Discover the blessings that God has for you ... and what He wants you to do with them.

Berni Dymet

Life Application Booklet
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CHAPTER 1

A New Understanding of Blessing

God’s blessing is a wonderful thing. And yet, in this world in which we live, God’s blessing is also one of the most misunderstood, misinterpreted aspects of who God is. Why? Because frankly, you and I, we’re prone to seeing it from a selfish rather than a selfless perspective.

Come on, let’s be honest! When we hear someone talking about God’s blessing, it’s easy to think, “Oh, you beauty!” and begin to unroll our shopping list before God. It’s a somewhat natural, human response.

But if we truly want to experience God’s blessing, then we need to understand how He works and how it works.

And that’s what this booklet “Blessed to be a Blessing” is all about – setting the record straight, helping you to enter into the mighty, life-changing blessings of God on His terms, rather than your own.

Why is this “correction” needed? Because
the world around us encourages us to have a crazy, mixed up view of what blessing actually is. Just have a look around at the advertising on television and the billboards; everything is screaming at us, “If you buy me, you’ll be happy. If you buy me, that emptiness you feel inside will be gone.” Sure, it can be fun to buy things and to have things (at least for a short while) but the things of this world will never, ever fill that inner void that we all experience. They will never satisfy the deepest yearnings of our hearts, because they’re simply not capable of doing that.

The advertising industry keeps on chanting its mantra, “Buy me and you’ll be happy,” knowing full well that if whatever it is that they happen to be peddling today were ever to make us contented and happy, if it were ever to fill that deep inner void, we wouldn’t buy it anymore and they’d go broke. And so our whole economic system is based on “consumer spending”; on people buying stuff that they don’t need and won’t make them happy.

Fortunately, God doesn’t bless the way the world does. (Hallelujah!)

God’s blessing is something entirely different. It fills, it lasts and most importantly, it overflows.

Of course our natural tendency, when we think about God’s blessing, is to say, “Wow, things are going to get better for me. After all, blessing is divine favour. Now, what do I want? A new job, a promotion? … that would be awesome; a husband or a wife, or a better husband or wife? … yes please! I know! … that shiny new car I saw in the glossy
weekend magazine last Saturday – that’s what I want! Oh, and a five-star holiday. Wow, I’d like to fly business class for once. And I also want enough money to pay my credit card off.”

We all have our shopping lists, don’t we?

You can see the danger. As we begin to think about God blessing us, we impose the advertising industry’s tawdry perspective on the wonder of His blessing and in so doing, reduce it to some narrow, materialistic, sugar daddy level. It’s so easy to do the me, me, me thing.

So let’s put God’s blessing into the right perspective. Looking His disciples straight in the eye, Jesus said this:

Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil because of me. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy because great is your reward in heaven for that is how their fathers treated the Prophets.

But woe to you who are rich for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you for that is how their fathers treated the false Prophets. (Luke 6:20-26)

Seriously? How is it possible that those who are suffering are the ones who are blessed, whilst
those who are happy and comfortable are going to be cursed?

I don’t think that any of us, when thinking about God’s blessing, would come to such a conclusion!

You might be thinking at this point that what Jesus needed back then was a good public relations consultant to put a better spin on this, to make it more palatable. But actually it gets worse:

*But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.* (Luke 6:27-29)

Invariably, the wisdom of God turns the “wisdom” of the world on its head. Invariably, the truth is diametrically opposed to natural human wants and desires.

In a nutshell, He’s saying, “Blessed are those who are suffering today, for great will be your joy and reward in heaven. And for those of you who are living comfortably at the expense of the ones who are suffering, watch out!”

Speaking as someone who came to Christ amidst great suffering, I can tell you though, when I first read that, it wasn’t just good news, it was great news – because blessing isn’t about
grabbing onto whatever it is that we can grab onto in this world and taking it for ourselves. That’s not blessing at all, according to Jesus.

No, according to Him, blessing is about two things:

1. Firstly, knowing that when you’re suffering, the blessing is on its way. If you’re hungry, you will be filled. If you’re weeping, one day there will be laughter for you. In other words, God’s blessing is based on the certain hope that in Christ, you have a much, much … much better future, a much, much … much better eternity coming your way.

2. And secondly, blessing comes from what you give away rather than from what you receive. It comes when you turn the other cheek. It comes when you give without the expectation of receiving something in return.

And that too is something that I can attest to. Before becoming a Christian, I was always trying to fill myself with the trinkets of the world. I worked hard, spent hard and tried hard to be happy. But whilst some of those things – the big house, the flash new car – satisfied for a while, they could never ever fill that gaping void in my inner being that longed for … well, something. Something more … something that on the one hand I knew I didn’t have, but on the other, I had not a clue where to find it.

And bringing it all together, putting the blessing of God into a godly perspective, just a few verses later, Jesus says this:
Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap, for with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (Luke 6:38)

Blessing has to do with giving and in fact, it’s a promise of Jesus. This is how God works. Take the blessings that you already have, take what God has already given you and give it away. And with the measure that you give, God will give back to you.

Here’s blessing in action. Blessing involves sacrifice and what Jesus is saying here is that it’s not about living life as a big party here and now. No, no, no! It’s about giving away your blessings to other people sacrificially, at times and in circumstances that don’t suit (If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them …) and God will bless you back.

