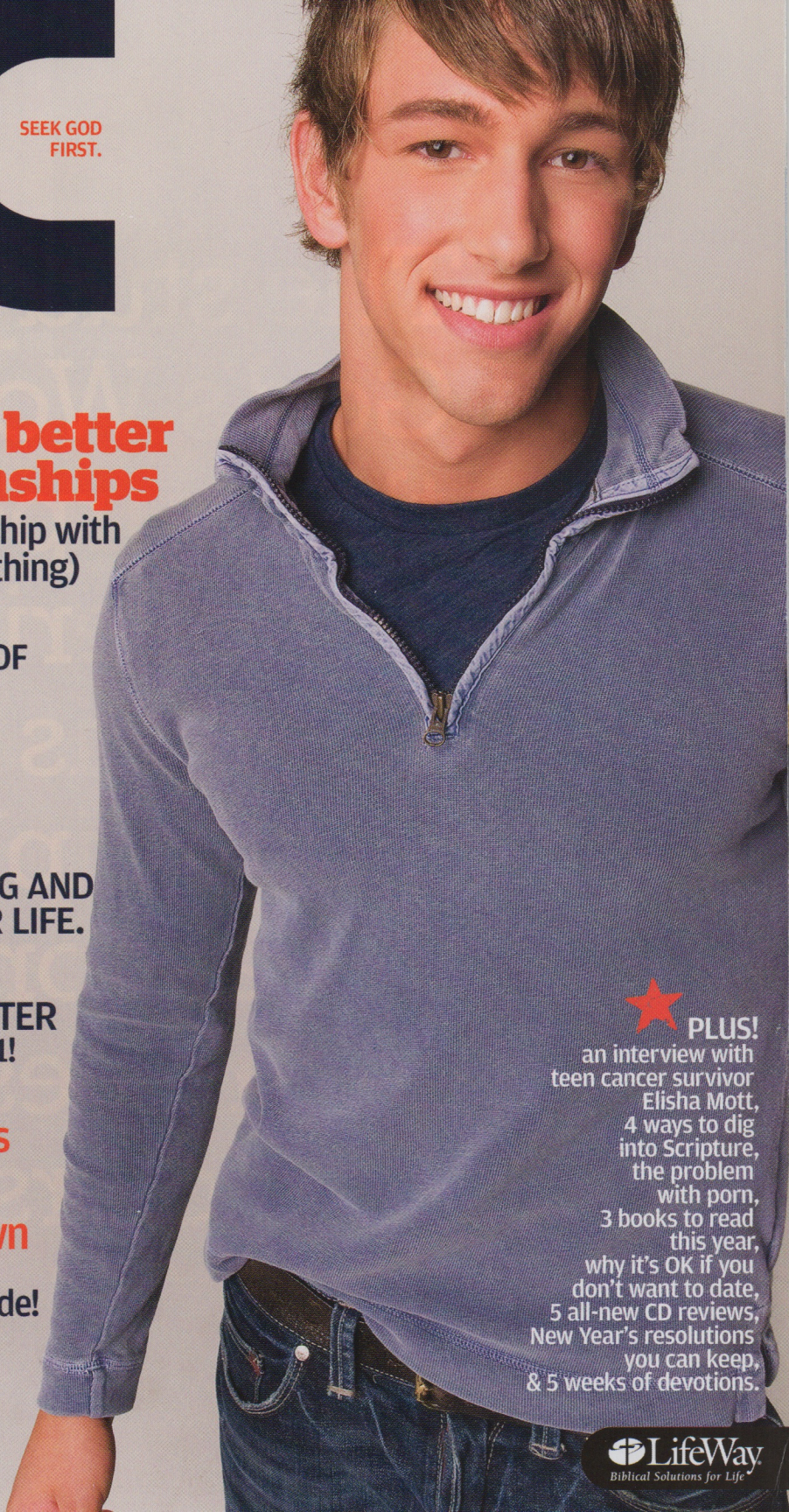
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Wake Up!

Live your life instead
of dreaming it away

by Leslie Ann Jones

Have you ever had the kind of dream that was so good you didn't want to wake up? Maybe the life you live in your dreams is perfect: you've got the coolest car, the best boyfriend or girlfriend, and the most fabulous friends around.



