

2019

OVERFLOW



twenty one
day devotional

Bridge Church Family,

What you have in your hands right now can be life changing...if you commit to it. Over the next 21 days, we are believing that you are going to experience OVERFLOW in ways you have been dreaming about for a long time. You will learn things about yourself, the world around you, and God. We are in this together! You will notice a progression from day one, to day twenty-one. That's on purpose. I encourage you to try your best to do the "Going Deeper" segment of each devotional. This is where we go from learning to doing and applying what we read.

There will be portions of this that are familiar to you, and there will most certainly be days that have a lot of new concepts and Biblical principals. Go on this journey with us! Ask questions along the way. That's the point, actually. When we begin to develop a curiosity for the things of God, we will seek Him and experience Him in ways we never have before.

Pick one person that you will be intentionally praying for their Salvation during the course of this devotional. Whenever you see a _____ during the prayer, fill that in with their name as you pray.

We would love if you would share testimonies of your experience throughout the next 21 days by:

Emailing us // info@thebridgeaz.com

Tagging Us // @TheBridgeChurchAZ

Use Hashtag // #21daysofoverflow

- Pastor Eric

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THE ORIGINAL PLAN FOR OVERFLOW

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." - Genesis 1:28

God's original design for humanity was for us to dwell on earth with Him forever. Eden wasn't supposed to be our limit but rather our starting point. God gave us everything we could have ever needed, to include each other. We were even supposed to be clothed with radiance and righteousness, being made in the image of God (Ps. 104:1-2). Before the fall, Adam and Eve were living in the overflow of the Creator of the universe. They didn't have a care in the world (see what I did there); they didn't have to worry about how they were going to provide for themselves, pay bills, what to wear, etc. Everything was taken care of by the Great Provider.

While this is not the reality we were born into this is still the reality that God desires for us as the Great Provider. Now this is not to say that the life of a Christian is an easy one, on the contrary, but when you live in the OVERFLOW that God designed for you from the beginning it certainly becomes one that is good and filled with joy. The first step in living out of the OVERFLOW is disconnecting the idea of 'bad' with being uncomfortable or difficult. Just because everything in life can seem to us like it's going wrong doesn't mean that it is. The God who knows all things, knew before you were born that you would be going through what you're going through right now and He has a plan for it. Once we do this we can look at the uncomfortable and difficult situations and know that our Joy is in the Lord and He truly is the Great Provider.

Prayer: Blessed are you Lord our God, you are truly the king of everything. I thank you so much for your original plan for us in the garden. That despite our failure you provided us a way to get back to that through our Messiah, Jesus. Use this time with you to refine me and make me look more like your Son. Please help me look at the difficult situations in my life and see them as you see them, a blessing from you. Soften my heart and allow these next 21 days to transform my life into a pleasing aroma for you. Please make yourself known to _____ and bring them into a saving relationship with your Son! I lift all these things up in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

Spend the next 15 minutes in prayer and reflection. Talk with God about some of the hard things in your life right now or even in your past. Let Him know how you feel about them and ask Him to help change the way you see them. Spend the last minute of your time in total silence, even silence of your mind. It's hard for you to hear from God if you're always talking.

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR US IN OVERFLOW

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work and keep it.
Genesis 2:15

How interesting is it that when God first made man, the next thing he did was plant a garden and put man in it (v. 8). Often times, this tiny but significant detail is overlooked. God made the world so that we would not be in need of anything, and yet, He perceived that we need purpose. It's easy to read "to work and keep it" and not understand the full meaning behind what God was really expressing here. The word 'work' here comes from the root word 'slave', this expresses a more intimate idea of service like a servant serving a master. Now 'keep' here conveys this idea of caring for or watching over. This verbiage is consistent with the priests and their keeping of the Tabernacle. Imagine that, the garden might have been the first 'tabernacle'.

God gives us two purposes, just like in the garden. One that is for ALL believers and one that is unique only to you. Just like in Eden, serving is a unique call, while keeping is a general one. Peter talks about our general purpose when he writes, "You are... a royal priesthood... a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you..." (1 Pet. 2:9). God did not make us to be robots with all the same functions, but made us with a very specific purpose in mind. God made YOU with a very specific purpose in mind. It would be nice if everyone already knew what God has planned for their specific purpose, but not everyone does. God will reveal that in His timing and until that takes place we are to walk in obedience to what He has placed before us. The next step in living out of the OVERFLOW is understanding God's general purpose for your life. Once you understand God's general purpose, to glorify Him in all you do and bring Him joy, living in the overflow of your specific purpose becomes so much easier. Remember that each time God allows hardship in your life it is because He is trying to grow you to better fulfill His purpose for you and through you!

Prayer: Father, I glorify your name and acknowledge your kingship in my life. All the praise belongs to you for you alone are worthy of it. I thank you for giving me purpose in my life, even if I don't fully understand what that is right now. Groom me for what you have planned for my future and to show me what my next steps are as I seek you. Please bless me in the days ahead and use this time with you for Your glory and joy. Please draw Godly people around _____ so that they may see their good works and you get the glory! In the holy name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

One of the most wonderful things about being a follower of Jesus is that even the sin in your life can be used for His glory and joy (Rom. 8:28). During the next 15 minutes, pray and reflect. Our God is not the God of confusion but of order. Ask God about His specific plans for your life. Talk about any concerns and uncertainties that you may have or if you need clarification and direction. Spend the last 1:10 of your time in total silence, even silence of your mind.

GOD'S OVERFLOW IS MUCH BETTER THAN OURS

7...And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths... 21And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. - Genesis 3:7, 21

Have you ever noticed this part of Genesis 3 and asked, why did God make garment's for Adam and Eve if they already had coverings for themselves? If you're in the majority, then your answer would most likely be 'no, I never even really noticed that before'. This is part of the bigger picture of God's plan for OVERFLOW. After they ate the forbidden fruit, their eyes were forever opened. They knew that they were naked and they tried to fix the problem themselves. This was just putting a band aid on a problem they could not fix on their own. They failed, in that moment, to realize that their desires could never match the desires their heavenly Father had for them. Yet, God's compassion reigned as He saw their attempts and intervened making for them garments (a coat or a long robe [Ex. 28:4; 2 Sam. 13:18]) of skins. This is the first sacrifice we see in the Bible and it signified that a sacrifice would be needed to cover the sins of man.