Back when I came to Christ I was reasonably wealthy – not mega rich, mind you, but by any global standard you’d have to say I was well off; a pretty flash house, a very nice car, a solid well-paying job and good income earning capacity as a consultant in the IT Industry.

But I wasn’t comfortable at that stage in giving my money away. I just didn’t do that. I wanted to hang on to it. I wanted to grow my wealth and get wealthier and wealthier and have a bigger house and a flashier car. And yet God, in His great wisdom, pulled the rug out from under my
feet. I went through a devastating time of loss of everything that I held dear. Everything!

There was this time when I didn’t even have enough money to buy food for the coming week.

As I began to read the Bible, as I was blessed by a wonderful pastor who taught me the things that we’re chatting about now, little by little I began to realise that the wealth that I’d always clung onto had, in point of fact, failed me. And the truth is that whatever I’d had – all my money, all my skills, all my gifts – there wasn’t one of them that wasn’t given to me by my Father in heaven in the first place. Nothing!

So I laid them at His feet. I decided to radically give my life and all that I had to Jesus. I mean, this whole wealth thing hadn’t worked for me anyhow, so the thought of giving my life to God made sense to me.

Little by little through those hard times, through those difficult times, I learned to give radically; firstly of my finances, then of my gifts and abilities and the most precious commodity of all, my time. I left the lucrative consulting job that had been my security blanket and stepped out into a failing little ministry (as Christianityworks was at the time) without any idea how I would ever make ends meet.

But this is what I discovered; God’s abundant blessing in my life started chasing me down the street – not success or fame, career or wealth – not that at all. God met all my needs and He’s thrown in some extras that I didn’t expect
along the way too. But there’s something much, much, bigger than that – a deep and intimate and personal relationship with Jesus. As I sit down in the cool of the morning as I do most mornings and fellowship with God, I am so blessed. I would give up everything else just for that. For me, that puts the idea of God’s blessing into perspective; it puts life into balance.

The reason I share that with you is that it’s a living testimony to the truth of the apparently unpleasant things that Jesus had to say about blessing.

Those who are suffering are the ones who will experience God’s blessing. And through that, they’ll learn that blessing is much more about giving than it is about receiving.

Jesus said that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

I’m here to tell you that He is absolutely right! Absolutely.

And when we set out to understand the idea of God’s blessing from His perspective, when we look at this notion of “blessing” through the lens of His truth rather than the world’s lies that have been fed to us over a life time, it’s then and only then that we will find ourselves tapping into the rich vein of blessing that God wants to pour out on us.

Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap, for with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.
LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

When you think about God’s blessings, what thoughts naturally come to mind? What is your usual “shopping list” before God?

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QUESTION 2

Is that a good thing or not?
QUESTION 3

Re-read Luke 6:20-29. What is God the Holy Spirit speaking into the midst of your circumstances today about God’s blessing?

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QUESTION 4

In your heart of hearts, are you ready to start thinking about God’s blessings in a different way?

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QUESTION 5

To whom could you be a sacrificial blessing right now?

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QUESTION 6

Now take another look at Luke 6:38. What do you hear God saying to you about His blessing in your life, going forward?

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CHAPTER 2

When the Rubber Hits the Road

It’s easy for someone to say, “You should be a blessing to other people.” Hey, it’s easy for Jesus, for the Bible, to say that. It’s a great theory, isn’t it?

But what if you’re too busy, or you just don’t have anything to bless other people with?

Really – then what?!

Because this is real life. There are times when we’re too busy. There are times when we feel as though we don’t have enough for ourselves, let alone for blessing other people.

As we saw in the last chapter, when we talk about God’s blessing, what we discover is that it’s a two-sided transaction. Jesus made it really clear that when God blesses us, the whole point is that we’re meant to be a blessing to other people.

In short, we are blessed to be a blessing.

People sometimes ask me, “Berni, what does that mean? I mean, let’s get practical here, what
does it mean for me to be a blessing to someone else?” That’s a good question.

I don’t know what sort of life you lead. Some people lead extremely busy lives and other people lead quiet, even lonely lives … and then there’s everything in between. Wherever you are on that spectrum, the notion of being a blessing to other people can seem … well, kind of impossible. How could that ever be?

God is a God of blessing. You can see that right at the beginning; Genesis, Chapter 1 – the story of the whole of creation. God created it all, and in His final act in the creation story, the last thing that He did before He rested, was that He gave it all to you and me:

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:28-31)
So we are co-owners, joint owners, in creation because God said, “Here it is, it’s all yours, I bless you with it.”

And then, just a chapter or two later in that book of Genesis, we see Adam and Eve squander it all. God had given them the whole garden and the incredible blessings that went along with that. They had a wondrous relationship with Him, but then they do the one thing that God tells them not to do. They turn their backs on God. And as a result, they usher suffering into the world.

The rejection of God, theirs and indeed ours, has consequences. But still God has a heart to bless us.

In the previous chapter, we learned that from where Jesus sits, we are blessed even when we feel that we’re not. And the whole idea of being blessed is that we should pass the blessing on, give the blessing away, even when the circumstances (if someone slaps you on the cheek) are screaming at us that this is a crazy idea.

