

Living Life from the Overflow

1 John 4:7-11

There was a Christian marriage counselor who was known for bringing restoration to those who were on the verge of divorce. He always had great success no matter how bad the marriage condition. He always had the right scriptures to say and advice to give. He was so successful his nick name was "The Love Doctor."

What made him so good at his job wasn't the degree's he had achieved or the amount of books he read, but simply, his connection with God.

Over the years he had cultivated a deep passionate relationship with God. He was always moving towards maturity on his own spiritual journey. He knew God's love and it showed in his ministry towards his family and in his profession.

However, after a series of events in his life including: having a new baby and not dealing with pressures from his job correctly, he began to lose his passion for God. He put his devotional life on the back burner and it began to show in his family life and ministry. It got to the point where his own marriage was on the rocks. So much so that the tables had turned, and now he was in desperate need for marriage counseling or he would be heading for a divorce.

One day after a huge argument with his wife, he went for a walk through town. He happened to run into Mike, a man he had helped bring restoration to his marriage a few years back. Mike recognized his counselor immediately and walked up to him and struck up a conversation. Before the counselor could say anything, the man confessed his marriage was on the rocks again and asked him for help.

Little did Mike know, but his counselor's life and marriage was also in shambles.

The counselor was drained. He did not have anything to give his old patient, because he was living on empty. Since his connection with God was not up to par, he had nothing to offer this man. He could not show love or guidance to any degree. He was no longer living from the overflow of his relationship with God.

This put him in a position that none of us would ever want to be in. Especially, since as Christians, the depth of our relationship with God will directly reflect the ability we will have to help someone.

As Christians, we will either live life from a loving relationship with God that spills over into all our relationships, or we will live on empty and have no answers for ourselves and have nothing to offer those around us.

Let's read some of the most beautiful passages in the New Testament on love.

1 John 4:7-11 (NKJV)

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

When John wrote these words, he was writing to the church who were lost in heretical teachings about Jesus. John's congregation was made up of both Ex-Jews and Ex-Pagans.

The Ex-Jews found it easy to diminish the divinity of Jesus on the basis of such texts in the gospel of John where Jesus made the statement about the Father being greater than Him. Even though, Jesus in the same breath states that He and the Father are one. So in this letter, John makes it extremely clear that *"Jesus is preexistent, holy, and pure and is going to return to glory."*

The Ex-Gentiles diminished the humanity of Christ. So John pointed them to a passage in his gospel that proved Jesus' humanity, by showing them that His life and death were real.

Although, John was facing these issues head on in his letter, he did not strive to prove that Jesus was equally God and Man, even though that is of great importance. To combat the ignorance, John simply encouraged them to love one another.

The church was so concerned with the details of their faith, they overlooked the foundational principle of their faith, to love one another.

Here we are over 2000 years later, many are still overlooking that same principle.

Yes, we do love, but we tend to be very selective in who and when. We tend to love those people who agree with us or sit next to us in church and in our classes or at our jobs, but forget about all the other people this command speaks to as well. All the people who do not do the same things you do or like the same things you like, but who are in need of the same love God showed you.

And He chose us, to communicate that love to them.

In this passage, John emphasized the source and the depth of God's love, so that when they were faced with issues about Jesus' humanity and divinity, they would stand unshaken because they learned that to know and show God's love is the best way to understand the person of Jesus.

What better place to live life from, but a complete knowledge of God's love that spills over into everybody we meet and everything we do.

Living life from the overflow requires us to do 3 things ...

1. TO LOVE ONE-ANOTHER: (v.7A)

The word, love, in this verse is a verb in the subjunctive tense. (subjunctive=expressing what is imagined or hoped possible)

The word actually means to love one another in such a way that it becomes an actual habit.

Love here is an action and John is urging us to keep on loving others so much so that it becomes a normal practice in our Christian lives.

John then goes further in his challenge, to love one another, showing it as an obligation (**v.11**). We are under obligation to make a payment in kind of having received something of value. That something being loved by God. Paying it forward if you will.