Just think, they used some leaves to try and cover their nakedness, but God deemed that a sacrifice was what was really needed! The garments covered them completely, unlike the loincloths they tried to use. In their eyes they were covering what they deemed as important and private areas. God looked at them and saw the inadequacy of their cloths. He knew their worth was far beyond just their private parts and said you need more, you're much more valuable than you give yourself credit for. How many times are we guilty of the same thing? We get ourselves into a bind, and instead of turning to the sacrifice that was already made for us, in our efforts to solve the problem we end up with an inadequate fix, totally missing the real value we have! Living in the OVERFLOW requires that you rest in the sacrifice. God has been, is, and always will be providing for you (Matt. 6:26). From the beginning of time in the garden, the first sacrifice, all the way to the spotless lamb - our Messiah, Jesus. God has been faithfully working to bring you back into the OVERFLOW, both now and forever. Today is the perfect time fully surrender your will to Him, because if you're honest with yourself, you know He'll do a better job with it than you could ever do.

Prayer: Blessed are you Lord our God, King of the universe. I thank you for being a God of the details. I praise you for what you're doing in my life right now; both the seen and the unseen, the difficult and the easy. I trust that all things are going according to your will. Please be with me in this season. Help me to be conformed to your will, refine my life, grant me peace, patience, and discernment. Use me as a witness to _____ to bring them into a saving relationship with your Son! Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

Take the next 15 minutes in prayer and reflection. Ask God what you need to do to take the next step in surrendering your life. If you have worries voice them, God is not an ATM where you only make withdrawals. He wants a relationship with you. Spend the last 1:20 of your time in total silence, even silence of your mind.

GOD'S OVERFLOW PUT YOU FIRST

10 But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief;... - Isaiah 53:10

Once, an evil man visited a village, he went from home to home stealing. In most homes he left a wake of destruction. One day the man broke into a home, killed the occupants and burned down the home. The man was caught soon after and thrown into jail to await sentencing. The day of sentencing came and everyone showed up to see that justice was properly dispensed, for he wronged every person in the village. The king entered the room and heard the case. The evidence was overwhelming, this man was guilty beyond a shadow of a doubt. The king was moved with compassion for His people. Now, there was a decree in the land that whoever broke the law should be punishable by death. The king stood to pronounce sentencing, "Man, you are found guilty and I would not be a good or just king if I did not exact the penalty that is required by my decree. You have not only wronged me but you have wronged my people whom I love!" The king looked at his son and nodded, "Son, I have brought you up in all my ways. What penalty should this man incur?" The son stood and boldly proclaimed, "Death will be the punishment!" The king nodded in agreement. The son looked at the man and said, "Father, you are a king of compassion. Not just on your own people, but upon everyone. I will take his place, and you shall exact his required punishment upon me." The king smiled broadly and sentenced his son to death and the man was then adopted to be a son of the king.

This is our story. It pleased God to crush His own Son for our sake. This is the extent that God was willing to go so that we could return to His OVERFLOW. How amazing is the "kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God" (1 John 3:1). OVERFLOW in our lives comes from returning the love God gave to us, back to Him.

Prayer: Oh Father, how can I ever repay the price that you paid for me? Not because I have to, but because I want to. You are holy, and perfect, and righteous, and I don't deserve anything that you have given me. When I was at my dirtiest you came and picked me up and washed me. Please help me not to wallow in my sin but to live a life of righteous deeds that is honoring to you and brings glory and praise to Your name. Please bring light into the life of _____, making yourself known to them in a real and unique way. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

Use the next 15 minutes to think about and thank our Father for the sacrifice of His Son. We will never know how much that truly cost. Plus we don't know anyone else who would do anything even remotely like that for us. God cares about you so deeply. Sit in the reality and depth of His love for you. Spend the last 1:30 of your time in total silence, even silence of your mind. It's hard for you to hear from God if you're always talking.

SACRIFICE PROVIDED THE WAY BACK INTO THE OVERFLOW

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. - 2 Corinthians 5:17

You may have heard before that you are a new creation in Christ. This concept is one of simple complexity. Just a few verses before Paul writes, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." (v. 14-15) The old you is the you that lived for what you wanted, what you thought was best. The new you is one that lives in full servitude to Jesus and what He wants for you and thinks is best. The idea of an old and new self is not exclusive to the New Testament. Ezekiel talks about God restoring a new heart in us, removing the old heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh. (Ezek. 36:25-27). Entering into the new self is something that must be initiated by God. The scriptures state, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." This makes the new creation synonymous with being in Christ. We have no capacity by ourselves to enter into a new state. It is something that is solely provided by the death and resurrection of Jesus, and anyone who wants it, can have it.

Jesus, our Messiah, is the only way to enter into the OVERFLOW that God intended for our lives. I cannot emphasize this enough, there is no amount of 'good' works that you can do to enter into Christ (have a relationship with Him). Conversely there are no amount of 'bad' works that you can do where God won't offer you the free gift of salvation that Jesus' sacrifice so graciously provided us! That is how much God thinks about and cares for you. Now this is not to be taken for granted, just because you have freedom through His sacrifice does not mean that you can live a double life. Jesus says that if you live a double life, one foot in the world and one foot in God that it is worse than you being a non-believer (Rev. 3:15-16; cf. Titus 1:16; Heb. 10:26-30). Being a Christian means that you look like, walk like, talk like, and act like Jesus. Obviously, this doesn't happen overnight, but over the course of a lifetime. OVERFLOW can only come through belief in Jesus and that is the starting point to the greatest relationship you will ever have.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for your glory, for your splendor, and for your mercy. You are truly a blessing to my life. I thank you that you cared enough about me to send your Son to take my place. I will never know the weight of the cross, and I thank you for that. Please purify my life and help me to look more like you, being a reflection in all ways. I lift up _____ and pray that you would bring them gently into a saving relationship with your Son. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

Once you take on the title of 'Christian' you become, to the world, a reflection of Christ. This can be a great thing if your properly portraying who He is, but it can also be a really bad thing. Everyone knows someone who has been turned off to Christ because of the actions of a Christian. Spend 15 minutes in prayer. Ask God to forgive you for every time you have been a poor reflection of His Son. Spend the last 1:40 of that in total silence.

