

## The Power of the Gospel

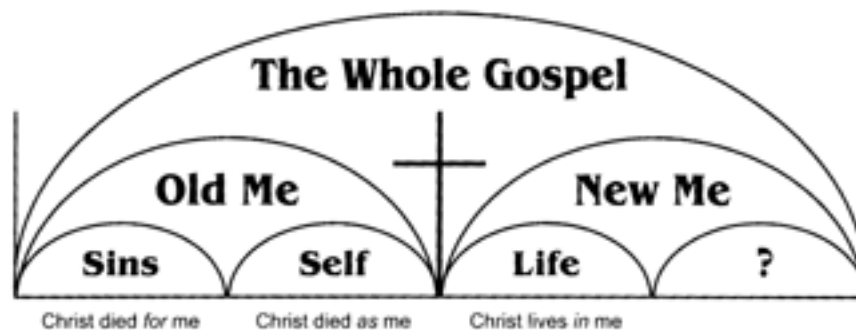
# 18

## God of the Overflow

So far, our examination of the Gospel has taken us through three quarters:

- The first quarter of the Gospel – dealing with sins
- The second quarter of the Gospel – dealing with self
- The third quarter of the Gospel – dealing with life

But what of the fourth quarter? What more could there possibly be after all we have examined? Surely it can't get any better than this!



The fourth quarter of the Gospel deals with the whole issue of your ministry. Like the third quarter of the Gospel, it focuses on the new self – but this time how the new self shares its life with others. It is the *giving* part of the Gospel.

### A Giving Gospel

#### Read John 3:16

The Gospel is a Gospel of giving. Because of his great love for us, God gave his Son in supreme sacrifice. Everything about the Gospel is a gift from God.

#### Read Romans 6:23

#### Read Ephesians 2:8

In fact, the Bible does not just say that God *gave* us salvation; it says that he has

“lavished” (NIV) his grace and love upon us (**Ephesians 1:8; 1 John 3:1**). This is the amazing nature of the Gospel.

But the Gospel was never designed to end there. It doesn't just focus on you as the recipient of God's grace. It focuses on ministering that same grace through you to others.

### Read Matthew 10:8

The Gospel is not complete until it is being expressed *through* you. Just as you have freely received, Jesus says, now give. This giving is according to a very simple principle of ministry:

➔ You can only give what you have received (note **Acts 3:1-6**).

If you have received an overwhelming revelation of God's grace toward you, no one will be able to stop you from sharing this with others. It is impossible to sit on a genuine revelation of the Gospel. It is like a fire in your heart and in your bones (**Jeremiah 20:9**). It *must* result in others being told.

### Read Acts 4:20

## Out of the Overflow

### Read Luke 6:45

Jesus said that your words come from the overflow of your heart. Both the old self and the new self have an overflow.

### ***The overflow of the old self***

Out of the overflow of the old self comes every “act of the flesh” listed in **Galatians 5:19-21**.

### Read Matthew 15:19

All these things listed by Jesus are from the *overflow* of an unregenerate heart. What festers inside a person's heart will eventually be expressed in some form or fashion for others to see. That is why Jesus said, in **Luke 6:44**, that “[a] tree is recognized by its own fruit.”

*The Message* eloquently describes the septic overflow of the old self in **Galatians 5:19-21**:

“It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community...”

## ***The overflow of the new self***

Out of the overflow of the new self comes every “fruit of the Spirit” listed in **Galatians 5:22-24**. Jesus not only came to give us *eternal* life (**John 10:28**); he also came to give you *abundant* life (**John 10:10**). Abundance means “having in excess, having more than you need.”

In fact, the Christian life has been designed by God to be so abundant that it is in overflow. He gives us more than we need to that we can share it with others. Here is a list of just some of the scriptures that describe this overflow experience:

- An overflow of love (**Romans 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:12**)
- An overflow of joy (**2 Corinthians 8:2; Philippians 1:26; 1 Peter 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:6**)
- An overflow of peace (**Jude 2; 2 Thessalonians 3:16; Colossians 3:15**)
- An overflow of hope (**Romans 15:13**)
- An overflow of comfort (**2 Corinthians 1:5**)
- An overflow of generosity (**Luke 6:38**)
- An overflow of grace (**1 Timothy 1:14**)
- An overflow of blessing (**John 1:16; Ephesians 1:3**)
- An overflow of thanksgiving (**2 Corinthians 4:15; 9:12; Colossians 2:7**)
- An overflow of praise (**Psalms 119:171**)
- An overflow of glory (**2 Corinthians 3:18**)

### **Read 2 Peter 1:2**

Notice that this verse immediately precedes Peter’s statement that you have received “everything [you] need for life and godliness” (**verse 3**). This “everything we need” is not simply just enough for what we need. It is everything we need *plus more!* It is everything we need *in abundance!* It is everything we need *in overflow!*

You will also notice that in both **verse 2** and **verse 3**, Peter explains that is through your knowledge of God that this overflow experience works. Your Christian life is initiated through your knowledge of God (**James 1:18**) and you continue to grow and mature through your knowledge of God (**Ephesians 4:13**). It is your revelation in Christ which creates the overflow!

