

» RECKLESS « DEVOTION

365 DAYS
INTO THE HEART OF RADICAL LOVE



HEIDI AND ROLLAND
BAKER



Chosen

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Jars of Clay

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

2 Corinthians 4:7

Simple jars of clay are formed in the dust and the dirt and used in the business of life. They aren't beautiful; they don't stand out as unusual on the outside; it's what they hold inside that is of real value.

In spiritual terms, we are these little jars of clay. All I really am is a little person, sitting in the dirt, just loving my Lord Jesus with reckless devotion. On the outside, I am small and unremarkable, with not much to show for myself. But on the inside, it's a whole other story.

I'm made to carry the *all-surpassing power* of the One whom I love so deeply, and the good news is, so are you.

The treasure that fills me, making my heart overflow into the world around me, comes from God and not from me. I am nothing; He is everything. He made us to be receptacles for His glory, His love, His compassion, His grace and His mercy. All He wants is a place to inhabit.

"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). When God fills us with His Holy Spirit, we are filled with love. He desires to pour Himself out through our lives, our *jars of clay*, into His world, which aches for Him. His all-surpassing power is given to us, not so we can hoard it for ourselves, storing it in a darkened room somewhere, from which it trickles out in small quantities. It is given to us to be splashed out in the light, for the joy of all people everywhere.

We can't love God's way without being filled with Him. If we try it on our own, we end up exhausted and burned out. I've done it; it doesn't work. Only when we let His love pour into us and let it spill out from deep within us will His Kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Reshaped Vessels

Then the word of the LORD came to me. He said, "Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand."

Jeremiah 18:5–6

God wants to reshape us into vessels that will hold more of His glory. He wants us to understand how different life can be when we are filled and poured out again and again.

For 26 years, we were missionaries, doing our best to serve the people around us. We thought we were doing it right. As we labored and worked and toiled for the Lord, getting more and more burned out, we honestly thought that was how it would always be. Looking back now, I now know we were bound to a false belief system that said, "If I'm working for God, I have to be cracked and dry, pushed to the edge and always miserable." It's a lie, but it's how we lived for years.

That was, until God broke in, pouring His sweet Holy Spirit into us. He reshaped us on His potter's wheel, lovingly reworking us so our hearts overflowed with life and energy and love and power. We understood for the first time how the love of the Lord completely transforms a life so that it becomes like His own. We began to see miracles and signs and wonders, and our love and compassion increased. It was as though someone had switched on a huge light, and we would never be in the dark again.

Now we are compelled to love those we serve through a love for God that never runs dry. Why? It is His Holy Spirit who fills our jars of clay, and all we do comes from Him. We know the love of God lives in us, not because we deserve it, not because we are better than anyone else, but because of His beautiful Holy Spirit. As we have let Him reshape us—moving away from thinking it's all about us to letting it be all about Him—His presence in and around us has multiplied.

Our cry is now, "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30).

Filled with Possibility

For nothing will be impossible with God.

Luke 1:37 NASB

Jesus loves us so much that He will never keep us small. In Him, absolutely nothing is impossible: There are no limits.

Luke 1:37 is part of the angel's announcement to Mary that her old cousin, Elizabeth, who was well past her childbearing days, was six months pregnant with a boy who would become John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin. If that wasn't enough, Mary also had to come to terms with the declaration that she was about to conceive by the Holy Spirit and would give birth nine months later to the Son of God.

That's some news.

God doesn't have a problem with making possible what we think is impossible. He loves to shake us up, out of our small-minded thinking, and free us from doubts about this thing or that thing. He loves to blast through our assumption that, somehow, if it can't be done in earthly terms, it can't be done at all.

Remember, He loves to reshape us. He speaks truth where we've believed lies.

You think He can't change you? He can.

You think you have gone too far down to be rescued? You haven't.

You think you're too old now? You're not.

You think you have to wait until you're older? You don't.

Nothing is impossible with Him. It's His love that changes everything.

Here's some news for you: Without Him, you'll never be good enough. I'll never be good enough. We are nothing without our God. He takes our little lives, laid down at His feet in the dirt, and He wrecks us with His love. When we see Him in all His beauty and let Him reshape us and fill us with His Holy Spirit, we no longer look at our failures and faults, because our eyes are drawn to see only Him.

Unless He fills me, everything is impossible.

When He fills me, nothing is impossible.

Good Purpose

For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Philippians 2:13

Wherever He went, Jesus fulfilled the *good purpose* of His Father. The gospels are packed with miracles and signs and wonders that show what happens when love breaks in and changes everything.

In Gethsemane, when Jesus prayed, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42), He was giving God permission to work in Him to *fulfill His good purpose*. It took Him to the cross, into death and out again into glorious resurrection power. Now nothing can separate us from God’s love (see Romans 8:38–39).