It's so wonderful that despite all the details of our past and our future, God loves us. And because of that gift we are obligated to show love to all people at all times. These are tall orders, but something we are capable of doing when we realize why we are doing it.

The first part of (**v.11**) gives us our motivation to love one another. Because God loved us. Since God loved us, we should love like Him. A clear response to God's love is to love one another without having a selective mentality.

God's love does not discriminate. He loves all equally.

So how and to who do we show this kind of love?

In the New Testament, there are 53 occurrences of the phrase; "*One-Another's*." We are commanded to forgive "*one another*", encourage "*one another*", and here, John tells us twice, to love "*one another*". The "*53 One-Another's*" are some of the greatest practical helps in scripture on the topic of love.

Jesus gives us a clear and simple picture on how to love like in the Kingdom of God.

John 15:12 (NKJV)

This is again a tall order. We are commanded to love one another, how Jesus loved us.

If I were to make a list of all the ways Jesus loved us, the list would be endless. So let's focus on one that I believe is the greatest act of all and that was when Jesus stepped down from Heaven to be with us on earth.

Philippians 2:5-7 (NLT)

Jesus did not hold on to his position as God, but humbled himself to meet us where we are. He put His agenda aside to show us love. How then can we not put aside our agendas for those people who God has called us to be in contact with and show them love.

The Bible tells us of a group of four men, who put aside their own agendas to help a man who could not help himself. If it was not for this man's four friends who each responded that day from the overflow of compassion in their lives, this paralyzed man would have never made it, not just to the house where Jesus was teaching, but up to the top of the house and through the roof so that he could meet Jesus and be healed.

These friends truly understood what it means to love. They individually and together sacrificed for their friend.

When was the last time you actually sacrificed for a friend?

When was the last time it cost you something to show someone you loved them?

To make an impact on someone's life like first requires us to be aware of the needs around us.

Think of all the people God has positioned in your life. We have family, friends, co-workers and people we share common interests and hobbies with around us daily. I didn't even mention how many social media people we connect with daily.

Can you think of one person in your life you could show the kind of love, these four friends showed their friend?

Mind you, it did not cost them money to show such a tremendous act of love. Sometimes money is too easy to give. People are worth our time as well as our resources and it's up to us, to show them that. Try to go out of your way for someone and watch the impact you have and the imprint you leave.

Living life from the overflow requires us to love one another and ...

2. TO CONNECT WITH GOD: (V.7B-8)

Loving others is only possible when we tap into God's infinitive source of love. Love is the glue that connects our relationship with God and the lack of it keeps us from sticking close to Him.

The word in the Greek that is used in reference to those who are "born" of God means to be in a close relationship like that of a father and child.

Our ability to love God places us in direct relation to His ability to love us as His child. When we love, we are mirroring God but when we don't; our capacity to know Him is hindered since His very nature is love. When we connect with God, He divinely positions us to be used by Him in ways we could not be normally used, if we had to rely on ourselves.

God is our unlimited source of love.

We have the ability to continually connect with him on a deeper and deeper level. This then puts us in a position to connect with people on a deeper and deeper level.

John's church's problems arose because people were not connecting with God intimately. They got so caught up in debating the details of doctrine, they ended up exposing themselves to heresy instead of growing their relationship with God.

Living life from the overflow calls us to be in direct relation with God on a daily basis. When this does not happen and we let other things take precedence over our relationship with God, our spiritual effectiveness falls off the charts. This then affects the way we interact with people because in a sense we do not have anything of value to offer them. We are in a bankrupt state where God's resources have been cut off.

It stands to reason then, just as I get filled when I am intimate with God, so I am empty when I neglect time with Him.

The amount of time you spend with God directly correlates with the effectiveness of your ministry. The more time you spend with God, the more God can use you. Your connection with God will play a key part in everything you do or your disconnect with God will hinder everything you do.

I want to illustrate this for you by sharing a story about Jim, the investor.

This guy lived for and knew how to make money. Whenever an opportunity came his way, he almost always invested to make money. Since, he could fund these opportunities, frequently; he made substantial amounts of profit.

His life's goal was to wait for the big one, the golden opportunity of a lifetime, the one that would set him up forever.

