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**Kenny  
Luck**

# Overflow

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Setting the Holy  
Spirit Loose in the  
World You Live In



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*A NavPress resource published in alliance  
with Tyndale House Publishers*



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ISBN 978-1-63146-898-8

Printed in the United States of America

29 28 27 26 25 24 23  
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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# INTRODUCTION

## The Overarching Tale

**WE WANT TO KNOW** where things are leading. Rare is the man who says to himself, “I don’t need to know what’s next,” or “I’m good with whatever happens.” Human beings like predictability too much for that to be a natural response to new environments, new relationships, or new processes beyond our control. Key word? *New*.

Or more accurately, *unknown*.

Like me, most men are not fans of engaging anything unfamiliar, mysterious, or beyond their personal knowledge. The jump from the known to the unknown produces a pause in us that very quickly leads to questions like:

- So what did you say goes on at this meeting?
- Who is going to be there?
- Where are they having it?
- Are they serving food?
- What is going to happen exactly?
- What is going to be the topic of discussion?
- How long will it last?
- How much does it cost?
- Why should I go?



Our *time* is the coin of the realm—we value it and spend it wisely because once it is gone, we can't un-spend it. It's not that we never want to try new things, but if we are going to be placed in an unfamiliar setting with unfamiliar faces and an unknown process with undefined goals, well, we are *out*.

We need answers.

Whenever I am talking to a man and he is asking about our men's community at Crossline Church, the church I serve, I provide answers to these and other questions *before he even asks them*. I want his brain to work from the *known* to the unknown. Consequently, in the most direct and dispassionate way possible, I tell him what he can expect to happen *before* it happens. I share:

- How connecting with other men is routine and easy
- What a gathering or group experience is like
- What the first meeting (especially) will entail
- How the ninety minutes of time is structured *exactly*
- How many weeks each module/topic will take
- How the leader development journey has a clear goal
- What personal knowledge or benefits he will leave with
- What my goals and hopes are for his process

No rah-rah speech needed. Slay the dragon—his fear of the unknown.

When I've said this in the thousands of recruiting conversations I have had, I've seen a look of relief on many faces. I learned a long time ago that a man will show up once to most anything if the perceived risk is low and there is a strong benefit. On the primal level, that could simply be good barbecued tri-tip at the Beast Feast we hold each spring at Crossline (five hundred pounds of choice, custom-smoked tri-tip). On the relational level, that could be a much-needed increase in intimacy with his wife or children at

our Get Healthy modules. On an inner level, it could be defeating an ongoing character issue that is harming his relationships with God and people he loves. On the spiritual level, it could be his need for a structured and strong spiritual-growth journey that is long overdue. On a leadership level, it could be a desire to start or participate in a ministry in the church.

But once he shows up in a space built for that benefit to be realized and starts that journey, a dormant part of his brain is activated. A deeper, more subconscious question in his head starts percolating. After showing up, he looks around, assesses, engages, and maybe even participates. But like a beach ball being strenuously held under the water, an invisible but inevitable question pops up in his mind: *Now that you have me, where are you taking me?*

We want to know the outcome of the process.

We are also subconsciously hoping it is a *great one*.

## **God's Endgame**

The human soul is attracted to superhumanity and the larger super-story. For proof, look no further than the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). To help the uninitiated (should they exist), the MCU is the shared place where all the movie adaptations of Marvel comic book stories are set. The “A Team” members of this realm are known as the Avengers—Captain America, Captain Marvel, Iron Man, Thor, Black Panther, Black Widow, Hawkeye, the Hulk, Ant-Man, and the Wasp. The “B Team” is a seemingly endless cast of characters who serendipitously and purposefully fold into the super-story with their own skills, personalities, and humor. Each character has his or her own distinct story and ever important backstory that also intersects and connects with other past, present, or developing stories in the MCU—*all to tell a single, overarching tale*.

As of August 2021, this unified collection of fantasy adventures is the largest box-office supernova of all time. Judging by ticket sales and sheer number of films, it has more pull, accessibility, and resonance than J. K. Rowling's and George Lucas's mysterious and magical forces.<sup>1</sup> Marvel's ethos of superhumanness dwarfs its nearest competitors.

I know *the pull* on an intimate level. In fact, my earliest memories of it look like a four-year-old relentlessly hounding his exhausted mother of seven kids for outfits, toy accessories, pajamas, toothbrushes, lunch pails, board games, underwear, and even soap (on a rope) emblazoned with my favorite Marvel character, Spider-Man. Astonishingly, just over five decades later, this scenario still plays out in many homes. According to a 2021 survey by the National Retail Federation, the next generation of young kids are feeling *the pull* like I did, with superhero costumes nabbing five of the top ten Halloween costume spots. Sitting atop that list is your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man from the MCU.<sup>2</sup> But what about adults? As of the time of writing, we see an even more revealing phenomenon at the box office: adults plunking down big dollars to experience the MCU's latest offerings. Men, the assumed demographic, are only a "click" (or statistically marginal percentage) ahead of women in viewership attached to the MCU in both the "avid" and "casual" fan categories.<sup>3</sup>

Kids. Adults. Male. Female. Everyone feels *the pull*.