It’s a radical departure from our notion of what blessing should be.

According to Jesus, being blessed and blessing other people are two sides of the one coin. So if you really want to live out God’s blessing … sure, go to God and ask Him for His blessing and say, “Lord, bless me.” Then let that blessing pour out through you to other people around you.
The reality is that God’s blessing is far greater than we can ever contain or hold. And as someone said, I can’t hold much, but I can overflow a lot! When you’re close to God, when you’re living out a rich, dynamic, intimate, powerful relationship with Jesus, then the truth is that you have so much with which to bless other people.

The danger is though that we talk in concepts and theory and not in practical realities. What does all this mean in a real-life, practical sense? What does it look like, feel like, smell like, taste like?

Okay, so you accept that God is a God of blessing. Okay, so you accept that it’s a two-sided transaction, in from God and out through you, but how does all that work?

Can I share again how it has worked and continues to work in my life? For over a quarter of a century or so, I’ve been walking closely but let me say imperfectly, with Jesus. I make mistakes, just like you do. I have good days and bad days, and I’m hoping that where my life is now is much closer to God and looking much more like Jesus than it was, say, five years ago.

And so I’ve learned about God’s blessing in two main ways.

Firstly, through His Word the Bible – and I thank God I have had some really good teachers.

And secondly, by living out the Word of God in my life and experiencing the truth of which it speaks firsthand. What God talks about in the
Bible is actually how it happens and when Jesus promises something like:

_Give and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured to you._ (Luke 6:38)

... they’re not just idle words. These are the words of God. He means them, and so what I’m sharing with you today is just my experience of that truth. You may have a different experience and other people will have different experiences again, but when it comes to God’s blessing pouring out through us, I only know one way to share that with you and that’s from life itself.

The one thing that makes my world go around – everything else revolves around it – is the time that I spend with God each morning. And please, before anyone tells me that they’re too busy to spend time with God, if they’re that busy then I would suggest that they don’t have time *not* to spend with God.

What happens to me is that as I pray and read God’s Word, He speaks to me. Sometimes He gives me impressions, sometimes there’s a verse or two in the chapter that I happen to be reading that leaps out at me ... and I walk away from that half hour, or forty five minutes, or hour, with a peace and a calm delight that I simply can’t put into words.

For me, it happens early in the morning because I’m a morning person. Now, okay ...
everyone’s different. Some people aren’t morning people, so for them it may be late at night. For others, it’ll be on the train or on the bus to or from work … whatever. But when we carve out that time with Him, God shows up and honours that and delights us, and deals with the things in us that He wants to deal with. He puts His finger on the issues or the hurt or the sin that He needs to deal with and leads us gently and firmly forward. And the biggest part of the blessing of God in my life flows in through those times.

However you function, whatever works best for you, there has to be a quiet time with the Lord in your daily routine.

*In the morning, while it was still very dark,*  
*Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place,*  
*and there he prayed.* (Mark 1:35)

If it’s good enough for Jesus, if He thought it important to speak with His Heavenly Father every day, what makes us think that we don’t need to?

If you want to walk in the blessings of God, if you want to be filled with His blessing and overflow His blessing into the lives of those around you, then first, absolutely first and foremost, it’s about having a relationship with Jesus Christ.

So then, during the day as things happen, as difficult situations arise, when someone slaps you on the cheek or tries to take your coat from you (as they will – that’s life!), instead of cursing the
person, the Spirit of God ends up intervening in your heart. You end up blessing them instead of striking back. You end up praying for them instead of judging them.

And to be honest, that doesn’t happen unless you’re spending regular time alone with the Lord. That doesn’t happen unless you’re giving Him the opportunity to speak to you by His Spirit and His Word.

Every now and then I notice that God interrupts my schedule and tees up a divine appointment with someone who needs His blessing. And for reasons known only to Himself, He chooses me to deliver that blessing, even though sometimes I’m not even aware that it’s happening.

There was a man I was dealing with last year in Africa who didn’t believe in God. There was a tough negotiation to get our programs on that particular radio station. It just wasn’t a comfortable time at all. Well, I prayed my way through it and we did the deal (so that many more could hear about Jesus) and we moved on.

Well, at the end of last year I sent him an email just to say, “thank you”, and he sent me an email back praising God. He’d given his life to Christ! It was just the way the whole interaction happened and the way God overflowed His blessing through me. I had absolutely no idea, but Jesus did … and the programs that the man was putting on his station impacted on him and his family for all eternity.
I always feel like a bystander when that happens. God was up to something, the Holy Spirit was moving, even though I was clueless. And yet He worked through me anyway.

And this is what I believe that God is saying to us today:

\[\text{You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.} \text{ (Matthew 5:14,15)}\]

Fancy that! Most of us remember that Jesus said of Himself, “I am the light of the world.” Sure, we get that. But how many of us remember that to the ordinary mums and dads, farmers and shopkeepers, school teachers and public officials – a bunch of nobody’s really, in the scheme of things – He said, “You are the light of the world.”