ONLY OUT OF THE OVERFLOW CAN WE LOVE LIKE JESUS

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. - Romans 9:3

If you had the opportunity to give up your salvation so that someone you loved could take your place, would you do it? What if it was someone that you didn't really know? How about someone that you didn't like or even someone you hated? This is a really hard question. Paul, on the other hand, knew where He stood. He wished that he could be cut off for the sake of his Hebrew brothers. This is a confusing passage. It sounds good on paper, but the reality of what Paul is saying is heavy. Giving up the one thing that we all put our hope in seems outrageous, right? What if this is a great reflection of what Jesus did? He was accursed for our sakes and cut off from the Father. We are called to follow Jesus' example of Godly living and this is love perfected. It's the willingness and desire to put others before you in all things. Paul is such a great example of OVERFLOWING love. He was in anguish and sorrow over his kinsmen according to the flesh. So much so, that he was willing to do whatever necessary to bring them into the truth of their long awaited Messiah.

How is this kind of love possible? It seems to be something that we only read about or would like to get to, but never really think is possible. The only way this is possible is if we stop limiting our spiritual potential by comparing ourselves with others. If we are to get there we need to take everyone we read or hear about in the Bible off a pedestal. Except for Jesus that is. We hear about stories of these great men of faith and how God interacted with them, never thinking that we can match or even surpass them in their love for God. Before the death of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was something that came and went. David was afraid to lose the Holy Spirit because of his actions (Ps. 51:11). They were all looking forward to the day when the Spirit of God would dwell within them. Most of them did not have access to the Scriptures and would have loved to have a bible accessible to them 24/7. Did it ever occur to you that they might have wished they could be in your shoes? We must realize that God deals with people on an individual level, in that He never compares you to anyone else. We must stop doing what God himself doesn't do (comparing ourselves with others. Then, we can start living unhindered in His OVERFLOW and start radically loving others.

Prayer: Father, what radical love you have for me. I am in awe that you loved me this much. I know that I don't deserve it and I worship at your feet that you would see me worthy of such a gift. Thank you for your redemption, for your Son. Help me to see people the way you see people. Give me a sense of urgency for the lost. Give me your heart for your people. I pray for _____, please draw their heart to the beauty of your love for them. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

Radical love for God is the only way to radically love others. Spend the next 20 minutes reflecting on if you would actually give up your salvation for someone else. Spend this time talking to Him about your day, your struggles, and how you can radically love better. Read about the love of the church in Macedonia, 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. Spend the last 1:50 of that in silence.

TO HEAR THE OVERFLOW OF THE HEART ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS LISTEN

45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of the evil of his heart produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. - Luke 6:45

If you want to accurately know the spiritual state of a person, all you need to do is listen to what comes out of their mouth. Imagine you have a bucket that was designed to hold water. Every day you go down to the river to fetch water for the day, filling your bucket to the brim. If everything went according to the design of the bucket, the only thing that would be put in it would be clean, life giving water. However, everything doesn't always go how we plan. After you fetch the water you see some of your friends playing soccer by the river, and during the game some sand gets kicked into your bucket. On the way back from the river you have to pass through a group of evergreen trees and some of the pine needles fall into the bucket. Then, after that you stop in a flower patch to soak up the sun and take a quick nap. During that time some bugs and pollen find their way into the water. Now, this wouldn't be the end of the world if you got a little bit of stuff in your water. Sometimes, when the water splashed out, it would have a little of the sand, pine needles, bugs or pollen...but for the most part it would be water.

What if you intentionally were putting these things into your water, that would be crazy right? However, this is the majority of Christians. It's one thing when they happen to make it in there by accident, but doing it on purpose is a totally different thing all together. We may tell white lies or half-truths so that we look better than we are, or to make our life a little easier. Maybe it's hating someone who has wronged you. Looking at a member of the opposite sex lustfully. Even vegging out on TV or Netflix all day. All of these things are filling your bucket with the wrong thing. Now some of them are not inherently evil, but they fill your bucket with the wrong thing. They are not from God, because He starkly opposes the world and asks you to choose, the world or Him. If you want to live in the OVERFLOW, you have to fill up your bucket with God honoring things so that your OVERFLOW is of Him and not of the world. It's going to be difficult, but it's worth the effort.

Prayer: Lord, I worship you, you are the King of kings and the Lord of lords. There is none higher than you and I thank you that in your mighty power, you choose not to abandon us to sin but to redeem us through your Son. I find it hard to always be pouring the right thing into my bucket, and I'm so thankful that you cover all my shortcomings. Please help me to walk in a manner worthy to the calling you have placed on my life. Reveal all the areas where I fall short so that I can work on them with you. Please make yourself known to _____ and bring them into a saving relationship with your Son! In the name of King Jesus, amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

Did you know that there wasn't a sacrifice that could be made in the temple that would cover intentional, malicious sin, and Jesus fixed that? Use the next 20 minutes to speak with our Father. Pray and reflect on how you can be filling up your bucket with things of Him. Talk to him about your shortcomings and ask Him about His opinion on what you fill your bucket with. Spend the last 2 minutes of your time in total silence.

WE MUST PROTECT OUR OVERFLOW

23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. - Proverbs 4:23

As we know from basic anatomy, the heart is the most vital organ in the body for sustaining life. It moves oxygenated blood and nutrients to every cell in the body. It pumps deoxygenated blood to your lungs where it can get more oxygen and release built up toxins. The heart is such an amazing organ. When we read about the heart in the bible however, they had something much different in mind. The

word in Hebrew for heart is בַּל (lev) which means inner man (seat of feelings and impulses). Just like your physical heart is vital to life, your spiritual heart is just as important to spiritual life. King Solomon's words give us great incite. We must keep[watch, protect] our heart with ALL vigilance [alertness, caution, diligence], for from it flow the springs of life. Something that we are called to with such a high level of awareness, must certainly be important. Your heart OVERFLOWS into your thoughts, words, and actions. Also the idea of guarding your heart means that it must also be under constant attack. We must do everything in our power to protect our springs of life.

Pretend you have a cup sitting in front of you, and let's say it's $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way full with water. Someone you were hanging out with pours some Pepsi into your glass, filling it up all the way. Your water is now gross and discolored. If you weren't able to just dump out the cup and start over again, how much water do you think it would take to flush out that cup so that it was just water again? The answer would shock you. If your cup was 8 ounces, it takes almost three times that to flush out the impurity. It takes so much more to wash impurities out of our heart once we let it in, then it does to protect it. King Solomon knew that. We all have past memories that cut deep, and probably in some ways, define your character. Maybe it was being reckless with your heart in a past relationship, friendship, or business decision. It could have been someone you trusted to protect your heart and they fell short, leaving you to pick up the broken pieces. Regardless if this is your past or not, it is never too late to start guarding your heart. This doesn't mean put up walls and shut everyone out. It means be cautious with whom you give your heart to. If you want to live in OVERFLOW, it is important that you do what is necessary to protect your heart.

