

Boundless

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*Living life
in overflow*

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and
Stephen Court

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To Moses, Judah and Zion
You were born to change the world.
May you keep exploring the wonders
of the overflow in your lives.

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A Tattoo, Salvation, and a Song

It took me about eight different tattoo parlours before I found the guy who would be willing to come with me to a large youth conference and give me a tattoo on stage. Actually, even him I had to coax to come. I was speaking, together with my husband, Stephen, to a crowd of teenagers about living life in a way we were meant to. On this day we were getting to covenant – this is living in promise, living with a purpose, living for something and someone larger than ourselves – and we were trying to communicate it to a generation that had been labelled selfish, fickle, and loose.

Tattoos can be a big deal. They are for ever. They are painful. They are obvious – and did I mention painful? So, in front of all these young people and many surprised older leaders I sat in the middle of the stage as my new tattooist friend started up his gun and began the work. My husband broke down the scriptural significance of living for something bigger than your own life, while I publicly

endured the pain and embraced being marked for ever. The tattoo I chose was a song – it is the musical theme of this book, with words that a man named William Booth penned more than a century ago. It was about an idea that has completely changed the world. It wasn't Booth's idea – he just wrote about it and lived it out. It was God's idea – from the very beginning.

The world was meant to be good. Actually, when God created it He said it was beautiful (that's what “very good” means in Hebrew). But something happened... With our power came great responsibility (think *Spiderman*) and we blew it. We gave over the power to destruction. And we started to get smaller. So did the world. Marred, broken... is there any more accurate way to view our world today? But God had a plan for even that inevitability.

Salvation

“Salvation” is a fancy way of saying that you and I need fixing. But that's not hard to see for everyone who uses both of their eyes to look in the mirror – we all need fixing. And all of us, together, including the entire created order, need fixing – collectively. If we are going to be fixed it's going to take an idea that is larger than our problems. And that brings me back to the tattoo.

You see, the tattoo is a song all about this – a boundless salvation – because Boundless is bigger than our curse. I'm pretty tired of people who use God's plan to save us as a personal path to happiness or success or even to peace,

A Tattoo, Salvation, and a Song

because it's so much bigger than that. God's plan is to put right everything that's been broken in the world. Every one of His children, every one of His created beings. God's plan of salvation is a plan for the entire world – it's, well, boundless. It's bigger than me.

I remember hearing the singer Bono once asked about becoming a politician. He said he had thought about it but then remembered that when a politician gives a speech, he gives it once – maybe if it's really good people listen to it twice. But when you write a song, it becomes part of you. You feel the song. You live the song. You sing the song.

I got “Boundless” tattooed on my arm because I want to live the song. I want my life to be immersed in the message of this salvation. This message is larger than me. I want it visible. I want to embrace the pain. I want to live the promise. I want to believe with everything that I am and everything that I've got that there is a better way to live, that I can help bring this fix to the entire planet – that my life matters more than the small drama of my own feelings, family, and gifts. It matters to the earth.

This book isn't just about “steps” or “doctrine”; it's not even trying to convince you of something that will make your life happy. This book is about a song – a song big enough to tattoo on your body. But even more than that, it's a song that can get inside you and become a new way to live. That melody is beautiful. I pray that you'll hear it as we write – and embrace it as you live.¹

William Booth's famous song (he wrote it back in

1893) is called “O Boundless Salvation”. In seven verses, he develops a story of a person who grows from a limited, stunted existence into a boundless life. It’s captivating! Here are the words. We’re crafting this book around his story.

O Boundless Salvation

*O boundless salvation! deep ocean of love,
O fullness of mercy, Christ brought from above.
The whole world redeeming, so rich and so free,
Now flowing for all men, come, roll over me!*

*My sins they are many, their stains are so deep.
And bitter the tears of remorse that I weep;
But useless is weeping; thou great crimson sea,
Thy waters can cleanse me, come, roll over me!*

*My tempers are fitful, my passions are strong,
They bind my poor soul and they force me to wrong;
Beneath thy blest billows deliverance I see,
O come, mighty ocean, and roll over me!*

*Now tossed with temptation, then haunted with fears,
My life has been joyless and useless for years;
I feel something better most surely would be
If once thy pure waters would roll over me.*

*O ocean of mercy, oft longing I’ve stood
On the brink of thy wonderful, life-giving flood!
Once more I have reached this soul-cleansing sea,
I will not go back till it rolls over me.*

A Tattoo, Salvation, and a Song

*The tide is now flowing, I'm touching the wave,
I hear the loud call of the Mighty to Save;
My faith's growing bolder, delivered I'll be;
I plunge 'neath the waters, they roll over me.*

*And now, hallelujah! the rest of my days
Shall gladly be spent in promoting His praise
Who opened His bosom to pour out this sea
Of boundless salvation for you and for me.*

William Booth (1829–1912)²

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Glasses Half Empty, Half Full, and Overflowing

Is the glass half empty? Is something missing? Does your life come up short in comparison with friends, famous people, and characters on your favourite shows? (Here's a secret: their lives mostly suck too.)