You and I have no light to shine except for the one that He shines in our hearts. That’s why it’s so vitally important to draw away from the crowds and spend that quiet time with Him every day. These days, I find myself thanking Him each morning for the safe, soft, clean, dry bed I slept in last night (something that many on this earth don’t have), for the breath in my lungs, for the opportunity I have to share the light that shines in my heart with others.
These days a joy unspeakable fills my heart, borne out of a daily habit of spending time with Him and in His Word.

That’s the light! That’s what He shines out of imperfect people like thee and me. So can I encourage you today to take an inventory of all the blessings, the gifts, the skills, the money, the possessions, the time that God has given you? What blessings has God dropped in your lap that you can bless other people with?

We all have them. It doesn’t matter how “not blessed” we may feel. When we stop and think about it, we are each hugely blessed.

I was recently chatting with an elderly widow – a pensioner, a grandmother – a woman of humble means. She said, “What do I have? I don’t have anything to give!” So we talked a little while longer and it turns out that her children were grown up and they had families of their own. Her children were working so hard, they were so busy, that it was impacting on the grandchildren.

So I said, “What about just spending some time with your grandkids? You have so much time on your hands. Just go and bless your children by taking your grandkids off their hands for a few hours. It doesn’t have to be big but I have to tell you … your children who are now working hard and have a mortgage and they are struggling under the pressure – they would be so blessed if you just took the grandkids off their hands for a little while.”
I could see it on her face. The penny dropped. She thought she had nothing to give … and yet she had the time that her children didn’t have. She had love in her heart. A smile erupted across her face.

It’s not rocket science, is it?

Allow me to get right in your face. You and I have so many things that we can bless other people with, but here’s the rub. It’s not always convenient. We don’t always feel like it. The people who need blessing aren’t always nice people who we would naturally want to bless. Sometimes God calls us to bless the one who slapped us on the cheek!

But when we take the blessings that God has given through Jesus Christ and share them around in small practical ways, it magnifies the name of God. It speaks of His love into the life of another. The Spirit flows, no … He overflows from us into the life of another … and a life is blessed and transformed.

Oh, and yes, at the same time, you and I are blessed in ways that we could never have imagined. Just remember the words of Jesus:

*Give and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap. For with the measure that you use, it will be measured to you.* (Luke 6:38)
LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

So here’s a crazy idea. Take the next half an hour or so and write down on a blank piece of paper every blessing that you can possibly think of that God has given you. Go on, I dare you!

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QUESTION 2

Now look at the list. Think about it. Turn it over in your mind. What do you see? What do you feel?
QUESTION 3

In what areas of your life do you have an abundance – more than enough?

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QUESTION 4

Now think about the people in your life who desperately need the overflow of abundance that you have in your life.
QUESTION 5
Are they desirable? Is it convenient? Probably not. So pray about those opportunities to bless them through with the Lord. Seek His guidance. Jot down what He speaks to you.
QUESTION 6

Now ... go, shine the light! Jot down what happened as a reminder for the future.

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 Okay, so we’ve been journeying together through this thing that we call “the blessing of God” … and it all sounds fine in theory. Sure, God is a God of blessing.

But the question that may still be lingering at the back of your mind is this: *Does He want to bless me?*

… especially if you’re one of the people that Jesus was talking about when He said:

*Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil because of me. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy because great is your reward in heaven for that is how their fathers treated the Prophets.*

*But woe to you who are rich for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you*
who are well fed now for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you for that is how their fathers treated the false Prophets. (Luke 6:20-26)

It’s easy to talk about blessings when things are going well … but not when you’re the one who’s starving or weeping or being ill-treated and rejected. Believing that there’s a blessing around the corner is a difficult thing to do.

So it’s time for us to go a bit deeper, because with all my heart I know that God wants you to live the rest of your life in His blessing, so … let’s do it!!

The words God and blessing somehow just seem to go together naturally. And yet each one of us can look back on our lives and point to times of hurt, disappointment, sorrow and loneliness; times when it seemed that if there is a God who blesses … well, he must have deserted us, or at least that’s how it can feel.

If God is God, is He a God of immense blessing or is this just some unbalanced, so-called “prosperity-gospel” thinking that’s crept in? Those are the thoughts that can run through our minds when things aren’t going the way we’d planned or hoped.

So getting a real handle on what God’s up to in our lives, what His plans are, is kind of where the rubber of faith hits the road of life, would you agree?

I see a lot of misunderstanding about God and His heart and where He stands on blessing His
people. There seems to be two opposite extremes on this idea of God’s blessing.

At one end it goes something like this:

“God wants to bless me; therefore I should believe him for the next new Mercedes and the next million dollars and the next bigger and better house. God is my sugar daddy, it’s all about me, I am at centre stage, so I’ll name it and claim it”. And tragically, there are many Christians who are being taught and who believe precisely that!

The problem is that when you compare that sugar daddy view of God to Jesus hanging there on the cross – having given up everything for you and me, even the clothes on his back, beaten and brutalized – it just doesn’t stack up.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.” A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:28-30)

And it was against that backdrop of brutal crucifixion, that Jesus said,

If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. (Luke 9:23,24)
This sort of “God is a sugar daddy” end of the spectrum really jars with the cross, doesn’t it? It leads to some of the worst excesses amongst God’s people – the tele-evangelists pressuring people for money and flying around in private jets. Is that where this understanding of blessing should end up, do you think?