Prayer: Father, life is so difficult sometimes, but I thank you that I never have to do it alone. I bless you, praise you, and worship you as king. I thank you for the wisdom that you have provided for me and I thank you for having my best interest at heart. Please help me protect my heart, give me discernment when it comes to trusting others. Please heal any wounds that _____ has accumulated over the past years and bring them into relationship with you.

Going Deeper (optional)

During the next 20 minutes read through Ephesians 6:10-18 and reflect on how you can use that to better guard your heart. Talk with God about some of the bigger hurts you have experienced in life and how you can better guard your heart. Ask for healing for the

OVERFLOW THROUGH THE SHEMA

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. - Deuteronomy 6:4-7

These are the starting lines of the Shema, the central prayer of Judaism that is recited twice a day. The word 'Hear' above in Hebrew is the word Shema, which is how it got its name. While the word Shema is translated as 'hear', its meaning is so much deeper than that; it is to be taken as both: to listen and to obey. If you hear what's being said and do not obey it, you're not fulfilling Shema. Loving God with all our heart, soul, and strength is no easy task. It requires that you adhere to God's desire and plan for your life, and not your own. Look at our solar system for example, everything revolves around the Sun. All of the planets, moons and even asteroids that enter into it are effected by the Sun's gravity. This is such a great example of our lives. When you are the center of your solar system, everything revolves around you. Anything that your gravity can touch instantly becomes about you. Unfortunately, Christ is just like Jupiter for most people. He is the most massive planet in our solar system, but not the center. He protects us from calamity just like Jupiter protects earth from asteroids, but has a limited effect on the solar system as a whole. This explains why so many Christians struggle with so much in their life; Christ is unable to effect it because they are the center of their solar systems. We need to stop thinking about how much God you can add to our life. No matter how much God you add to your life, it will never be enough. Not that you can't get enough God, but in the manner that adding God means that you're the center.

If God is the center of your universe, that changes everything. In fact, you can't add any more God to your life, because God IS your life. Everything that you do, think about, and are, revolves around God. This is the reverse of trying to add more God to your life. Now you are seeing what of YOU, you can add to your solar system. All of your actions are consumed and controlled by your center. This is the orientation that God created you to be in, full reliance and faith in Him. This is how the Shema is lived out to the full effect and OVERFLOW.

Prayer: Father, blessed are you King of eternity. I thank you for your word. I desire to be changed from the inside out. Please help me to surrender fully to you today and to live in the OVERFLOW of that reality. I thank you for your endless patience and persistence in my life, without it I would have been lost a long time ago. Please be with _____ today. Bless them and prosper them. Meet them right where they are and help them to come to you. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

Read through the Shema (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num.15:37-41) and spend the next 20 minutes in prayer and meditation regarding these passages. Remember the Old Testament is alive and well, allow these truths to soak into your soul. Ask God how these apply to your life today, let him know any reservations you may have. Spend the last 2:20 of your time in total silence, even silence of your mind. It's hard for you to hear from God if you're always talking.

THE OVERFLOW BINDS THE HEARTS AND SOULS OF BELIEVERS

32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. - Acts 4:32

Just as OVERFLOW starts in the heart, it also binds the fellowship of believers together in the most intimate way. Looking at just the first few words, we get a better understanding of how this is to work properly, ‘the full number of those who believed’. This type of OVERFLOW works through the individual, to the benefit of the whole. They gave up their purchase of material things, realizing that everything belongs to God and therefore to God’s people. This type of radical living you see time and time again when God meets us right where we’re at. David and Jonathan are great examples of this. We read in 1 Samuel 18:1, “As soon as he (David) had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (emphasis added). This was right after David slew Goliath, Saul (Jonathan’s father) inquired of David and he went before the king. Jonathan saw David’s overflowing love and reliance on God and it bound them together. Note, the common thread here is God, not David’s victory over Goliath, stylish clothing, hobbies, or profession. This is just like in Acts, ‘those who believed were of one heart and soul’.

Unfortunately, OVERFLOW isn’t something that just happens to us or that we fall into. Rather, it is something that we must work for, filling up our heart with the Truth of God’s word. OVERFLOW is the culmination of time spent with God, time in God’s word, time in prayer, and time spent with God’s people. What this really boils down to is time, just like most things in life. If you want to learn an instrument, sport, or new job, it takes practice. Getting to the OVERFLOW takes time. Don’t get frustrated if you’re not experiencing OVERFLOW right now. Just start walking forward in these areas and allow God to transform you from the inside out.

Prayer: Father, blessed is your name above all other names. I submit myself to your authority and entrust my heart to you. Please forgive me for my repeated offences. You are holy and all powerful, and deserve better than I am ever able to give. Please use me right where I am. Give me patience and humility. Turn my heart towards the fellowship of believers; make my heart jump for excitement when someone tells me that they believe in you. I love you. I pray for _____, continue to reveal yourself to them and use in that whenever you desire. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

With the next 20 minutes read through Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37. Reflect on your past experiences and ask yourself if this is something that you would like to be part of. If it is, remember that it starts with you! If you want to receive that but aren’t willing to give it, look in your heart and ask why not. Talk with God about this. Let Him know your thoughts, feelings, even any fears you might have with this level of fellowship. Spend the last 2:30 of that in total silence, even silence of your mind.

UNITY THROUGH OVERFLOW

44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. - Acts 2:44

Interestingly enough, in Greek, the word "all" here actually means all. Having all things in common seems like an impossibility. I mean let's be real, some people like football and some people don't. You could do this with a number of different subjects. The fact is that God made each of us different. So how are we supposed to have all things in common? Great question! Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor during World War 2. After escaping Germany, God called him back there to minister, run an underground seminary and eventually die in a concentration camp. He was a man who understood the answer to this question. In his book 'Life Together' he writes, "*a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. Among men there is strife. "He is our peace," (Eph. 2:14). Without Christ there is discord... between man and man... without Christ we also would not know our brother, nor could we come to him. The way is blocked by our own ego. Christ opened up the way to God and to our brother. Now, Christians can live with one another in peace; they can love and serve one another; they can become one. But they can continue to do so only by the way of Jesus Christ. Only in Jesus Christ are we one, only through him are we bound together.*" The only way to have all things in common is through Jesus Christ. This happens as we surrender the person we used to be to the grave. The new us that emerges starts to steer away from the things of the world.