While the secret sauce of the MCU's success is hotly debated within its global "fanverse," the following common denominators go a long way to explaining *the attachment* we feel toward the characters and overarching story being told:

- Characters with personal backstories and shortcomings
- Transforming encounters or traumas that redefine their purpose

## INTRODUCTION

- Special and potentially dangerous powers or skill sets in their possession
- The execution of justice
- Sacrificial actions taken for the sake of others
- Confrontation of evil forces that threaten humanity
- Purposes and missions that are bigger than themselves
- Willingness, in specific spaces and times, to risk their legacy
- Humor in the midst of super problems, super chaos, and superheroes

These themes have a mysterious and strong touch point in the human soul. The critical thing the MCU lacks is a basis for fans to experience these longings themselves. The world has paid billions to *vicariously* experience them while viewing the films.

Each film is a synthetic tease that exploits an authentic and supernatural reality.

God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.<sup>4</sup>

God. Eternity. Reality. The overarching tale to which we *actually* belong.

Eternity is God's realm outside of space and time that has, through Jesus alone, broken into our space and into our times to call on the souls of men and women for the greatness we crave inside. While on earth, Jesus called this breakthrough and advent among people the Kingdom of God—the dimension where his super-humanness and super-story connects us with eternity. He declared that it was here *now*. He declared its power and active presence. He

pointed to its signature activities and core agenda among us. He pointed out its evil adversary. But most importantly for our purposes here, he called all those who believe in him to proactively advance it. Why? Because it is the dimension where all believers in Christ are intended to work out their unique stories. It is the source of the pull we feel inside that cannot be satisfied by self-destructive rip-off versions. It is the hole in the soul, the ultimate reality we seek. It is *the pull* inside that leads to our strongest legacy—where we are called specifically and uniquely to be great and do great things.

It is God's endgame in which *all believers* in Christ . . .

- Bring their personal backstories *and* shortcomings.
- Experience a transforming encounter that redefines their purpose.
- Are empowered by the Holy Spirit and made dangerous for goodness.
- Are used to bring God's love and justice.
- Sacrifice in their context, like Jesus, for the sake of others.
- Confront and defeat evil forces/agendas in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Engage in missions reflecting Kingdom purposes that are bigger than self.
- Risk for God's glory and eternal legacy in their "moment in time" on earth.
- Laugh along the way, perplexed and amused at how God works.

Now that he has you, this is where *he is taking you*.

**Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.<sup>5</sup>**

Did you catch that? Whoever believes . . . *will do*.  
Feel the pull. Start getting excited. Sense where this is leading.  
Your beliefs set you up for supernatural action.

### **Transformed to Overflow**

I love Bolognese sauce with tagliatelle pasta.

Eating my favorite pasta dish, however, is preceded by a process.

- Regular water is placed into a pot.
- A fire is lit, and the pot is positioned on top of the flame.
- Time passes, and the water heated by the fire produces steam as little bubbles.
- More time passes, more steam is created, and the little bubbles get bigger.
- More time passes, and the surface of the water starts moving as steam bubbles rise up through the water and break free.
- More time passes, and all the water in the pot is moving with waves of fast-moving bubbles, causing a full boil.
- The pasta is added to the boiling water and cooks for seven minutes.
- The hot water is drained from the now-cooked pasta.
- I smother the pasta in my beef and pork Bolognese and enjoy the product of my labor. Yum!

Water. Fire. Time. Steam. Release. Yum.

Every day, in homes and restaurants around the world, this ritual is repeated perhaps a billion times. You have done it. You might be doing it right now. Physics of Cooking 101. Water—the object of change. Fire—the agent of change. Time—allows for the process of change. Steam—produced by the change.

Release—something is allowed to move freely after previously being contained. In this case, it's the power of the steam. Yum—the pleasure of eating and experiencing the purpose of the process. No transformation of the water, no yum!

Basic cooking physics mirrors basic spiritual physics, a point that is going to be important for this journey. Break down the physics and we start to see a process, or journey, that God wants to reproduce with every believer, leading to his specific, experiential outcome. You, like water, are the object of change. The Holy Spirit, like fire, is the agent of change applied and deposited in you. Time and cooperation with the Holy Spirit, like heat applied to water over time, triggers the process of spiritual transformation. Christlike character within, like steam, is produced by the change. Christlike conduct, like steam breaking the surface into a boil, moves freely and visibly *out of us* into our world. Conduct is the natural expression of character. Kingdom influence and impact, like tasting and experiencing a finished dish, is the gratifying sensation we seek as believers—and God's ultimate goal for our personal spiritual process.