I have so many stories I could tell you. Miracles I have seen that have blown me away. Beautiful face-to-face encounters between God and His loved ones. I have watched in wonder as the Holy Spirit unblocked deaf ears and opened blind eyes. I have seen the lame walk again and watched food miraculously appear to feed the hungry crowds all around us.

He is so wonderful.

I never want to get in the way of God’s glory. I never want to take my eyes off Him—not for one second. He is the one with *good purpose*. It’s all about His love, and all I do is tuck myself under His wings, nestling in as close as I can and offering my life as a jar of clay to be filled.

It’s a privilege and a joy to say yes to God and invite Him to come and work in me to *fulfill His good purpose*. Why does He use me? Is it because I have degrees and can speak different languages? No. All God wants is my laid-down love, my reckless devotion. He wants me to sacrifice my own pride and fall completely in love with Him.

He is asking the same from you. Is it time to reorder your priorities?

“What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:8).

Undone

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.

Philippians 1:9

I'm sure people sometimes think, *I wish Heidi would get a grip*. Why does she cry so much? What's with the laughing? Can't she just calm down?

When I am talking to a room full of Christians who are more familiar with the typical preaching style—leaning on a lectern and delivering a three-point sermon—I know I'm difficult to understand. A lot of churches prefer to have the preacher stand up, not lie on the floor. I know it can be irritating for some, and I used to apologize for doing it.

But I don't anymore.

Because I really don't want to get a grip. I want to *contend to be undone*. If I didn't, I wouldn't be able to handle my schedule or the demands on my time. I don't want to conform to any expectation of me as a preacher that distracts me from being totally united with Christ. If that means lying on the floor, I'll lie on the floor.

What does it mean to *contend to be undone*?

When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians, his prayer was that their love would increase. Read the verse above. It is not just a theological statement; it's a heart cry. Paul longed for the believers in Philippi to fall deeper and deeper in love with the Lord so that they would know an increase in knowledge and depth of insight.

Let's ask ourselves, have we given ourselves so completely to Christ that we can say we are abounding in love? Do we love Him with reckless devotion? Are we growing into more and more understanding of Him?

Do we need to go lower?

Is it time to risk the judgment of others in the pursuit of His beautiful face?

Are you ready to fall on your knees, your face, and contend to be undone? You can do that right now. He's waiting for you.

Going Where He Goes

But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.”

Ruth 1:16

When Naomi was left destitute after the deaths of her husband and two sons, she told her two daughters-in-law to go back to their own country so they could each find another husband. One went back, but the other, Ruth, clung to Naomi, determined to remain at her side. This devotion positioned Ruth into the genealogy of Jesus. How’s that for a destiny?

At times, it’s easier to go for the safe option. We may feel insecure stepping out into unfamiliar places, and we may be tempted to keep our Christian faith as it always has been—not really rocking the boat and living on yesterday’s manna. Have you ever felt like that?

But there is so much *more*.

When you tell the Lord you will go with Him wherever He goes, He takes you at your word. When you devote your life to the pursuit of His presence at the cost of everything else, even family and friends, He will lead you into an adventure beyond your wildest imaginings. When you go where He goes, you position yourself in the line of glory.

I would never go back to being safe, not for one second. I know not everyone will do what we do, but my question to you is this: Will you give yourself wholeheartedly in devotion to the one who is love? Will you let the fragrance of the Holy Spirit so fill you that you deposit Him everywhere you go—even at the gas station and the hotel check-out desk and the baseball game? Will you choose to live your life to honor and glorify the King of kings? Will you lay down your life as an offering to the one who laid down His life for you?

“He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:7).

Come Closer

- » Are you ready to be filled with more of His love?
- » Have you been aching, deep in your heart, for an adventure with Jesus?
- » Are you tired of doing the same thing?
- » Have you been asking yourself, *Is this all there is?*

Right now, the Holy Spirit wants to lead you into a fresh encounter with the love of God.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked to the multitude about many things related to our relationships with God and other people. About our relationship with God, He said, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8).

He is calling us to *trust Him* that when we ask for what we want, we will have it.

Sometimes we fear that if we ask God for more, we won’t get it. Maybe we think we aren’t good enough or don’t deserve it. These words of Jesus say the exact opposite. They invite us to approach Him with courage and faith.

God will never say, “Go away.” He will always say, “Come closer.”

Will you pray with me?

Lord, I am coming closer to You. I know You accept me for who I am, and I know You know all about me. I am tired of the old religion that keeps me bound to rules and regulations and the fear of judgment from others. I am a simple jar of clay, empty but waiting to be filled now with Your Holy Spirit. I ask You to pour Yourself into me. I am ready to be undone. Thank You, Lord. Amen.