### **Read Psalm 23:5**

The picture being used here is one of a vessel being filled to the brim, but then over-filled, so that the excess begins to run over the side. This is what your life in Christ has been designed to be like. God gives you more than what you need so that out of the overflow of your Christian experience, you are able to share what you have received with others.

### **Read Romans 15:13**

## More Than a Conqueror

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### Read Romans 8:37

This verse holds a wealth of meaning for the Bible student. Here are just a few translations:

**New International Version:** “No, in all these things we are *more than conquerors* through him who loved us.”

**New Living Translation:** “No, despite all these things, *overwhelming victory* is ours through Christ, who loved us.”

**The Amplified Bible:** “Yet amid all these things we are *more than conquerors* and *gain a surpassing victory* through Him Who loved us.”

**The Union Bible (Chinese\*):** “No, in all these things, we have the victory *with plenty left over...*”

Such is the victory that has been won for us on the Cross, there is actually more than we need personally! He gives us more than need, so that we can share his victory with those around us!

### Read Ephesians 3:20

## Streams of Living Water

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### Read John 7:38-39

Jesus made an incredible declaration, translated this way by the NIV:

“Whoever believes in me, *as the Scripture has said*, streams of living water will flow from within him...”

What part of Scripture is Jesus referring to? Where in the Old Testament does it say that “streams of living water” would flow from a person?

### Read Isaiah 44:3

### Read Isaiah 43:19-20

### Read Isaiah 32:2

### Read Isaiah 35:5-8

Jesus declared that he was fulfilling these passages of Old Testament Scripture. It is interesting to note that the first century Church believed that they were witnessing the fulfillment of these passages, for they called themselves the people of the Way (**Acts 9:2; 19:9; 22:4**), a direct reference to **Isaiah 35:8**.

Note that John tells us that in speaking of “streams of living water [flowing] from within [you],” Jesus was referring to “the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.”

\* Translated from Chinese into English.

God expects that we be filled with his Spirit (**Acts 2:38-39**). This is not meant by God to be a one-time experience but a continuing experience\* (note **Acts 4:31**).

### Read Ephesians 5:18-19

Do you notice the relationship between **verse 18** and **verse 19**? Being “filled with the Spirit” is not just meant to be a personal “for me” experience. You are filled with the Spirit, not for your own sake, but so that you can minister to others.

The experience of being filled with the Spirit is likened to streams of living water gushing out from your innermost being. This can only happen because the Spirit is in overflow. In other words, you are not just filled to the brim with God’s Spirit; you are filled to overflow! This is what the gifts of the Spirit are all about (read **1 Corinthians 12:7-11**). The gifts of the Spirit are the overflow of God’s Spirit in your life.

The living water Jesus spoke about was never meant to be just for you. It was meant to become “streams of living water” flowing out from you to others. This is the nature of ministry. What you have is what you give. Out of the overflow of your experience in God, you now minister to others.

## Two Ways of Ministry

There are two ways you can live life (read **Jeremiah 17:5-8**). There are also two ways you can minister to others. When the Lord rebuked Israel, he pinpointed to primary sins.

### Read Jeremiah 2:13

Think of the long list of sins that God could have brought against Israel at this time. This was just before their exile in Babylon, just before experiencing the wrath of God’s judgment. Yet the Lord narrowed his charge sheet down to just two items:

- ☞ They had forsaken the Lord, the spring of living water
- ☞ They had dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that couldn’t hold water.

These two sins lay at the core of Israel’s problem. From these two sins, every other sin sprang forth in overflow. So let’s take a quick look at what these two sins mean for the Christian today.

### *The spring of living water*

#### Read Jeremiah 17:13

The life of God is like a perennial spring of water. It is constant, never drying up, continually bubbling up in freshness and life. God has planned for you to spend time in his presence each day, drawing from the spring of his life (see **Revelation 21:6**). As you are filled with God’s Spirit, this spring will overflow in Spirit-filled ministry.