God's intentional process always fulfills his Kingdom purpose.

Christ followers are transformed by the Holy Spirit to overflow *in their contexts*. Your context includes the people and the places uniquely connected to your life and everyday rhythms right now. The Holy Spirit's *work in you* (God's intentional process) is supernaturally intended to become a visible *work through you* (God's Kingdom purpose) in your unique time, your specific spaces, your relationships, and your cultural context. While personal transformation is part of God's process within us, it is never the only goal he has for individuals who belong to his super-story. His vision—through the person and work of the Holy Spirit in us—is a worldwide overflow of Kingdom power *into* a dark, dying, and desperate world that is battling evil and injustice.

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Holy Spirit transformation always leads to Holy Spirit overflow.

Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.<sup>6</sup>

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”<sup>7</sup>

Follow the process and arc of experiencing the Holy Spirit.

- Jesus is prophesying the Holy Spirit *filling* us.
- Jesus is prophesying the Holy Spirit’s *transforming* us within.
- Jesus is prophesying the Holy Spirit’s *overflowing* out of us into the world in which we live.

Anyone who misses the arc that Jesus foretells will miss God’s fullest intention for life—the great adventure of the soul for which we were created. Jesus was no stranger to the tendencies of men and the inner battles they would experience trying to let go of the synthetic cultural expressions of masculine or personal greatness. This is why he addressed the inner tension and challenge head-on.

Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you



try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?"<sup>8</sup>

We can hang on to man's purposes or let go in order to advance God's purposes.

For every pull of God, there is an opposite and forceful pull by culture. For every authentic and ultimate moment of eternal influence, there is a synthetic and immediate moment available for carnal indulgence. For every greater work of the Holy Spirit in and through us, there is available a lesser work of selfish impulses in us and through us. For every moment of Christ-inspired sacrifice for others, there springs up the comforting rationalization that it is not our problem. For every call of Christ to risk Kingdom advancement in faith, there is a suggestion by the devil that attempts to thwart it by stoking a fear.

The pull. The tension. The choice.

The journey you choose will flow most directly from the strength of your inner transformation at this point in your relationship with God. Specifically, it will flow from your sense of identity in Christ and your security in God's love. These were the exact journeys we took in *Dangerous Good: The Coming Revolution of Men Who Care* and *Failsafe: Living Secure in God's Acceptance*. You may be tracking right into this final book of the trilogy while others are starting at the end of it. (That works too!)

Whatever your journey, God has this book in your hands right now because his Spirit in you is calling. In your soul, you feel the pull to be dangerous with goodness. The power to actually live that out is emanating from knowing who you are in Christ, being fully accepted by him, fully loved by him, and fully defined by him. You know God's

## INTRODUCTION

highest vision and noblest goal for you is Christlikeness. His love has freed you from fear in order to pursue his character. Your failsafe—God’s love—is in place. Your soul is secure, and your gaze is fixed.

No matter what happens to you, no matter what mountains you have to climb, and no matter what the personal cost, what Jesus foretold about your outward trajectory into the world will be manifested in this hour and in your personal context. You see the horizon of your life and know it is time to elevate your influence for Christ and risk more for him. Your comfort is solid, knowing that God’s Spirit and God’s Word will not fail to complete the inner transformation that will lead to the greater works of Jesus through your life. This season of overflow will influence many, and you will join millions of other brothers in Christ right now in a worldwide shift to overflow, influence, and impact for Christ in these last days.

Identity and inner security in Christ’s love leads to Holy Spirit explosivity.

As you read each chapter, you will be challenged to live out what God has poured into your spirit in real time—that hour, that day, or that week. Your growing sense of identity in him will widen your availability to him, which will activate more influence for him. Release of the Holy Spirit’s power will come about supernaturally. God will actually bring people to you in natural ways in order for you to be used in supernatural ways you could not have imagined.

Expect filling. Prepare for overflow. Loose the spread.

*fill (v.): to put into as much as can be held; to supply with a full complement; to cause to swell<sup>9</sup>*

The disciples, seeing the Master with their own eyes, were awestruck. Jesus repeated his greeting: “Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you.”

## OVERFLOW

Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. “Receive the Holy Spirit,” he said.<sup>10</sup>

*overflow (v.): to fill a space to capacity and spread beyond its limits<sup>11</sup>*

They couldn't take their eyes off them—Peter and John standing there so confident, so sure of themselves! The fascination of the religious leaders deepened when they realized these two were laymen with no training in Scripture or formal education. They recognized them as companions of Jesus, but with the man right before them, seeing him standing there so upright—so healed!—what could they say against that?