Now the other end of the spectrum says you have to be poor to serve God. Money is evil! We had someone ring up at midnight the other night and leave a message on the phone to say, “How dare you ask for support for your ministry. Money is evil; people who have money are evil.” I was talking to a man in India recently. And of course, India is a land of huge extremes; you have the very rich and you have many, many very poor people. And this Indian man was very critical of this particular Christian leader who just had a nice house in a nice suburb, nothing particularly excessive. He believed however that it was wrong.

But then you go to the Bible and read about Abraham, the man whom God chose to engage with first. Abraham was extremely rich. So was King Solomon, one of the wisest men that ever walked the earth.

I know a few people who are extremely rich. They have more than I could ever dream of having. I was sitting with one having coffee recently and I asked him what his plans were for the rest of his life.

His answer was that he planned to give everything that he had away before he died, if only God would be so gracious as to allow him to do that.
You can see the problem. At the one end you can have people getting these extreme prosperity views in their heads, thinking it’s all about them and their material wealth and it plays right into the hands of the world – me, me, me! The next plasma TV; the next big car; if you don’t have that then … well, obviously you don’t have enough faith.

On the other hand, there’s this perception that you have to be poor to be a Christian. Well, if that were the case, who would ever fund the work of the Lord on this planet?

And it’s not just about material wealth either, this whole idea of blessings. Some are blessed with a wonderful family. Others seemingly do everything right and lose a child to depression and youth suicide. Some people are born in safe parts of the world while others have to live through wars, droughts, floods, tsunamis, fires, hurricanes.

There doesn’t seem to be any rhyme or reason to God’s blessings amongst His people. I often will receive a letter or an email from a persecuted Christian who thanks us for making the Word of God available to them amidst terrible circumstances.

So what is God’s plan? Does He want to bless you or not? Is it okay for us to ask for His blessing or not? Is it okay to expect His blessing or is that just presumptuous? These are important questions because it’s where the rubber hits the road.
You get up in the morning and you maybe pray and you look forward to the day, but how do you pray? What do you give thanks for? What do you ask for? Is it okay to ask for God’s blessing in a difficult situation that’s going to happen at work this afternoon?

God, where are you in all of this? Where are you in my life?

That’s why we have this little booklet that I’ve called, “Blessed to be a Blessing”. I’m a simple kind of guy. I just open the Bible, I see what God’s saying on a particular subject and try to get it in balance. God’s Word empowers us, and the problem that I often see when people look at this subject of God’s blessing is that you can’t just read one verse and say “Oh, that’s it”, because that’s how you end up with one of those extreme positions that I was talking about earlier.

Is God a God who blesses and if so, what does “blessing” actually mean?

The main connotation of blessing is God’s unmerited divine favour – God intervening to make something better or to give you something that will bring joy or happiness. There’s financial blessing of course, there’s spiritual blessing, there’s physical blessing like healing … anything and everything; God’s divine favour, His blessing, becoming active in our lives.

The question is: is God in the blessing business in your life and mine?

When I see the word “bless” or “blesses” or “blessed” or “blessing” (358 times in the Bible) the
very first time it appears is in the first chapter of the Bible, Genesis Chapter 1. This is where God creates all of creation. He makes light out of darkness, and the heavens and the earth, and the oceans and the dry land, and the plants – and the first time He creates a living creature, this is what He says:

So God created the creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teams according to their kinds and every winged bird according to its kind and God saw that it was good.” Now look at this, “God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water and the seas and let the birds increase on the earth. (Genesis 1:21-22)

And the second time the concept of blessing happens in the Bible is just a few verses on in that same chapter:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female, he created them.

God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it and rule over the fish in the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

And then God said to them, “I give you every
seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They’ll be yours for food and to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground – everything that has breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food. And it was so. (Genesis 1:26-29)

Let me ask you something. Do you think God is in the blessing business? The whole creation thing, the whole idea of creation, is that God created this wondrous, wondrous universe and then he kind of comes along and makes you and me and he makes us part owners, joint owners in the whole of his creation. He gives the whole thing over to us and says, “Look it’s yours, you own it, you subdue it, you use it, it’s my blessing to you.”

As James puts it:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (James 1:17) (ESV)

Wherever you are in your walk with the Lord, whether on a mountain top or in a deep, dark valley, I want to encourage you today to believe that your God is a God who wants to bless you.

Granted, His blessing doesn’t always show up when we want it to, or in the way we expect it to. But the blessings that He has in store for you are greater than you can ever imagine.

My first experience of Christ was in a long,
deep, dark valley full of hurt and loss. And as I look back over the quarter of a century since, I have had so many blessings. But the greatest one of all was the very Presence of God with me in that dark place.

You just never know how He is going to bless you.

So let me leave you with this final blessing:

*The Lord bless you and keep you;*
*the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;*
*the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.*

(Numbers 6:24-26)
LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

Just have a think about where you are in your life at the moment – the highlights and the lowlights. How would you sum up your current circumstances?