If you have ever been part of a club, sport, or other close knit association you know the instant connection you have with other members. In the military, there is even more of a tight knit community. When the soldiers go off to war, the spouses band together like family. When you meet another person who was or is part of the military, there is usually a sense of ease in that they understand a part of your life that nobody else could ever understand. This is because when you're in the armed services, that is your life. Everything else is augmented to that. The mission comes first, as they say. This is how being a believer in Jesus is supposed to be. We should feel elated when we meet other believers, because they understand the core of our being. We must unite under the banner of Christ and get to know the other member of our Church because 'only through Him are we bound together'.

Prayer: God of Righteousness, I exalt you. You are the only one that I would ever bow a knee to. Please help me not just to understand the fellowship that we are supposed to have, but to experience it as well. Help me to change my life so that I can come into unity with my brothers and sisters in Christ. Walk with me throughout this week and be with _____ as they go throughout their week. Draw them into your flock, for you are the Good Shepherd. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

You don't need to serve in an official position to serve the church. It's as easy as staying after service and striking up conversations with new people or people you don't know. Get out of your comfort zone. Don't only talk with those you know, that is how a fellowship becomes "cliquey". Spend the next 25 minutes in prayer and reflection on how you could be a more connected member of the body of Christ. Spend the last 3 minutes of your time in total silence. It's hard for you to hear from God if you're always talking.

OVERFLOW HELPS US DEAL WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. - Galatians 6:2

Dealing with difficult people is something that everyone encounters. God actually planned on this and therefore has a purpose for it. Proverbs 27:17 states, "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." When people with different beliefs and personalities come together, of course, there is going to be friction. But, this friction is for our benefit, it is supposed to carefully sharpen us and draw us closer to the heart of God. When two pieces of iron come together, sparks fly. Neither piece is left unchanged, and both are shaped by the process. Unfortunately, this is a process that most people avoid, especially in the culture we live in. It will be helpful to understand the context which the Apostle Paul writes when writing to the Galatians. Due to the persecution of believers during that time among other things, the Church acted as a family unit. They spent a good amount of time together, devoting themselves to the apostles' teachings, eating at each other's homes, providing for everyone's needs, and praying (Acts 2:42, 45). Being in close proximity to others is of course going to stir up conflict, but should not be the reason why we stop having fellowship with others.

The Church is supposed to be a family. Now, I know that the term family invokes a variety of responses. A lot of people come from a *broken family* and have never experienced what a 'good' family is supposed to be. Please do not let your past experiences turn you off to this concept. Jesus' mother and brothers once came to him looking to see him. When the surrounding crowd told him of this he answered them, "Who are my mother and brothers?" Then looking at those who sat *around* him, he said, "Here are *my* mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, *he* is my brother and sister and mother." (Mk. 3:31-35). Jesus put equal value, if not higher, on those who do the will of God, even over his own immediate family. Just like *biological* family, we don't get to choose our spiritual family either. Nevertheless, the OVERFLOW of our walk with God calls to bear [to carry; lift up; to take or take away] each other's burdens. By doing this, we are reminding the body of the love Christ has for us, and reflecting *light* into the darkness of the world.

Prayer: Lord, you are the ultimate Father, abounding in steadfast love and kindness. No matter what happens in my life, I know that you will never leave me. Please help me to walk the narrow path with you. Sometimes I just get so frustrated with people around me; increase my patience and love for those around me. Forgive me for all the times I fail my church family and help me to get better at it. Surround me with Godly friends and teach me how to follow you better. I lift up _____, please heal any past scars they have received from other Christians and bring them into right standing with you, their Savior. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

For the next 25 minutes read Ephesians 5:3-14 and 1 Corinthians 5:6-13. Use the remaining time to dig in and ask God to give you patience for specific people in your life. Talk with Him about His heart for people and even if you don't feel like it, ask Him to move your heart into alignment with His. It's ok to not feel like doing/feeling something you know you 'should'. It's not ok to not talk to God about it and keep that to yourself. Spend the last 2:40 of your time in silence.

OVERFLOW PUTS OTHERS BEFORE OUR BELONGINGS

45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. - Acts 2:45

Can you put yourself in the shoes of the 1st century church? They gave away not just their possessions and not just their belongings, but both. This gives the idea of willfully offering everything they have. This is difficult to imagine, even if you don't have a lot. Giving away everything seems rather contrary to our way of living. Some of us are ok with giving away things so long as it doesn't affect us. We may even be ok with it affecting us, as long as it's just a minor inconvenience or doesn't interfere with our plans. I would venture that few of us would feel comfortable giving away everything of excess to provide for the needs of others. This is what this passage is really talking about, the excess. In Leviticus 3:16 it says, "All the fat is the Lord's." In Jewish thought, this is because all of the excess of a sacrifice belongs to God. This seems to fit right in line with us being called to present our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). If we are now the sacrifices being presented to God, then our excess belongs to Him also. The early church rallied around this idea and it had a massive impact on the world around them.

Almost everybody has excess in their lives, whether it's material stuff, coffee at a local coffee shop, video games, etc. Excess is anything that is not necessary to our survival. Often times, what we want is muddled with the reality of what we actually need. Now, I'm not saying that God desires you to be bored, unhappy, or even unsatisfied. Quite the contrary, His desire is for you to live in the OVERFLOW. Since we see with physical eyes, sometimes we are distracted by physical and miss the spiritual. It is difficult to let go of things; we make excuses as to why we have it, why we need to keep it around, and how useful it will be in the future. The kicker is that most of the things we come up with are true and valid. Yet, to get more plugged into the spiritual, we must turn over the excess to whom it *really belongs* to. This surrender and love of others will lead to an excessive return in your OVERFLOW account.

Prayer: Oh Lord my God, blessed are you. I thank you for your abundant patience. I acknowledge the excess in my life. Please help me surrender that over to you, do with it as you please. Move my heart for what moves yours. Grant me compassion for those suffering. I know that you have a plan for them as well. Be with them this evening, provide for them a meal and safe place to sleep. Please bless _____, provide for them in such a way that only you can get credit for. Thank you for loving me despite my many flaws. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

Spend the next 25 minutes in prayer and reflection. Ask God about what in your life is excess and what He would like to do with it. Talk with Him about any struggles you have with excess and ask for help in that area. Here is a challenge, go pick out your favorite shirt from your closet and put it in your vehicle. The next time you see someone asking for help on the street corner, park your car and go chat with them. Let them know that God desired them to have that item and that it is your favorite piece of clothing, when you finished make sure to pray with them. Spend the last 2:50 of your time in total silence.