They sent them out of the room so they could work out a plan. They talked it over: “What can we do with these men? By now it's known all over town that a miracle has occurred, and that they are behind it. There is no way we can refute that.”<sup>12</sup>

*spread (v.): to open or expand over a larger area; to extend the range or incidence of; to make widely known<sup>13</sup>*

And with that, the apostles were on their way, continuing to witness and spread the Message of God's salvation, preaching in every Samaritan town they passed through on their return to Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup>

Keep in step. This is where everything has been leading.

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.<sup>15</sup>

## **Holy Spirit,**

*Thank you for dwelling in me. Thank you for sealing my identity. Thank you for conforming me to the image of Christ. Thank you for filling me and controlling me. Thank you for manifesting the fruit of the Spirit and gifts of the Spirit in me. Thank you for being the fire of God in me, transforming me in my inner man, giving me the very character of Christ. Thank you for securing my spirit through God's love and acceptance, setting me free from condemnation and comparison. Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus, I surrender to your overflow from me and into the spaces, places, and people you have assigned to my life. I want the greater works of Christ manifested in me and through me right now, according to your Word and promise. Align my spirit, my energy, and my body with your Kingdom super-story. Holy Spirit, use me today. Open my eyes to the Kingdom of God and the exact part I am playing in it. Open new doors and help me to step through them in Jesus' name and for your pleasure. Amen.*

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.<sup>16</sup>





PART I

# **OVERFLOWING IDENTITY**





# SALT BY CONTACT

I Am in the Mix

**“MY WIFE CRASHED ON THE OPERATING TABLE.”**

This was the second time I had seen Ryan at our gym. He was not a part of my plan that day as we both waited to get inside for the next class. I know that seems selfish. But these sixty-minute sessions of high-intensity interval training are the spaces in my week that detoxify my spirit. I am not super chatty when I go, but on this day, I asked a total stranger how he was doing. His words about events in recent weeks landed with a weight that only vulnerability plus unvarnished reality can possess.

The only proper response was, “I am so sorry.”

The good news was that this event was not the end of the story. Apparently, a routine procedure turned into a sepsis infection, which turned into the body shutting down, which turned into the heart *restarting*—all in one medical event. While his wife remembered none of it, Ryan lived through all of it—all the



emotions, the horrible thoughts, and the uncertainty that came with being minutes from losing the light of his life. And there I was, unsuspectingly strolling through the door of the gym, asking a normal question, and getting drawn into a major life event. Naturally, my wheels were spinning as Ryan relayed the awful experience of knowing his wife almost died on the operating table and then the relief of her heart starting back up and her pulling out of the infection and coma over the course of the next few days.

No coincidences here. Ryan booked the same workout I did on this day, at this time, as a first step toward resuming his life after such a traumatic and unwelcome interruption.

Clearly, he needed to talk about this with someone, and we did talk for about ten minutes before our workout started and then again in class between rowing and weights. Since his wife was out of the woods and recovering well, the big need I could sense was a friendly outlet to process his emotions. But having been let into the heart of someone's life, I was now praying this meeting would lead to a friendship and ongoing conversation. In short order, my prayer was answered as I learned I would be seeing Ryan every other day. His restarted workout schedule looked identical to mine.

We exchanged numbers. But it gets better.

After meeting me in the morning, Ryan went home, showered, and went to the fine jewelry department at Nordstrom, during the mid-shift, to bay number one, where his wife's favorite brand of jewelry resides behind the glass. He had it in his mind to purchase a get-well-please-don't-ever-die-suddenly-again present to express his love for her and celebrate life.

My wife, Chrissy, works in the fine jewelry department at Nordstrom. She works the mid-shift, and she is the specialist for Ryan's wife's favorite brand. She was standing in bay one to greet Ryan, totally unaware that I had just met Ryan earlier that

morning. In her customary way, Chrissy engaged Ryan warmly: “Is this for a special occasion?” As Chrissy talked with Ryan, he was able to relay to another friendly ear the ordeal he had been through the past couple of weeks. After hearing Ryan’s story, Chrissy helped him pick out the perfect bracelet for his wife.