It's a problem when your dreams for the future keep you from living life fully in the present.

Or, maybe in your dreams, you've finally moved out of your parents' house and into an amazing apartment with your best friends at the college you've been looking forward to attending for your entire life. Your dreams may even catapult you past college and into a home that belongs on the pages of a magazine, where you live with your wonderful spouse and cherubic children.

Life is good in your dreams.

But then, the alarm on your cell phone vibrates under your pillow, letting you know that it's time to get up and get ready for school. You groan as the fantasy world you've been

living in slips away and is replaced by your real life, the one that's stuck in high school and underneath your parents' supervision.

It turns out that life in the here and now isn't nearly as amazing as the life of your dreams.

If you spend your days wishing for better times in the future, you're not alone. Almost everyone is looking forward to something. Setting goals and planning for the future isn't a bad thing, but craving bigger and better days to come becomes a problem when your dreams for the future keep you from living life fully in the present. Here are some tips to help you

focus on today and quit waiting for the next big thing to come your way.

Remember where you came from and be thankful for where you are.

You may not be where you're going yet, but at least you're not where you used to be, right? It sounds cheesy, but life is about the journey, not the destination. So don't get so focused on who you want to become that you forget who you are. Take a minute or two to reflect on all the ways that God has shaped you and changed you over the past few years, then thank Him

God has mercifully granted you today, so take your life one day at a time and live it fully. Don't waste the day you've been given.

for all the work He has done in your life. He isn't finished with you yet, but it shouldn't take long to see that progress has definitely been made. Life may not be perfect, but I'm willing to bet that God has poured out a number of blessings on you, so thank Him for the life He's blessed you with today. Then, get out there and live it!

Slow down!

Don't be in such a hurry to grow up that you forget to appreciate the simplicity of your life now. As hard as it may be to believe, algebra is a lot easier to figure out than a mortgage. And when you get a little older, everyone will expect you to, well, act a little older.

Enjoy your youth! Don't wish away your present; instead, take advantage

of your age and celebrate not having to worry about paying bills and other grown-up responsibilities.

Dare to embrace the moment.

You only get one life. How depressing would it be to wake up when you're 87 years old and realize that you've wasted your entire life waiting for tomorrow to arrive? Life is made up of a million tiny moments all sandwiched together into one huge chunk of time. God has set the timetable of your life.

Choose to appreciate each moment for what it is: a tiny blessing from God. You are not promised tomorrow, but God has mercifully and graciously granted you today, so take your life one day at a time and live it fully. Don't waste the day you've been given wishing you were older, smarter, or further along in your life. Tomorrow will come, if God wills it to. You have today. Live it to the fullest!

Use your time wisely and get to work.

You can settle for the mundane while you're waiting for the future to arrive, or you can commandeer your time and use it wisely, as God has intended for you to use it. It's your choice. (See Eph. 5:15-16.)

Remember that He placed you here for the purpose of bringing glory to His name, so spend your days honoring and glorifying Him in everything you do. God has blessed you with talents and gifts, and He intends for you to use them. So stop waiting until you're older to join in God's work. Use your time wisely by jumping in and getting your hands dirty now.

Dive into the abundant life Jesus Christ has given you.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then you should be living an abundant life **now**, not just later. When we think of salvation, we tend to focus on the end result: spending eternity in paradise with our Savior.

That's definitely something to anticipate, but Jesus came to redeem our present lives, not just our future ones. The Bible doesn't say that Jesus longed to give us mediocre lives; it says that He wanted to give us life in abundance. (See John 10:10.)

Your life, no matter how boring it may seem at the moment, is a precious gift from God. So dive in, live it, and live it abundantly. **EC**

THOUGHTS ON LIFE

"In the entire history of the universe, let alone in your own history, there has never been another day just like today, and there will never be another just like it again. Today is the point to which all your yesterdays have been leading since the hour of your birth. It is the point from which all your tomorrows will proceed until the hour of your death. If you were aware of how precious today is, you could hardly live through it. Unless you are aware of how precious it is, you can hardly be said to be living at all."

—FREDERICK BUECHNER

"For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin—real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way. Something to be got through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life."

—ALFRED D'SOUZA



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