

Let It Flow

by

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“Give away your life; you’ll find life given back, but not merely given back-given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity.” Luke 6:38 (The Message)

A couple of years ago, some men blessed me when they gave my wife and me a trip to Israel. I was told that they wanted to give this to me especially, for it would help my ministry. They thought that it would give me a better framework for viewing the Bible, and then with teaching it, and as well, my writing inspired from it would benefit. Man were these generous visionaries right. I continue to “see things” more clearly now since going to Israel, and scriptures now come alive with greater significance, as they drill into my heart. That is what is happening right now as I write this devotional, and as I think about that piece of real estate in the Middle East and connect it with the scripture referenced above.

Now don’t get me wrong. The trip was not completely inspirational, for the commercialism of Jerusalem is appalling to me, as Jesus is mostly represented only through iconic worship and “holy sites” that are venerated more than people or the values that Jesus represented. But there is something mystical about the land and the stories that come from it. What can be seen and represented by the land alone tells a story, if we will look closely. We just have to look more deeply to see it. Of course looking deeply requires that we look through a Biblical lens, and the values presented by God and His disciples, not commercialized Christianity. That is what I will try to do now as I write these words to you.

During my ten-day stay in Israel, I saw a lot of things, with the main things being historical sites. But it was not those historical sites that come to my mind as I try to expose the deeper truths of the scripture above. It is the land itself. The land speaks to me, as surely as God’s word speaks to my heart. Let me explain:

We read in the scripture above that as Christ’s disciple, we are to give our life away for someone or something greater than our self. In other words, we are to be a blessing, while being assured that what we give away will return to us as if it never left us. It will be replenished. The problem is that it requires our faith in God’s promises, and unless we understand the dynamics of the *flow through blessings* of God’s returned blessings when we give our life away, we will not understand how our life is replenished. We will think that we will be emptied out and there will be nothing left for us. Of course this philosophy is what the world teaches us, and is why we live in a dog eat dog world where our concerns are driven by a “*What’s in it for me?*” attitude. We just do not understand God’s economy, and therefore we do not risk giving up what we have secured, and instead jealously guard it. But that is not an excuse that we can take before God at judgment day, for He has given us plenty of examples to learn from with how the *flow through*

blessings work. This is where the land of Israel teaches me the blessing of having an open flow of God's blessings through my life, or the consequences of what happens to me if I stop the flow of giving away the blessings God has entrusted to me. To me there is not a better example than the Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee, and the Dead Sea in Israel of this dynamic. This is how the land of Israel teaches me and opens my heart to the truth of the scripture above. How so?

The Jordan River waters begin high on the summit of Mount Herman in the northern part of Israel, as a large amount of rain and snow fall on its slopes and then melts to form the river. The water then seeps through rock channels and gathers into a single river. One day as I sat in a park next to where the springs come together and where raging water rushes through the narrow rock shoot, I felt the cool air around the cold ice melt and knew that this water was the beginning of something wonderful for the lakes and valley it would feed below. The clear and clean water meant life for plants, animals and people. I then thought of how God's blessings, like that pure, clean water I was seeing, comes from Him and how it is not hoarded by Him. He shares it with us. The snow melts, turns to water, and then it is released to be a blessing to others. But then I thought, "What if it was not released? What if God had no concern for others, which includes me? How would that impact me? It would be devastating for all of us. Therefore, we need to understand that it is God's heart that we are to bless others by what we have, for He has shown us that He has blessed us by what He has. The *flow through blessings* begin with God. That is where the concept originated, and it is the code that His family is to also live by. Let's continue my illustration:

The Jordan River then works its way through some upper pastures and vineyards where they are blessed by its water before entering the Sea of Galilee. From a historical view, we know that the Sea of Galilee has been a blessing to the people who have lived around it for thousands of years. It is fertile and healthy with fish and such. It has fed many people for a long time. It is a body of water that Jesus Christ has walked on, where He stood on a boat and preached to people on the shoreline. It is a place where the disciples could at times catch no fish at all, and then suddenly they were able to catch more than their nets could hold, because Jesus commanded the fish to come next to their boats. It's not really a sea, but a large lake that is about 13 miles long and about eight miles wide. The lake is alive with life and health because the Jordan River flows through it. Make note of this. The lake contains God's blessings from the Jordan River only for a while, and it then releases the flow to be used elsewhere. The river originated by God at Mount Herman feeds the Sea of Galilee, but it doesn't stop there. It flows in and out of the lake and then feeds the Jordan valley below. Similar, God's man or woman must receive from God and be blessed, and then we must release these blessings and bless others with that which we were blessed.