As our individual workdays were winding up, Chrissy and I texted, making dinner plans and looking forward to a debrief. Since you have the backstory, you can see what’s coming—an epic collision of providence in real space and time for the sake of a real person who is the object of God’s real concern. They say ignorance is bliss. Well, in this case, our ignorance of the other’s encounter with the same person was the context of a supernatural revelation. It sounded like this:

*Me: How was Nordy today?*

*Chrissy: Good. I had this customer whose wife’s heart stopped during a surgery, but they revived her and she lived! I helped the husband pick out a bracelet to buy her.*

*Me: Wait! Are you being serious right now?*

*Chrissy: Totally. She went in for a routine procedure, got sepsis, and crashed on the operating table.*

*Me: Was this customer tall?*

*Chrissy (head tilting): Yes.*

*Me: Did he have a beard?*

*Chrissy (hesitatingly): Yeeeeeeesss.*

*Me: Was his name Ryan?*

*Chrissy: Yes! How did you know that?*

*Me: You are not going to believe this. God is on the move.*

I can't quite describe the feeling we had in that moment. How do you process an encounter with divine providence that is so in your face like that? No mystery to it at all!

The idea that our individual stories actively intersect with God's great super-story and his concern for every person demands reflection, inspires awe, sparks wonder, and produces a serious "Whoa!" But more importantly, it should amplify for us the supernatural purposes of the spaces we occupy and the people who are in them. God has sovereignly and strategically placed us in the mix of specific cultures and communities to execute his plan with people in the rhythms and routines of everyday life.

Jesus said this would be the case for every follower.

Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth.<sup>1</sup>

## **Salt Is Everywhere**

In so many ways—salt shows up. Everywhere. Every day.

Chances are that within the last few hours you have interacted with salt by choice or by its simple presence in so many things. From prescriptions to plastics, leather goods to lavender soaps, paper to pottery, salt is a key manufacturing ingredient. It is also the silent staple, sitting on billions of tables in homes, cafés, and restaurants worldwide, largely unnoticed but essential to have in the mix if food is being served. In fact, most cultures divide the totality

of daily meals into two categories—sweet and salty—choosing salt to represent the savory side of the menu. But you can't limit salt to the kitchen alone. During the winter months in many states, it is spread across snow-filled roads and walkways. Physiologically, the body uses salt to absorb and transport nutrients, maintain blood pressure and the right balance of fluid, transmit nerve signals, and contract and relax muscles.<sup>2</sup> You *literally* can't escape it! Salt is critical to a body's health. And lastly, our little blue planet orbiting the sun appears blue from outer space because salt water, holding trillions of tons of salt, covers almost three-quarters of its surface.

Ordinary. Everywhere. A variety of purposes.

Jesus declared us “salt.” He chose this working illustration for our identity and commission because it resonated in his world, in his context. Then, like now, salt was ordinary, everywhere, and used for a variety of purposes. But in the ancient Near Eastern mindset, salt also had some specific purposes that are not so familiar to us, and we need to explore them if we are to understand his commission to overflow in our world. So how would someone who just decided to follow Jesus interpret being called “salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth”?

***You make things better by contact.***

This is no surprise at all. Taste-wise, salt makes just about everything better on contact. It is added to flavorless food to give it life. It is added to food that already has flavor to further draw out that flavor. Salt is added to provide a contrast. As a parallel, God adds us into families, churches, communities, workplaces, and social environments to add Holy Spirit presence, make supernatural contact, and influence those around us for these same purposes. We are placed or sent into specific spaces to bring the life of the Kingdom where it has not yet taken hold, to draw out and magnify blessings already present, and to be distinctly different in a

Spirit-empowered way by making contact with those people in those environments.

Think about your purpose this way: God has you available to him. He can add you into the mix of situations and relationships directly connected to the people and places you frequent. More specifically, he can add your character in Christ, your conduct that is an expression of that character, your insight and wisdom rooted in his truth, your prayers, your spiritual gifts, and your direct testimony of God's presence in your life. All of these enhance the quality of the environments you are assigned by God to enter, drawing out their potential for Kingdom purposes. Just by being aware that you are intentionally added by God into *all* the environments you presently occupy infuses you with one specific aim as salt—*make them better by contact*.

The Holy Spirit's mission *in you* is to make you better—more like Christ in your character. He improves you. He increases righteousness. He secures you in God's love. He grows your awareness of his love and your ability to love others the way he has loved you.

The Holy Spirit's mission *through you* is the same, but now *you are the one* improving specific spaces and places, situations and settings, connections and communities.

This is what Jesus had in mind with his “just as I” statements connected to loving, forgiving, and being merciful in the Gospels. It's also what Paul had in mind when he coached believers to “season” their interactions with people, making those encounters *better*.

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.<sup>3</sup>

Notice what the nature of the believers' Holy Spirit overflow is? Grace.

You are salt by contact, and upon contact with you, people

experience favor, blessing, and a response from you that is either uncalled for, undeserved, or unmerited. Grace. It shocks and most likely will offend all sense of fairness. Grace. There is no rationale for it—it just comes. Grace. It is a kindness overflowing from God through you that demands no reciprocity and no returning of the favor. Grace. It feels unusual to people and is mysteriously attractive.