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QUESTION 2

How plausible does the likelihood of God’s blessing seem in your life, the way things sit at the moment?
QUESTION 3

Spend some time resting in Luke 6:20-26. What is God speaking into your life through His Word?

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QUESTION 4

What do you yearn for more in terms of blessing? The things that God can bless you with, or God Himself?

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QUESTION 5

If you could have more of God, if you could be closer to Him, if you could experience Him and know Him more deeply, what difference would that make to your life?
QUESTION 5
How do you think you might go about making that happen?
CHAPTER 4

Blessing In, Blessing Out

It’s those last couple of questions from the previous chapter that I’d like to turn to now … because truly, there is no greater blessing than God Himself.

In fact, to the extent that we seek happiness in His blessings, apart from a deep, rich, intimate relationship with God Himself, we are completely … and I mean completely … missing the point.

One of the things that Jesus always managed to do was turn everything on its head. *Love your enemy* is just one of His startling sayings. And the same is true when He talked about God’s blessing – particularly in that Sermon on the Mount.

In coming closer to the truth of God’s blessings, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to a man called S. D. Gordon. Sometime in the late 1800’s or early 1900’s he wrote a book called “Quiet Talks on Power”. In that book he uses a simple yet powerful example to describe the consequences of expecting all of God’s blessings
to flow into our lives without letting any of them flow out again. In it, he uses the picture of the Dead Sea.

Now the Dead Sea is that body of water bounded by Israel to the east and Jordan to the west, where all the rivers flow in but none of them flow out. And as a result, it’s dead. Nothing can live in it – not a thing; no fish, no plants, no birds – because the water is so incredibly brackish and hard. Gordon makes this point in his book; that if we expect all of God’s blessings to flow in and none of them to flow out, then our lives become like the circumference of that Dead Sea.

It’s a powerful metaphor … because on the inside, despite how blue and beautiful the waters may appear on a clear, sunny day … on the inside, it’s dead.

Many a life is, tragically, lived out that way. It is the natural consequence of seeking out blessings that only flow inward, but never outward.

Our generation has been born to consume. We are consuming the planet right down into the ground. We just can’t help ourselves. And in the name of economic activity and prosperity, our governments (not to mention the corporations that stand to benefit) continue to encourage us to do just that … consume.

We’ve swallowed that lie hook, line and sinker, which is why so many people are trying to buy their way into happiness. Hey, I used to be one of them …
God’s blessed me with a new car, God’s blessed me with a salary increase, so I’m going to believe God for more.

And of course God does those things. He’s blessed both you and me with things that we’ve needed along the way, even with things that were just “icing on the cake” … because He felt like it. That’s nice but they’re not the main thing, and if we start making them the main thing … then Houston, we have a problem!

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.
(1 Timothy 6:10)

I regularly speak on this subject because, quite frankly, our failure to get a grip on what God means by blessing is one of the greatest maladies in society today – and let me say it really bluntly – even amongst God’s own people … people who say, “Yep, I believe in Jesus.” If we think that God’s blessing is all about stuff flying to us and stopping there, we’re missing the whole point.

We’ve seen that God began His plan for blessing right from the beginning of creation. The truth is that He created all of creation, then He created male and female, man and woman, and then He gave everything to them and said, “Here it is. It’s yours. Be blessed, go prosper and multiply. Go for it, it’s all yours.”
But it didn’t take Adam and Eve long to interrupt that blessing. They rejected God, they turned their backs on Him, and so now we live in a fallen world. We’re living out the consequences of humanity’s rejection of God.

Why is there suffering? Why is there pain? Because way back then, humanity turned its back on God – and you and I … we’ve done it too. In our own way, we’ve turned our backs on God as well. And in the last chapter, we saw that for blessing really to be a blessing, for God’s blessing really to be God’s blessing, it has to flow in and out. Now I want to continue on with that a bit more in this chapter and unpack it a bit more.

In the last chapter, we spent some time in this Scripture:

*Blessed are you who are poor because yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now for you’ll be satisfied. Blessed are those who are weeping now because you’ll laugh.*

*Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject you because of me. Rejoice in that day, leap for joy because great is your reward in heaven for that’s how their fathers treated the Prophets but woe to you who are rich for you have already received your comfort.*

*Woe to you who are well fed for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all*
men speak well of you for that is how their fathers treated false disciples but I tell you, listen to me, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.
(Luke 6:20-26)

Do you see? This is the heart of Jesus; this is the heart of God. It’s not to have a whole bunch of wealthy people running around saying, “I’m wealthier than you.” It’s not about people having a big party and saying, “Life’s good” while the poor and hungry are starving out there. It’s not about fame and fortune and recognition. We’re missing the point.

Do you see the sharp contrast between those who are blessed in adversity and those who think they are blessed in their comfort?

What’s Jesus saying in all of this? Without doubt … that those of us who have all the necessities, with “icing on the cake” are meant to be a blessing to those who don’t.

… remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ (Acts 20:35)

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (Hebrews 13:16)

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.
(Galatians 5:13)
Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. (1 Peter 4:10)

Are you getting this? God’s approach to blessing is quite simply this: blessing-in, blessing-out … over and over again!