**Read John 4:14**

God is the spring of living water. As we spend time in his presence on a daily basis, we draw from him life in abundance, enough for us to share with others.

***The broken cistern***

But many Christians have forsaken the spring of living water and “dug their own cisterns.” A cistern is like a well, but has no independent source of water. It is like a water storage tank. You need to collect the water from another place and store it there.

There is one problem, though. The cistern leaks. It does not contain the water indefinitely. Before long, all the water has run out and the cistern is dry.

Many Christians find that their life leaks. They leak faith and power and encouragement. They go to church on Sunday, but by Monday or Tuesday all the joy and peace has leaked away. They have built cisterns modeled after the ways of this world, not realizing that the world’s model leaks (see **John 14:27**).

We can only truly minister out of the spring of God’s Spirit. If we try to minister to others out of our own strength and ability, independent from God’s Spirit, we will either dry up or burn out. Whether in life or ministry, we too must learn the lesson that God taught Zerubbabel in **Zechariah 4:6** (NIV):

“...‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.”

**Grace in Abundance****Read 2 Corinthians 9:8**

The Christian life runs on grace in the same way that an automobile runs on gasoline. But grace is a high-octane fuel. It is finely tuned to empower your life to live in line with God’s will.

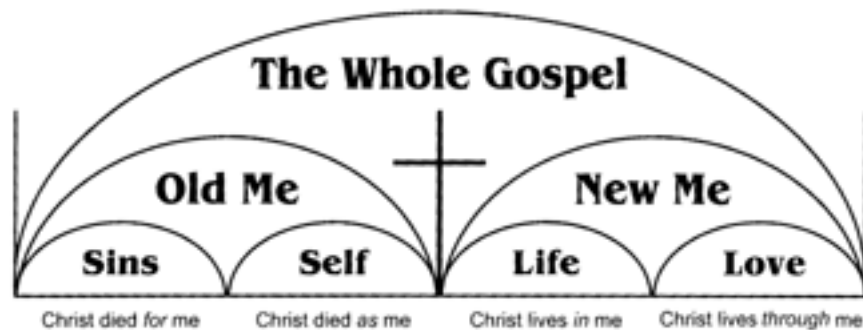
God actually causes his grace to “abound” in your life. It is a “pressed down, shaken together and running over” experience (**Luke 6:38**). It is everything you need and it is more than you need. It is grace in overflow!

**Read Psalm 36:8**

Everything with the Lord is expressed in superlative. He works in you with a power that is “immeasurable” (**Ephesians 3:20**), taking you into a glory that is “surpassing” (**2 Corinthians 3:8**), which results in a joy that is “inexpressible” (**1 Peter 1:8**). How can this not also impact the lives of those around us?

So what is the secret to ministering to others? It is the same secret as the rest of the Gospel. It is from God, through God and to God (**Romans 11:36**). It comes from a new self that is centered in God. From this God-centered and God-empowered position, you are now ready to freely give to others what you yourself have freely received.

Let's refresh our memory and take a look now at our completed chart portraying the four parts to the Gospel:



This is the broad scope of the Gospel of Christ, expressed in four parts:

- The **First Quarter** deals with the barrier of sins.
- The **Second Quarter** deals with your unregenerate self.
- The **Third Quarter** deals with your new life in Christ.
- The **Fourth Quarter** deals with how you minister that life to others.

What you have had a revelation in, you can now share with others. What has become yours is now yours to give away.

In conclusion, no words better describe the overflow of life that is proclaimed in the message of the Gospel than Eugene Peterson's introduction to the book of Colossians in *The Message*:

“But circumstances are incidental compared to the life of Jesus, the Messiah, that Paul experiences from the inside. For it is a life that not only happened in a certain point in history, but continues to happen, spilling out into the lives of those who receive him, and then continues to spill out all over the place. Christ is, among much else, the revelation that God cannot be contained or hoarded. It is this “spilling out” quality of Christ’s life that accounts for the happiness of Christians, for joy is life in excess, the overflow of what cannot be contained within any one person.”

<sup>1</sup> Martin R. Vincent, *Vincent's Word Studies, Vol. 3: The Epistles of Paul* (Parson's Technology: Electronic Edition STEP Files, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Augustine of Hippo, quoted by Martin R. Vincent, *Vincent's Word Studies, Vol. 3: The Epistles of Paul* (Parson's Technology: Electronic Edition STEP Files, 1998).