Grace is the opposite of unkindness, abuse, cruelty, harshness, evil, nastiness, self-importance, and coldheartedness. Jesus said, “Freely you have received; freely give.”<sup>4</sup>

God says: “Overflow grace in the power of the Holy Spirit on contact.”

That’s what happened when Jesus made contact with us.

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!<sup>5</sup>

Now—having experienced that as one of the “many”—guess what happens when we make contact with others God has placed in our lives.

We’re not keeping this quiet, not on your life. Just like the psalmist who wrote, “I believed it, so I said it,” we say what we believe. And what we believe is that the One who raised up the Master Jesus will just as certainly raise us up with you, alive. Every detail works to your advantage and to God’s glory: more and more grace, more and more people, more and more praise!<sup>6</sup>

God does not make mistakes. He is present in the details. He has set things up so that you are in a position to salt the people you

meet and the environments you are in with something different, something supernatural, something mysterious, and something wonderful.

Grace.

***You preserve goodness and prevent corruption.***

In Jesus' day, salt was like refrigeration is today. Rub salt into meat and fish, and you could stop it from decaying so that it remained edible for a long time. The special property? Salt draws bacteria-producing moisture out of foods, drying them and making it possible to store food for extended periods. So when a follower of Jesus heard the identity statement, "You are salt," many filtered it culturally in a couple of ways. First, they understood just how valuable salt was to their daily existence. Second, they knew salt had a special power to preserve food and prevent spoiling. Salt in the first century was so valuable that it was used as currency. And just like you have to restrict the printing of money to create controls in a large economy, governments in Jesus' day had to legally manage, monitor, and restrict salt production. Roman soldiers sometimes received their pay in salt, which is the origin of the word *salary*.<sup>7</sup>

Think about your specific purpose in the world for the Kingdom of God in this way: you are a highly valued, super-useful, powerful stopper of corruption in your community. You might even want to reread that in the first person, saying "I am" instead of "You are." Think about it. You are the currency of his Kingdom. God rewards others in your life by giving you to them as "salary," which they can rely on to help them function and make progress. You ensure that the Kingdom realm works smoothly as you (the valuable salt) submit to God's oversight, control, and distribution of your energies.

So let's reset that.

As God's salt, we preserve and protect, specifically preserving

the good and protecting against the corrupting forces of godless culture, the depraved impulses of men, and the devil himself. This is what Jesus had in mind when he commissioned his followers to enter the mixes of people and places connected uniquely to them and said:

Be preservatives yourselves. Preserve the peace.<sup>8</sup>

Notice what the Holy Spirit overflow is? Peace. God's *shalom*.

Upon contact with you, people experience more peace and less chaos because of the presence of God through the Holy Spirit in you! To be clear, God's peace is not just the absence of conflict—it is God's "salt" in the mix, taking action to restore a broken situation, a broken relationship, or a broken heart. When things are fragmented, God's man ties things together as a whole and sets it as one again. This ability is an overflow of God's presence in you spilling over into the work, social, and family networks you belong to—new and old, professional and personal.

As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you.<sup>9</sup>

You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.<sup>10</sup>

The Holy Spirit has specific work to do in the places and with the people assigned to you. He has chosen to sprinkle you into the variety of settings in which you currently reside in order to help people experience peace with God, peace with others, and peace



within, no matter what chaos and confusion surround. Sometimes, you being salty looks like doing good, and in doing good, the chaos and panic caused by evil are eliminated. Other times, your very presence acts like a preservative preventing situational, relational, or emotional decay—you are literally a peacemaker through presence. You can also seek peace by pursuing and securing agreement, offering or fostering forgiveness that leads to restoration, or simply celebrating truth in a situation, which always leads to greater peace. Salty people pursue peace wherever God puts them.

Whoever wants to embrace life and see the day fill up with good, here's what you do: say nothing evil or hurtful; snub evil and cultivate good; run after peace for all you're worth. God looks on all this with approval, listening and responding well to what he's asked; but he turns his back on those who do evil things.<sup>11</sup>

God says: "Overflow peace in the power of the Holy Spirit." You preserve good. You protect peace. Salt is not just savory. It saves.

***You make sacrifices in order to please God.***

In Jesus' culture, people would certainly have thought of seasoning and preserving, but a few who heard themselves being compared to salt might have remembered a scriptural connection—thinking about Moses, about worship, about their covenant relationship, and about the right way to offer sacrifices pleasing to God.