It’s like a double-sided bookkeeping transaction. If the two sides of the ledger don’t balance, the whole thing gets out of whack. And so it is with God’s blessing. If we think it’s all about God pouring His material blessing into us – even His spiritual blessing into us – but us then not sharing that out, the whole thing gets out of whack.

I know people who believe that their relationship with God is about getting the next BMW or Mercedes. Now I, per say, don’t have a problem with people having BMWs or Mercedes but that’s not what God’s blessing is all about. Jesus, after He spoke all those really challenging words about the poor and the hungry, and all these people at the same time going off and having parties, said this:

Give and it will be given to you, a good measure pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap for with the measure that you use it will be measured to you. (Luke 6:38)

In other words Jesus Himself is saying, “You are blessed to be a blessing”. He said it over and over again in different ways:

On the last day of the festival, the great day,
while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)

There it is again – blessing-in, blessing-out. That’s God’s model. That’s what it means to be blessed.

In fact, let me put it as directly as this: you can’t be truly blessed of God unless you yourself are the blessing of God in someone else’s life.

Are you thirsty? Are you thirsting for that ‘something’ that constantly seems to elude you? Are you parched and needy? Then come to Me, says Jesus and drink, drink deep, drink until you are so full of Me, of My Spirit, of My Presence that you simply can no longer contain Me … and then rivers (rivers!) of living water will flow out from you.

Not a trickle, not a stream, not a river … rivers!

A Nile and a Ganges and a Murray and a Mississippi and a Thames and a Rhine and a Yangtze and an Amazon: Rivers – huge flood tides of blessing – will flow from you in abundance.

Now, is it always convenient to be a blessing; to be the entry point of God’s floodtide of
blessing into a lost and hurting world?

No. In fact, being a blessing inevitably involves sacrifice.

*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* (Galatians 2:19,20)

That picture of crucifixion is a brutal one. It’s a picture of suffering in order to be Christ to those in desperate need of a Saviour.

And yet, when we allow the Spirit of God to flow down to us, to fill us, to drench us, to overflow from us – through our gifts, our abilities, our resources, our time – truly, there is no sweeter blessing than that.

This timeless truth was the biggest shock for me in becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.

All along, I had thought that the blessing lay in the inward flow. But it doesn’t. The most exquisite part of the blessing lies in the outward flow.

Only then is God’s blessing complete.
LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

Has your conception of God’s blessing been turned on its head? If so, what most disturbs you? What most worries you?

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QUESTION 2

In that Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6:20-26) which group of people do you most relate to? The first group (those who are doing it tough) or the second group (those who will lose it all)?

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QUESTION 3
Which group do you think Jesus has you in?
QUESTION 4

What do you hear Him saying to you in John 7:37-39?
QUESTION 5
What possibilities of blessing does this open up for you?
6. Who are the people in your life that need this floodtide of blessing through you? Will you go?
CHAPTER 5
The Interruption of Blessing

My prayer is that you were on the one hand rocked and shocked in the last chapter ... and yet, I pray too, that your spirit soared Christ-ward at the truth of the floodtide of blessing that He would unleash through you.

It’s easy for someone to say, “You should be a blessing to other people.” But what if we’re too busy, or we just don’t have anything to bless other people with? Really – then what?!!

Okay, so blessing is a two-sided transaction. Blessing-in, blessing-out ... over and over again. But let’s get practical here. What does that mean? What does that actually look like in your life and in mine?

I don’t know what sort of life you lead – some people lead extremely busy lives and other people lead quiet, even lonely lives sometimes. Whichever end of the spectrum you’re on, the notion of being a blessing to other people can seem rather far-fetched. How could that ever, possibly be?
So, we’ve been talking about living out God’s blessing in our lives. God is indeed a God of blessing. We see that right at the beginning, in Genesis Chapter 1, God created it all – and then, as His final act of creation, gave all that to the likes of thee and me. Sensational!

And then, just a chapter or two later in that book of Genesis, we meet Adam and Eve. God’s given them the whole garden, untold blessing, a relationship with God Himself, and in doing the one thing He tells them not to do, they turn their backs on Him. As a result, they usher suffering into the world. The rejection of God has serious consequences, but still God has a heart to bless us.

And not just us, but in the most wondrous twist to this whole notion of blessing, in this lost and fallen world, God deigns to involve us in the business of blessing by allowing us to become a channel of His blessing – and in doing so, to be blessed ourselves in ways that we couldn’t have begun to imagine:

… give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” (Luke 6:38)

Great stuff! The danger is though, that we talk in concepts and theory rather than in practical realities. What does all this mean for you and me, here and now? How do we live this stuff out in a way that makes sense; in a way that allows
us to take hold of this God-ordained approach to blessing in the reality of our own experience?

Okay, I accept that God is a God of blessing. I accept that it’s a two-sided transaction, in from God and out through me. But how does all that work?

You and I are two very different people. The demons of the past that I’ve had to slay in my life are no doubt different to the ones you’ve had to slay. Your Achilles heel, the chink in your armour … well, that’s probably different too.

That’s why we need the power of God in our lives to set us free from the past. That’s why we need Holy Spirit power unleashed in us. If we could slay those demons on our own, then we wouldn’t need Jesus. No, we need power, power with a capital ‘P’ kind of Power.