THE GREAT COMMISSION OF OVERFLOW

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. - Matthew 28:19-20

What is the 'Great Commission' and how do we live out this command of Jesus in real time? The passage above is referred to as the Great Commission due to its sense of significance, comprehensiveness, and its permeation in every facet of our lives. In the Greek language, this passage is written as an imperative command. What that means is that we are to treat this as if it were coming from a king. The Great Commission is not a suggestion; it is a direct order in which you have no choice but to obey. Of course, we all do actually have a choice in the matter, and the options we are able to choose from are to either obey or dis-obey. But what is this command actually telling us to do? Some theologians say that another way you can look at 'Go therefore' is by interpreting it 'As you go'. If you look at this through the lens of 'As you go' then it becomes an accomplishable command for everyone. This means *that as you live out your life, you are responsible for carrying out this commission within your realm of influence.*

Let's focus on the two key takeaways. If someone were to come to you and say, "I will give you one billion dollars if, for the next 24 hours, everyone you meet you tell about Jesus. If they don't want to listen that's ok, just move on but everyone you come into contact with you MUST share the gospel." Few of us would have a problem with that, especially because the stakes are so high. We would be focused on completing the requirements and by nature we would be sharing it with everyone. These are the two objectives that we are to take from the Great Commission. We MUST be focused on sharing the faith that is worth well more than *one billion dollars* and conjoining it with our lives so that it becomes second nature. It is not your pastor's job alone to tell people about the good news of Jesus. All of us can start by breaking out of our shell and telling people about what Jesus has done personally in our lives. Testimonies are powerful in that they cannot be argued with. Maybe we start with co-workers, friends that we haven't shared our faith with, or the cashier at the grocery market. If the overflow of your life stops with you then it isn't overflow. By definition our overflow is supposed to spill into the lives of those around us, stirring up change. You have the privilege of telling people the greatest story they will ever hear in their entire lifetimes - the story of Jesus.

Prayer: Father, thank You so much for your instructions for my life. Your word is holy, righteous, and good. Please convict me and use the Holy Spirit to bring me into obedience with them. Would You lead people into my life that I can share Your love and Your message with. Give me boldness to speak the truth from a place of deep love. Help me to know You better. Walk with _____ this week, send Godly friends into their lives and lead them to You.

Going Deeper (optional)

Matthew 25:14-30 tells about the parable of the talents. During the next 25 minutes chat with God about the Great Commission. Ask Him who He wants you to share the gospel with this upcoming week. Meditate on the fact that overflow is supposed to be influencing those around you and ask yourself if this is true for your life. Spend the last 3:10 of that time in silence.

A NEW COMMANDMENT GIVEN - OVERFLOW

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. - John 13:34-35

Typically, this verse is seen through the eyes of the greatest commandment - love your neighbor as yourself. While we should be loving everyone, this scripture is not just speaking to that point. We must remember, this all took place when Jesus was in the upper room spending time with his disciples. This was during Passover and He would soon be crucified as the sacrificial lamb. Judas had just left to betray him so these words were specifically spoken to the 11 apostles. Nowhere else in the New Testament do we see Jesus explicitly giving a 'new commandment'; we do see Him tell others to do things, but this type of verbiage concerning a 'new commandment' is only found here, making it significant. This type of love we are commanded to seems to be a deeper love shared specifically amongst believer. In fact, by this radical love, the world will know that we are followers of Jesus. This type of love washes the feet of those who should be washing their own. This type of love takes a king and willingly turns him into a servant. This type of love is self-sacrificing to the max and goes well beyond the boundaries of what a traditional love would.

Have you ever looked at someone and noticed them loving on somebody and thought to yourself, 'Wow, that person is a Christian'. Most of the time when people see someone doing something nice or 'loving' for someone, they think that they're just a 'good' person. Envision a group of people sitting around a table talking about this new command of radical love. They decide that if anything happens to anyone that they will take their children and raise them as their own. If something happens to one of them and they find themselves in \$500,000 in medical debt, that each person is now in \$500,000 of debt. No longer were they going to live life for themselves but they were going to live out this love for the believers that we are called to. This is just a taste of the type of love we are called to live out and the benefit of this overflow is not just you, but the body of Christ as well.

Prayer: Blessed are You Lord our God, King of everything. Your endless love knows no bounds and I thank You for Your mercy. Your plan for my life is far better than anything that I could have imagined but I know that Your plan is better than my own. Help me to accept Your will. I thank You for Your provision and protection. Be with me this week and lead me into a deeper understanding of who You are. I pray for _____; walk with them this week and continue to scatter seeds and water what is already there. I thank You for loving them right where they are at.

Going Deeper (optional)

Take the next 25 minutes and use this time however you feel God is leading you, whether that is reading the word, sitting in silence, talking with Him, or even calling someone who God is putting on your heart. Use the last 3:20 of that time for total silence. If what you're doing overlaps into your silence time today it's not the end of the world; do your best to get some silent time.

THE WHITE FUNERAL

3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. - Colossians 3:3

Talking about death is an uncomfortable topic for most people. This is especially true when it's your death that's being talked about. However, for the Christian, we are told that we are already dead and should be walking in newness of life. In, "My Utmost For His Highest", Oswald Chambers writes, "No one experiences complete sanctification without going through a "white funeral" — the burial of the old life. If there has never been this crucial moment of change through death, sanctification will never be more than an elusive dream. There must be a "white funeral," a death with only one resurrection— a resurrection into the life of Jesus Christ. Nothing can defeat a life like this. It has oneness with God for only one purpose— to be a witness for Him. Have you really come to your last days, of living for yourself? You have often come to them in your mind, but have you really experienced them? It will not happen by trying harder, but by yielding to the end of ourselves. It's being "baptized into His death" (Rom. 6:3)."

