

## Equipped to overflow with good things

The first time I saw a chocolate fountain was in Whitby, Yorkshire. It was on display in the window of a shop that specialized in hand-made sweets and drew many “oohs” and “aahs” from people passing by. I stood for a few minutes watching the liquid chocolate cascade down the fountain over and over again and thought how nice it would be if I could dip my finger in the overflow... I knew the chocolate fountain wasn't malfunctioning - it was designed so that the chocolate would overflow. Know something? We are designed to overflow as well. Not with chocolate, but with many other good things. Here are some ways we can overflow.

**Overflow with praise.** A verse in one of the Psalms says, *“May my lips overflow with praise, for you teach me your decrees.”*<sup>1</sup> When was the last time your lips overflowed with praise to God? So often, we're more likely to allow grumbling, complaining or criticizing to come out of our mouths and, at such times, praise is the last thing on our mind, far less on our lips. Why not begin praying the psalmist's prayer above and then make a deliberate choice to be extravagant in your praise? It's a great antidote to a discontented spirit!

**Overflow with hope.** Could you, or someone you know, use a little hope right now? How about personalizing this verse by inserting your/their name in the blanks? *“May the God of hope fill \_\_\_\_\_ with all joy and peace as \_\_\_\_\_ trust in him, so that \_\_\_\_\_ may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*<sup>2</sup> Before we can overflow with hope, we need to place our trust in the God of hope. Have you done this yet? Are you doing this now - even in difficult circumstances?

**Overflow with joy.** Are you a joyful person? Sometimes we confuse joy and happiness. Happiness is generally dependent on our circumstances, whereas joy is something we possess, regardless of what's going on around us. The problem is that we don't always choose to be joyful. In Philippians 1:26, the apostle Paul commends the church at Philippi for overflowing with joy. How would you like to have so much joy that you couldn't contain it and it spilled out to other people? As followers of Jesus Christ, joy is ours as a fruit of His Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Let's allow the Spirit to control our lives to such an extent that this fruit grows to maturity.

**Overflow with thankfulness.** Know what one of my pet hates is? People who don't say *“thank you”*! Whether it's something simple like holding a door open for them or going out of your way to help them, the absence of appreciation can sometimes leave me shaking my head in disbelief. But, wait a bit... Do I regularly show thankfulness to others and to God? Do I counter negative feelings by counting my blessings and being thankful? In Paul's letter to the Colossians, he encourages his readers to overflow with thankfulness.<sup>4</sup> This is something we can all do. As with many things, it's a matter of making a deliberate choice. How about choosing to overflow with thankfulness?

**Overflow with love.** Some people are easy to love. Others aren't. I believe God knows it can be difficult for us to love certain people and He's prepared to help us out here. *“May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else...”*<sup>5</sup> Have you ever asked Him to make your love increase and overflow for an unlovable member of your church? What about people outside the church whom you're having difficulty loving? When God increases our love for others, I believe the world will sit up and take notice. They will know we are Christ-followers by our love.<sup>6</sup>

Why not make a conscious decision to begin overflowing with praise, hope, joy, thankfulness and love? It's unlikely they'll all happen immediately, but you can make a deliberate choice to concentrate on one of them to start with. See what a difference this will make to your everyday life. It might even mark the beginning of a lifetime habit of overflowing with good things!

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 119:171 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Romans 15:13 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 5:22

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 2:7

<sup>5</sup> 1 Thessalonians 3:12 (NIV)

<sup>6</sup> John 13:35