The Bible talks about “the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). And he is wily, he is crafty, he is a liar … and he’s seen it all before.

> Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.  
> (1 Peter 5:8)

For this reason we need to come to Jesus and drink … drink deep, so that He can unleash His Power, His Holy Spirit Power, in our lives. It’s something He does in two ways.

Firstly, through His Word the Bible. I thank God that I have been blessed through some really good, faithful Bible teachers along the way – teachers of God’s Word who didn’t shy away
from the truth, teachers of God’s Word who didn’t seek to water down the power of God’s Word.

The Apostle Paul put it like this:

> For we are not peddlers of God’s word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence. (2 Corinthians 2:17)

The more I encountered such teachers, the more I sought them out … and the more they pointed me directly into God’s Word … to become a man of God’s Word, to mine the depths of the riches of the mind of God, the mind of Christ … in His Word.

That one thing (more than any other) – the habit of reading the Word – has unleashed the power and the blessing of God in my life.

When we read (how many Christians actually do?!), reflect upon, receive and respond to the Word of God … the blessing of God begins to flow.

And that brings me to my second point. Drinking deep of Jesus is to live out what He says … as though it’s true. Because it is! And when God speaks, stuff happens. Powerful stuff. Supernatural stuff. Stuff that we could never have imagined.

Listen again to the words of Jesus … listen, this is Jesus speaking directly to you:

> ... give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together,
running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” (Luke 6:38)

These are not idle words. These are not mere suggestions. These are commands and truth from the mouth of God.

And He begins very simply with the word “give”. Will you live out His truth simply by giving, by serving, by taking what He has placed in your hands and giving it to another, in His name? Will you?

Give.

Truly, we want to skip that word and go straight to the next bit – to the promise, to the “What’s in it for me?” bit. But that second bit is a consequence of that first word … give!

I know what you’re thinking. This is a leap of faith. If I sow, if I give … will the words of Jesus here come to pass? Or will I be left like a shag on a rock, with nothing to show for my giving?

To give, from a human standpoint, is to lose, to have less. I start off with this much, I give some of it away and that, quite obviously, means that I have less. That’s how we think.

Hmm … imagine how that must have played itself out in the mind of a Man who was called to give His life on a Cross. Remember, though Jesus was (and is) indeed the Son of God, the Creator of the Universe, eternally existent in the God-head, when He became a Man, He laid all His glory, all His power, aside.
If that’s not true, then it was all a sham.

The Bible tells us that He struggled with all the same trials and temptations that assail us:

> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.

(Hebrews 4:15)

And indeed, it’s a struggle that we see playing itself out in Gethsemane before that moment when the Son yields His life to the Father:

> Then he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.” And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” (Matthew 26:38,39)

So let me ask you then? How did the whole ‘give and it will be given to you’ thing play out for Jesus, in the greatest “give” in all of eternity?

… Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and
under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

There it is. The truth is always (always!) true.

Which is why that passage there in Philippians starts off with the words:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, …

But Berni, that was Jesus. At this point, we’re talking about me. I’m not Him. I’m not all that smart, or all that gifted, or all that blessed. Can I really make a difference?

Yes, you can. All you need is just the smallest amount of faith:

For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. (Matthew 17:20)

God wants to bless your socks off! But unless that blessing flows in from above, and out through you, it can never be complete.

He handcrafted you in your mother’s womb. He knows how He made you. He has prepared you for a moment such as this. He has put people in your life who need the blessing of God in a way that only you – through your heart, through the way He made you, through the gifts you’ve been given, through the life experiences that you’ve had – can deliver it.
You have been made, prepared, positioned, for a time such as this.

You have been blessed to be a blessing. So …

… give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” (Luke 6:38)
A Final Prayer

Father, sometimes this idea of blessing is so confusing. On the one hand, You make it clear in Your Word that you call us to a life of sacrifice and at times, suffering. On the other hand, over and over again, You speak of the blessing that You want to pour out on our lives.

Help us, Lord God, to enter into Your blessing on Your terms. Help us to lay down our lives at Your feet as our response to that great love-sacrifice on the Cross of Christ.

And Lord, give us the grace to accept the blessing that You choose for us in the middle of the life that You have given us.

May we be a light that shines out Your love. May we be a fountain through which Your blessing overflows into the lives of the lost and the hurting people around us.

And may we, Your people, willingly submit to Your plans for our lives, sacrificing what we may want in order to be a blessing to the people that You bring into our lives.

Lord, we are indeed blessed to be a blessing. We give You all the praise and honour and glory, in Jesus’ mighty name. Amen!
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Thank you with all my heart.

Your friend in Jesus,

Berni Dymet
Blessed to be a Blessing

Discover the blessings that God has for you ... and what He wants you to do with them.

Let’s face it. We live in a pretty self-centred society – me, me, me ...

So when we start to talk about God’s blessing, it can be a bit confusing. Sure, God is a God of blessing but does that mean that we treat Him as the world would – “It’s all about me”? And if God blesses ... well, what about all the suffering that we go through.

In this great latest booklet, Berni opens up God’s Word to discover some firm foundations for our understanding of God’s blessing. Solid. Biblical. Exciting. Where the rubber of faith hits the road of life ...