When I sat on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, I thought of the consequences if the lake did not give up the precious water that it had been so blessed with by the Jordan River and Mount Herman. What if there was not a sharing of this water, but instead it was hoarded by the lake for fear of running dry? I thought of how the valleys below the lake would have become desert with no agriculture, instead of the amazing agriculture that is seen. But the Sea of Galilee allows the water to pass through it, and as a result, its water is replenished with fresh new water all the time from Mount Herman. In the same way, the life of a Christian is to be a pass through blessing as we receive all that we need from the Lord when it is needed, and when we empty out the

blessings we have received by giving to others, we are faithfully replenished by God. This dynamic allows us to receive the “Living Water” daily into our lives, and it never runs dry. It is always fresh.

After the Sea of Galilee releases its water from its southern shore, the Jordan River is then reformed and makes its way down the Jordan Valley. On each side of the river is extensive agriculture where plants and animals grow and become the breadbasket of Israel, Jordan, and many other parts of the world where the produce and product is exported. This Country has become a major super-power of agriculture, as the Jordan River feeds the growth. Again, we see the water that came from God at Mount Herman is being shared and it is blessing many people along the River's flow because of it. The land teaches us the truth of the scripture above that tells us that if we give freely that which has been freely given to us, we will bless others, and be blessed and replenished in return. As much as the Jordan gives off, it never runs dry, for God continues to replenish it. But there is another truth about consequences if we do not share the blessings. It is seen down the valley where the Jordan River goes in and never comes out of the sea that hoards it and never shares it. The place is called the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea is appropriately named, for nothing lives in it. It is completely dead of all life forms. The once pure and fresh water that cascaded from the slopes of Mount Herman now flows into a stagnant, caustic, lake of salt water that is about 33% saline, verses the ocean, which is about 3%. Why has the once pure water of the Jordan turned to lifelessness? Well, the Dead Sea is the lowest habitable place on Earth at about 1,400 feet below sea level, and there is no place for the Jordan to exit. Unlike the Sea of Galilee that was able to be replenished after it gave off its treasure, the Dead Sea hoards the fresh water and then kills it by turning it into a thick, salty liquid unfit for sustaining life. So what does this teach us about life, for there is a truth if we will look for it?

In the same way that the Dead Sea dies within and produces nothing good, a life that is self-centered and has no concern for sharing the blessings that God has given to him or her will end up the same. We will end our life as old, caustic, selfish men or women who no one wants to be around. We will die within, and then any influence we could have had on our world around us will die as well. There will be no fruit, no joy, no life other than a selfish existence. Just as Dickens in *A Christmas Carol* represented Scrooge, we will be the same as he. The good news is, like Scrooge who ended well, it can also end well for us if we are willing to break open the dam that hoards God's blessing to us. It will require a breaking of those dams to start the flow again. But surely, after we take this step in repentance and obedience, God's Living Water will flow into our lives like what I saw cascading down from Mount Herman and we will be replenished. It will surely come.

Start praying right now by confessing your selfishness, if that is the case with you. Then follow it up by asking God who you can share your blessings with, whether it be words, deeds, financial blessings, forgiveness, or repentance. Give of yourself. Empty yourself of yourself and I promise you, based on the authority of God's word, your life will be returned to you refreshed and remade into a life that will bless others and be replenished ... many times over. Now is the time to break open that dam of self-centeredness and hoarding of God's blessings to you, and to allow God's blessing to flow through your life. Let His *Living Water* rush through you now!