Season every presentation of your Grain-Offering with salt. Don't leave the salt of the covenant with your God out of your Grain-Offerings. Present all your offerings with salt.<sup>12</sup>

Abijah took a prominent position on Mount Zemaraim in the hill country of Ephraim and gave this speech: “Listen, Jeroboam and all Israel! Don’t you realize that GOD, the one and only God of Israel, established David and his sons as the permanent rulers of Israel, ratified by a ‘covenant of salt’—GOD’s kingdom ruled by GOD’s king?”<sup>13</sup>

Salt has a long history of reflecting a binding agreement between two parties, and when applied to agreements between God and man, it carries specific meaning. Thus King Abijah of Judah in the passage above flexes this awareness and refers to the strong, legally binding promise of God to give Israel to David and his sons forever. How? By referring to the salt covenant between God and his people.

Many who heard Jesus refer to his followers as “salt” could easily connect that illustration directly to their relationship with God and what it meant for them. Most immediately, it meant the keeping of promises—promises made by God to his people and promises made by his people to him. The covenant of salt included loyalty, honesty, and a lasting relationship. In biblical times, all Jewish listeners understood that the covenant of salt meant that they would keep their word at all costs. Fast-forward to Middle Eastern people groups today, and you will still hear the phrase: “There is salt between us,” meaning the two parties are keeping the commitment made to each other. The public claim of identity in God only had integrity if there was public commitment and conduct to back it up. In fact, this concept of keeping your word in your relationship with God (and being willing to sacrifice for it) can be seen in an actual “come to Jesus” moment in the Gospels. A frustrated Jesus exclaims to his so-called followers:

Why do you call me, “Lord, Lord,” and do not do what I say?<sup>14</sup>

Ouch! The personal claim of connection is meaningless to Jesus without visible conduct that reflects the relationship—a relationship not only in name but also in daily commitment, daily obedience, and sealed through daily *sacrifice* in light of one’s commitment. The “salt” of public sacrifice for the sake of relationship is Jesus’ own example, is the core identity of the believer, and is at the center of our motivation to keep our commitment to Jesus publicly at any cost.

God says: “Overflow your sacrificial love for me in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

We ask: “Why do you want that, Father?”

God says: “Because there is salt between us.”

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.<sup>15</sup>

I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not “mine,” but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that.<sup>16</sup>

He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.<sup>17</sup>

His example. Our identity. Our energy overflowing in sacrificial commitment.

The salt of our covenant is sacrifice, and it shows.

***You judge evil and confront injustice.***

This may surprise you, but there are more references to salt being used in judgment than for any other purpose.

- Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt.<sup>18</sup>
- Moses warned the Israelites that the consequence of breaking covenant with God—forgetting they were his people and instead worshiping other gods—would be their land becoming “a fire-blackened wasteland of brimstone and salt flats.”<sup>19</sup>
- Gideon's son Abimelech razed a city of rebels by “[sowing] it with salt.”<sup>20</sup>

When Jesus compared his followers to salt, I imagine there were more than a few who took a deep breath because, in his time and culture, salt was used to express judgment upon evil.

As we have learned, all Spirit-empowered believers are living out a personal story in the shared place of God's super-story called the Kingdom of God. In that Kingdom—his supernatural universe—an epic battle between good and evil is being waged. When you think about being “salt” that judges evil and confronts injustice, it makes perfect sense from God's perspective. He scatters his “salty ones” into billions of spaces every day, all over the world, as a way of judging evil; destroying wickedness; diluting lust, greed, and murder; and preventing injustice from taking root. We are his boots on the ground against evil, which exists and advances right alongside good and God. God's “salt of the earth” need to be mindful that they serve a God and King who feels

strongly about very specific things and is proactive in advancing what he is for while thwarting, judging, and ultimately, destroying what he is against.

The LORD loves righteousness and justice.<sup>21</sup>

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.<sup>22</sup>

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.<sup>23</sup>

He loves “righteousness and justice.” He is against “those who do evil.” And he has a new community called the church that is an evil-defeating machine.

The very existence of Christ followers who comprise the church is the supernatural and living expression of God’s position on earth against all evil, all unrighteousness, and all injustice. He is actively judging and confronting evil now, deputizing us with his power and authority to confront, overpower, and overcome evil as we encounter it in the contexts of our lives and the culture we live in. The ones who are taught to pray, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”<sup>24</sup> are also the ones who are filled with the Spirit of God to destroy all enemies aligned against God within and without. Just like Jesus.

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.<sup>25</sup>

Did you catch that? The reason Jesus came to earth? To destroy what the devil is doing. We ask: "What the devil is going on?" and mean it—literally. We are the salt that confronts evil. Christ's own mission on earth is the best indicator of what ours should be. But before we run to battle, he advises running to the mirror.

Jesus' strongest and most graphic exhortation of judgment suggests that we begin our campaign against the sin and evil residing in our own lives and in the house of God.

If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where "the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched." Everyone will be salted with fire.

Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again?<sup>26</sup>

We are the "salt of the earth"<sup>27</sup>—the ones who confront evil, *beginning with ourselves*.

- "Salt"—the agent of judgment and testing—recognizes sin. Note the language of "If your hand causes you to stumble . . . if your foot causes you to stumble . . . if your eye causes

you to stumble.” Jesus assumed we know our own patterns of weakness and ritual failure and commanded his followers (hyperbolically) to take drastic measures in eliminating them from their lives. This isn’t nickel poker. The stakes are much higher.

- “Salting”—the action of judgment—amputates sin. Amputation in Jesus’ day did not involve an anesthesiologist. It was painful. It was thorough. It was worthwhile, because it meant that the threat of infection was eliminated. The pain of self-confrontation is worth the prize of present power and eternal life.
- “Saltiness”—the active power of the salty ones to influence—is destroyed when sin is not confronted in a believer.

Salt is stable. Salt lasts. Salt has many uses. Salt is everywhere. *But* salt can be rendered useless.

### **The Big *But***

*But.* It’s a small word that carries a lot of power. When we use the word *but*, people brace themselves for what comes next, or they might even make a face. We may not want hear what follows it, but we have to pay attention if we want a complete picture. We have to listen to resolve our feelings and prepare to act in response to what the *whole truth* is. When Jesus uses the word *but* as he talks about our identity and calling to be salt, it is only reasonable to lean in and pay super close attention.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.<sup>28</sup>

Salt has a kryptonite—a neutralizer that renders something formerly powerful *powerless* to advance God’s agenda in the world.

Salt in Jesus’ day was derived from salt marshes, and it contained impurities that had to be “leached,” or filtered out. This was possible because pure salt was more soluble than the impurities and could be separated. This process would leave a residue so diluted and impure it was of little practical worth. Things that are “thrown out” or “trampled underfoot” are things that have no practical value. So was Jesus saying that the “salt of the earth,” which is so valuable in the Kingdom of God, could, through a process of impurity, become worthless and useless?

Yes. Here’s how.

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.<sup>29</sup>

Jesus told his men they were chosen “out of the world”—the polluting factor. His point? Worldliness and godliness are at odds. We can be salt that remains salty and useful, or we can be a diluted residue worth nothing. We can be pure, or we can be polluted. We can allow God’s Spirit and Word to wash and leach out the world’s ways from our spirits, or we can blend the world’s ways with God’s ways at our own peril. It is an everyday choice to have spiritual boundaries to preserve our saltiness.

Make no mistake: God’s intention is for every believer to have a positive Kingdom effect, but he does not shield us from potential pollution of our commitment. He didn’t shield Jesus in the wilderness encounter, where Satan, appealing to Jesus’ flesh, offered him bread and tempted him to break his fast. Satan



has not changed. The battle has not changed. The offer has not changed. The path to victory and staying pure before God has not changed either.

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.”

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”<sup>30</sup>

Full of the Holy Spirit. Led by the Spirit. Speaking words of the Spirit. The result?

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.<sup>31</sup>

Jesus did not let worldliness pollute his godliness. Two more times the devil came to Jesus to solicit compromise and pollute his commitment. Two more offers to be worldly that matched the moment. But the same Holy Spirit’s filling and leading led to the same plunging of God’s Word into the heart of each suggestion. The devil left him. The Son of God showed all future sons of God who are commissioned to be the salt of God how to stay salty (uncompromised) and remain unpolluted (pure). What Jesus models for us is meant for us.

Saltiness is keeping all your Holy Spirit capacity to influence. Saltiness requires being full of and led by the Holy Spirit every day. Saltiness requires speaking words of the Spirit as a way of life.

God says: “Stay filled. Stay close. Stay ready to speak truth.  
Stay pure.”  
Stay salty.

### **Holy Spirit,**

*I want to be used by you in the mix of my life. I declare in Jesus' name the fulfillment of your purposes in me and through me in the spaces where you have placed me. You are my helper and my guide. You make me salty. Show me where and how I can make things better for your glory. Use me to bring life where there is no life in you. Use me to draw out blessings that are present but unseen. Use me to provide a holy and healthy contrast to the world.*

*Holy Spirit, overflow your radical and mysterious grace through me and give me courage to express it. Overflow your peace through me as you lead me to do good and protect peace. Overflow your authority through me and help me to recognize and confront evil agendas, defeating them with the spiritual weapons of your presence in me, your power through me, and your Word coming out of me. Fill me. Lead me. Let your Word come to mind so I may meet the tempter's suggestions head-on and thwart his plans.*

*Holy Spirit, keep me free of worldliness and from blending culture's ways with your ways. I ask that you keep sprinkling me into whatever situations and places you need me to serve the Kingdom. Keep me salty today and every day until I am with you forever. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*