You may have heard that we must die to ourselves daily, but how can someone die daily? It seems like that would be similar to making a decision to die each day and then never doing it. Someone asked the question, "What are the dimensions of the narrow gates talked about in Matthew 7?" What if I told you that the answer to that question was roughly 36 inches (wide) by 8 feet (long) and that they are 6 feet in the ground? This may seem like an odd response but these are the dimensions of a standard grave. Overflow floods the life of a person burying the old and resurrecting the new. Chambers concludes, "Are you willing to experience that "white funeral" now? Will you agree with Him that this is your last day on earth? The moment of agreement depends on you."

Prayer: Father, You are unimaginably grand. You are worthy of so much more than my life and yet You came to earth in the form of a humble servant. I thank You for all You do, both seen and unseen. I'm not sure how I'm supposed to get to my death but my desire is to follow You and Your will for my life. Please help me get to where You want me to be. I place both my life and death in Your hands. Please help _____ come to the end of themselves, even if that means breaking them down a bit further. I know You have their best interest at heart and I trust You. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

Read through some White Funeral passages and talk with God about them (Rom. 6:6-8; Gal. 5:24; John. 12:24-26; Gal. 2:20). In the next 30 minutes really meditate on if you have come to the end of yourself. Are there any unsurrendered parts of your life (Netflix, hobbies, Bible reading, purity, etc.)? What about partially surrendered? Repent and ask for forgiveness in any partial or completely unsurrendered areas of life. Use the last 3:30 minutes for total silence.

HOW OVERFLOW APPLIES TO OUR FINANCES

6The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. - 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

I know this is a sensitive subject in church culture. It seems like most people have been turned off to giving to the church because of bad experiences or something similar. However, if this topic is neglected, how is the light of God ever supposed to reach every aspect of your life? Are we supposed to just know what God desires in this area? Starting with Cain and Abel, we see this pattern of generosity. It says “In the course of time...” (Gen. 4:3)), their offerings did not stem from anyone telling them when, what, or even how much. It was an offering of generosity. We even see this repeated with Abram (soon to be Abraham) and Melchizedek (Gen. 14). The first time God asks for an offering, look at what He says to Moses. “Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me.” (Ex. 25:1-2) So God asks for an offering and says that they give whatever their hearts desire to give. The outcome of that was the people bringing so much that Moses had to call for people to stop contributing (Exodus. 36).

When you are living out of the overflow of your relationship with Christ, the needs of this world start to dim. The more you get to know and understand Jesus’ deep, sacrificial love for you, and when that knowledge moves from the head to the heart... watch out world! That kind of love changes the lens we see the world through. Suddenly, our finances aren’t for us, but for the kingdom. Some of you are probably dealing with a financial issue right now. Seven out of ten people don’t have 1,000 dollars in their bank account. Maybe you are in debt. Maybe you are living paycheck to paycheck. Or you might even have so much money that you don’t know how to invest it properly. Whatever your circumstances are, God is in it with you. He wants to provide for you. God doesn’t need your money; all the money is His anyways. What God is really after is your heart and He knows that your heart is intimately connected with your finances. He isn’t going to force your hand to give, but instead desires a relationship with you. Will you open your hand so God is able to not just take things out, but also put things in your hands?

Prayer: Lord, You are great and I thank You for the provision You have already provided for me. I pray that I would understand at a new level what it means to be loved by You so that my grip on the things of this world loosens. Give me the perspective that You have about money. Allow Your kingdom and Your work to become my main priority in my finances and everything I do. May giving back to You what is already Yours bring me joy and contentment. Show Your heart to _____ and walk with them through the remainder of this week. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

Spend the next 30 minutes in prayer and reflection. Search your heart regarding your finances. Talk with God about your reservations with giving. Ask Him to grow and stretch you in this area of your life. Spend the last 3:40 minutes in total silence.

MENTALLY CONSUMED BY OVERFLOW

1 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God... - Psalm 42:1-2

Take a few moments and close your eyes to try to envision this setting with a deer and flowing streams. Have you ever experienced a time when you finally were able to eat after being hungry for a long while but no matter how much you ate, you couldn't seem to satisfy your hunger? Or maybe for you it was water; your belly was full, and yet your thirst persisted. Many have never experienced this metaphorical kind of desire for God. Moses was a man who saw God's back (Ex. 33); he had sought God and found Him only to realize that in finding Him he wanted more. "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!" (Ps. 43:8a) If you have ever just had a taste of something absolutely delicious, you know that you don't want to just stop there. You want to keep enjoying it and never lose that taste. Too often, we pray to experience God, only to stop seeking Him once we have found Him. This is not how it was supposed to be. God is the only one that can gratify the soul.

If you are single, do you find yourself thirsting to be married? If you are married, do you find yourself thirsting to be financially stable or have a child? Do you thirst for a promotion or new job? Do you thirst for the right ministry project? None of the things listed above are bad. In fact, most of them are part of the plan, part of living. How often do we get caught up in our expectations of when, how, or where these things will happen? Do these questions and desires consume our thoughts? The enemy is crafty. He takes our past or future and robs us of our contentment in the present. When we thirst for the Lord, the enemy is not capable of doing that. Nothing can compete with the cross. The enemy can distract and muddle, but he cannot take the contentment and peace that comes from thirsting for the living God!

Prayer: Abba Father, You are the only constant in my life who will never disappoint me. Forgive me for all the ways that I do not look to You first. Show me the areas that I need to let go of so that I can stop thirsting for the things of this world and thirst for You. Thank You in advance for what You are going to do in my life today and the days after. Please place this desire for You into _____'s heart. Amen

Going Deeper (optional)

Often times we measure our relationship with God in time spent with Him. Today, take a reverse approach: how much of your day do you not spend thinking about God? If He is the most important thing in our lives then time should reflect that. Use the upcoming 30 minutes in prayer and reflection. Ask God to show you all the times that you could be using to think about Him. Spend the last 3:50 minutes of that in complete silence, even silence of your mind. It's hard for you to hear from God if you're always talking.

THE MYTH OF FREE TIME AND THE TRUTH IN OVERFLOW

19 *19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

Abraham Joshua Heschel was one of the leading Jewish theologians and Jewish philosophers of the 20th century. In his book The Sabbath, Heschel puts forth a profound idea. He asserts that since God is in control of everything, leaving nothing to waste, that He has something planned for every moment of your day. What an insightful thought. Often times we enter into the day thinking that 24 hours is never enough and yet it is. As our Great Shepherd, God provides for each and every need we have in life. This is true for time as well. God does not expect the impossible from you; He gives you enough time in each day to accomplish everything that He desires for you to accomplish. This is often jumbled with what we want to accomplish, nevertheless this rings true. But how does this have anything to do with the passage above? If we are not our own and we were bought with a price, then our bodies, and therefore our time, belong to God. It is His to do with as He so desires. With this in mind, the idea of ‘free time’ becomes a myth. Heschel continues to stress that our focus must shift to asking God what he desires for us to do with our time, even if that means asking 100 times a day.