However, because of a series of risky real estate deals and the decline in the stock market, his funds became extremely low. He was actually almost bankrupt and as Murphy's law goes...

The opportunity of a lifetime he had been waiting for finally presented itself and Jim who at one time had 10 times the money he now needed, now could not put together even half the needed money for this investment. Opportunity was knocking but he was broke, bankrupt, with nothing to invest.

Unfortunately, the way we handle money is like the way we handle our spirituality.

We all have a spiritual bank account that builds equity when we connect with God regularly and declines and diminishes when we don't. God gives us what we need so that we can meet the needs of others.

Unlike the investor who had nothing to offer when the opportunity of a lifetime came his way, we need to be full of God's love so that when the person who is hurting comes our way, we are not empty, but have an abundance to offer them to help in whatever they are going through.

I want to ask you, what is the balance of your spiritual account today?

Are you in the red or black, the negative or are you in the positive?

The formula for success with God is easy, connect with Him and live in abundance or don't and live in spiritual poverty. Just remember, other people's lives are on the line.

Connecting with God through prayer is the place where our tank is filled. Just like your car's gasoline supply needs to be refilled regularly, we too need to let God fill and refill us again and again.

"Those who know God the best are the richest and most powerful in prayer." We must make room for prayer so that we can make room for love. You can only give from the resource of what you received.

Remember the marriage counselor was at his best when he made time for God. When he connected with God, he lived and gave from the overflow, but when he lost touch with God, he was bankrupt. He could not even help himself let alone anyone else.

In order to live from the overflow, we must love one another, connect with God and lastly,

3. To reflect on the depths of God's love: (v.9-10)

Reflecting on what God did for us is the motivation behind living for God. If only our minds could regularly recall clips from the movie "The Passion." I think we would love people and connect with God more often and deeper.

I don't know about you but the act of God sending His Son to the earth to redeem me is the only reason I live the way I do today. Everything I do is filtered through that one act. I serve people because of it. I preach because of it. I love my wife and children better because of it.

The more evident we make the cross in our lives the more we will reflect on God's love. This will give us the determination to live life from the overflow, not on empty.

John used this picture of God, sending His son for us because the teachings in his gospel on the death of Jesus were being distorted in the church. Those who were spreading this heresy knew that if they can cut Jesus' death out of the equation, people would not and could not love one another and connect with God.

The basis and foundation to love God and people is the imprint the cross left on human history. When we allow the cross to leave an imprint on our hearts, we love and serve not because we want to, but because we can't imagine not sacrificing as Jesus did for us.

God loves the worlds unlovable and we should do the same. Loving the unlovable is not an easy thing to do.

Actually, the word unlovable does not even do justice in describing us before we came to Christ, but just as God loved us where we were at, we should do the same for those who might not have it all together or who are struggling with their place in this world, for anybody who intersects with our lives.

We are positioned to show the same love God showed and continues to show us.

I have personally concluded from these verses that *"Love is a sacrifice for someone else's benefit."*

Be forewarned, to love like God, will cost you something. It cost God separation from His one and only Son.

What has it cost you lately?

I am not talking about spending money, but sacrificing something to show somebody you love them. That is the least we should do in response to the love God showed us and keeps showing us.

Loving others is not possible if you are not connected to God and connecting with God is motivated by the imprint He has left in your heart. You can only love somebody to the degree in which you have experienced God's love.

Jesus Himself understood this, in that He depended on His father to give Him what He needed to fulfill his calling on earth. If Jesus, the Son of God, understood that to be effective in life and live from the overflow depended on the amount of time He spent with His father, how much more important is it for us to spend time with God daily?

I don't know about you, but when the time comes and someone looks to me for something, whether it is an encouraging word or an act of service, I want my tank to be overflowing so that it is clear God is living and working in my life.

Today, I want to encourage you to live life from the overflow of your relationship with God.

Because you are going to come in contact with a countless number of people who desperately need to be touched by God's love.

In order to live life out of the overflow of our relationship with God, we must love one another habitually, connect with God daily, and reflect on the depths of God's love regularly.