Lower Still

I have found that, just when I think I have surrendered my all to the Lord, He gently, graciously, uncovers a new layer of resistance in me that even I didn't know was there. For a few years now, I have preached a message I call "Lower Still." This sums up the process of Jesus tenderly shaping, patiently reshaping, and then gloriously filling our lives with Himself. Do we think we have humbled ourselves and surrendered everything to Him? We can still go *lower*; there is still more for us to give up.

Surrendering everything to Jesus sounds risky, as though it could be painful, difficult, demanding. Many ask, "If I completely surrender to Him, with reckless devotion, will I still be *me*?"

Here is what I have found to be true. Yes, it's risky, but the reward vastly outweighs the risk. Yes, it can be painful, difficult and demanding, but the joy and all-surpassing peace that Jesus gives can hardly be compared to such fleeting inconveniences.

Most of all, Jesus doesn't rob you of being *you*. You don't somehow become less than yourself because Jesus' presence is larger in you. It's just the opposite; the more you surrender to Him, the more you become who Father always intended you to be.

This is all part of God's upside economy, which defies the narrow-minded, one-dimensional, limited wisdom of human thinking. In choosing to become nothing, we become everything we were ever meant to be.

As always, Jesus is our model. He made Himself as nothing so His Father might be fully glorified through Him. In Philippians, Paul urges us to imitate Jesus' humility:

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:1–4

As we do this, we'll not only find our purpose in Jesus' Kingdom; we'll also truly find ourselves.

Beholding and Becoming

Implicit in Paul's encouragement in Philippians 2 is a question: *Have you so surrendered your life to Him that you are united with Christ?* He spells out just two of the countless benefits of being united with Jesus: the comfort of His love and His tenderness and compassion. Then he urges us to express those same attributes of Christ to others—to allow what we have been filled with to spill out everywhere and touch the lives of others, to consider the interests of others above our own.

It's reasonable to expect that if we are united with Christ, then we will be Christlike. Sometimes we fail to be as Christlike as we think we should be, and this disappoints us. We get discouraged; we fail to see how we are becoming more like Jesus. Why is this? Does it mean we're not really Christians? No.

Our disappointment with ourselves is really based on faulty theology. We are disappointed when our expectations for ourselves are not met. We are discouraged when we think we haven't met God's expectations for us. But this is *performance-based* thinking. At its root lies the belief that we have to earn our way into Father's favor by the things we do. We don't. God's gift to us is all grace, freely given. We can't earn it; we can't work for it.

As I write, I know you know this. But we so easily fall into the trap of performance. Subtly, we slip back into the old habits of self-effort and self-reliance.

Rather than being purpose-driven, I prefer to be presence-centered. All our efforts in God's Kingdom must originate from the place of rest, the place of His presence. They must flow from the realization that even if we did nothing but sit in a cave and pray for the rest of our lives, He would love us no less than He does now.

Graham Cooke calls this process "beholding and becoming."¹ The more time we spend in God's presence, simply beholding His beauty, the more Christlike we will become and the more we will be motivated to "spill out" all He is pouring into us.

1. Graham Cooke, *Beholding and Becoming* (Vancouver, Wa.: Brilliant Book House, 2004).

Inside Out

In humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3–4

Something interesting happens when we begin to place a greater value on the needs of others than on our own. Something supernatural. As we give out to others, Father God fills us with more. As we invest ourselves in meeting the needs of others, Father God meets our needs. As we reach out and touch someone with love, Father God touches us afresh with His love. It creates a virtuous circle.

In Romans 15, Paul prays, “I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13 NLT).

I have found that when I focus on me and my needs, my inner spiritual life begins to shrink. When I look outward, becoming focused on the needs of others, it begins to grow. Healing happens. Peace increases. Hope overflows. As we look away from ourselves, the inside-out process of transformation into greater Christlikeness is accelerated.

We may feel far from complete in our spiritual maturity, but when we dare to express the love of God to others, regardless of ourselves, miracles can happen. God takes our sacrifice and multiplies it. He takes the little we can offer and makes it into something extraordinary. And in the doing, He shapes us to be a little more like Jesus.

Paul says the outflow of the Spirit in our lives will result in “tenderness and compassion.” Do we allow that tenderness and compassion to be expressed to others, no matter where we are? Are we tender to others at Walmart? Are we compassionate at the local diner? Does the fragrance of Christ flow from us when we stop to get gas?

As we cooperate with the Holy Spirit inside us, we will notice His influence flowing out of us into the ordinary situations of life. His love is expressed in the routine, unremarkable moments—not just on special occasions. And as we share His love with others, day by day, we are healed, changed, transformed, grown.