The thought of giving up ‘free time’ probably doesn’t sit well with you. Paul writes in Galatians 5, “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do... And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” God wants more for you than binge watching Netflix; He has bigger plans for you than Snapchat, Facebook, and Pinterest combined. God’s desire is that you have rest. Now, these other things aren’t necessarily sinful, but what they tend to do is. All of those things don’t make you hate God, but what they do is put God on the back burner of your mind. During those activities, you normally don’t think about God at all. This is dangerous to the overflow of your life. It is easy to come home from a long day at work and flip on the television. We even consider that rest, but it is far from it. Our rest is only found in Jesus. It’s much like the gas gauge in your car. When your fuel is low, your warning light comes on. This is God telling you that you need rest. You have two possibilities: unplug the warning light or fill up the tank. Unplugging the light is easy, just keep doing what you’re doing. The only way to fill up the tank is to enter into God’s rest.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for adopting me. I pray that I would stop thinking of my time as my own. Teach me to think of it as a gift from You and for You. I know turning to You for rest will be true rest. Remind me of this truth when I desire to turn to my old ways of rest. Please help _____ see that their time is not their own and give their life to God. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

In the subsequent 30 minutes, talk with God about your free time. Let Him in on your concerns and chat about what He wants your free time to look like. Read through Hebrews 4:1-11. Devote the last 4 minutes of that to total silence.

WE PERCEIVE THE WORLD WITH EYES OF OVERFLOW

16So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. - 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Losing heart is an easy thing to do especially when things just don't seem to be going our way. The reality is that each and every day, our bodies are deteriorating, bills are adding up, and a number of things could go wrong that would upset the delicate balance of our lives. This passage seems to make light of that by calling all of our struggles a 'light momentary affliction'. Struggles, especially ones that seem big, don't feel light or momentary. However, this makes more sense if we do not focus on what we are going through right now but our future hope of glory. Visualize yourself walking along a beach. The waves are cascading along the shore and the sun is poking out from behind some white fluffy clouds. You bend down and grab a handful of sand, looking over the mound of individual pieces. Opening your fingers slightly, the sand spills back to the beach until all that remains in your palm is a single grain. You look across the seemingly endless shore and then back to your hand. Think about how many grains of sand make up this beach. The single grain in your hand is insignificant when cast amongst the countless others. This is a representation of our lives in eternity. Your life is in focus when you look at your hand but when you look at the beach, you see your life in the perspective of eternity.

When we look at the world do we see the eternal? To look and see all the struggles in our lives as 'light momentary affliction' requires that we see them in the grand scheme of things. James says that we are to "count it all joy" when we have trials in our lives because when our faith is tested, it leads to us becoming complete. If you are a normal person, it can be difficult to see the unseen. The good news is that overflow doesn't just renew our mind, but also renews our eyes and allows us to see what we couldn't before. In Romans 8 Paul says that for those who love God, all things work together for good. What this means is that when you're in the overflow, God turns the 'bad' things into blessings. It might not be the blessing that you wanted, but God knows it's the blessing that you need. Right now, there is all kinds of music playing around you. Of course you can't hear it without a radio, but that doesn't mean that it's not there - you're just not tuned into it. This is the same with blessing in our lives. When we're not tuned in, blessings can often times look like curses or hardships.

Prayer: Jesus, You know what I've been through. I pray that I come to a place where I can say thank You for those times. Thank You for being a constant in my life so that I can always turn to You in times of struggle and pain. Help me to change my perspective to one that focuses on what You are doing and where I am going. Change _____'s perspective of this world, help them to see You in everything. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

Fill the next 30 minutes in prayer. Use Ephesians 1:16-23 as a tuning fork. Use that to pray over yourself and whoever God brings to mind. In the last 4:10 commit yourself to total silence.

OVERFLOWING INTO ETERNITY

11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. - 1 Corinthians 3:11-14

Someday, we will all stand before the living God and be judged for our works (Rev. 20). Now this judgement is quite different for believers and unbelievers. When we have built our house upon the rock of Jesus, our Messiah, there no longer remains a judgement for the sins we committed. This is because Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection paid the required debt. But the final judgement isn't when we, as believers, will receive our rewards. Revelation talks about two resurrections. The first resurrection is for believers who will share in the millennial reign (the 1000 year period when Jesus will rule and reign on earth). The second resurrection will happen after the millennial reign where everyone else will be raised for the final judgement. It is when Jesus returns to earth that we will receive our rewards. Paul talks about our works in terms of materials, "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and straw". This represents that there are varying degrees of good works, some being better than others, and some that are completely unprofitable whatsoever. Paul continues in the next verse to write, "If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." Being saved through fire doesn't seem like a comfortable thing but it's better than the alternative. All of this to say that on the day when our Messiah returns, we will be rewarded for our actions.

What types of works are prevalent in your life? Is your life filled with works that will be burnt up in the end or will you be richly rewarded? Living in the overflow is synonymous with living a life of obedience. One simply cannot live in the overflow while living in disobedience to God. The only way to know the will of God is to spend time with Him. That can look different for different people. However, there are common things that you can do; praying, reading your bible, going to church, and spending time with other believers are all great ways to help you get connected with God and His will for your life. This isn't a formula that will lead you to Godliness, but it will help you grow and will nurture your relationship with God, which is just the beginning. The overflowing life ensures that on the Day, your rewards will be great in His kingdom.

Prayer: Your glory is so beautiful! I can't wait to see it and experience it in heaven. Please help me reprioritize my thoughts so that my actions change to work for You. I don't want _____ to have to spend eternity without You. Please gently walk them into a saving relationship with You through your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Going Deeper (optional)

Take a look at these passages about being rewarded: Matt. 6:6, 17-18; Lk. 6:22-23, 35, 38; 14:12-14; Col. 3:23-24; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 2 John 1:7-8. Spend 35 minutes in prayer and reflection. Ask God to bring your actions into alignment with His will. Talk with Him about your future. This is the longest one, 4:20 of total silence. If you have been keeping up with this, you are already seeing the fruit of spending time in silence with God. Great job and keep it up!

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