Or is that glass just half full? Sure, you spin it positively to your friends, and even, usually, to yourself. You try to focus on the good things, the high points, the great memories, the positive aspects of your current existence. But the reality is, it is existence more than it is life. It's still only half full. Where's the rest?

Is that the best we can hope for on earth?

The short answer: No.

The longer answer? Let's go for the overflow! We'll invest the rest of these pages in showing you that half empty and half full are both less than the abundance that is available to all of us. We can each live a life of overflow!

For example:

I've been following the unfolding story of the Advent Conspiracy movement. The idea behind this movement is that Christmas is the best time to invest in things that matter most – life, love, hope, and peace, etc. And it's also about exposing the things that we often invest the most in, that don't matter at all – expensive gifts, material things, business toys – in order to feel better about ourselves.

So, out of this idea – that at Christmas we could spend less but give more – all these projects started to happen. As some followers of Jesus decided to give things that actually matter, they started to see some incredible things happen.

Water of life

One story is about an African village whose people only had a dirty source of water. The results were horrific. Since the stagnant water was dirty, everyone got sick, especially the children, whose immune systems weren't up to the challenge. Kids died there all the time because of bacteria in the water: a simple flu-like symptom would take them out. The whole village just lived with this as their fate. There wasn't anything that anyone could do.

Then the Advent Conspiracy guys heard about the village through a missionary contact and decided to do something not just about the sickness but about the source of the sickness.

They found a fresh water source by digging a well in the middle of the village. That fresh water was clean and safe to drink. It didn't take life, it gave it. And it still gives

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it. A whole village has been changed, and the way of life in that village has changed, too. The source of the diseases is no longer in charge: there is a new source, a source of life that is endless and clean and pure.

That's the boundless story. It's not just about another source of something to stuff into the hole in your life that eats away at you and causes your own sickness. It's about finding a brand new source, a clean and fresh source that will get rid of sickness for ever – giving you not just life but abundant life. Now, that's a gift that matters.

A cup overflows

There is a lot of ancient wisdom available to us in our pursuit of a boundless life. The world's most famous poem is called Psalm 23 and was written by a one-time shepherd named David. This version of it might be familiar to you:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside quiet waters.

He restores my soul;

He guides me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow

of death,

I fear no evil, for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Glasses Half Empty, Half Full, and Overflowing

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of
my enemies;*

You have anointed my head with oil;

My cup overflows.

*Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all
the days of my life,*

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

There's heaps of juicy stuff here, but just check out the promises near the end:

God prepares a table – a feast – for him, and his enemies have to stand there and watch! Did you get that? David's enemies impotently peer in through the window and contemplate the spectacle of him enjoying a lavish spread.

God anoints his head with oil. The honoured guest in ancient times was blessed with expensive perfume, poured on the head. Besides the obvious practical element in a culture punctuated by pungent odours (of both humans and creatures), there is a powerful spiritual component to this action. His cup overflows. This signifies boundless abundance. David was living life in the overflow!

Goodness and mercy are in hot pursuit of him all the days of his life. Have you ever met that kind of person? It seems as though kindness, love, understanding, integrity, and goodwill chase them around.

And he gets to move in with God! David doesn't have to settle for some vague notions of the supernatural, resign

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himself to occasional warm fuzzies over coffee with close friends, dabble in the paranormal, flirt with the magical. He gets to experience GOD – and not for some fleeting instant. He moves in, settles down, changes his address, puts down roots, rearranges the furniture... This is more than divine visitation, it's a habitation.

As the King James Version of the Bible puts it, his “cup runneth over”. Other versions of the poem render the phrase “my cup overflows”,³ “You fill my cup until it overflows”,⁴ “my cup is brimming over”,⁵ and “my cup overflows with blessings”.⁶ The original Hebrew word (*revayah*) means “saturation”.

Do you get the idea?⁷

A boundless life – a life lived in overflow – is for you.

Don't settle for the unsatisfactory half-empty or half-full options. Don't settle for a contaminated source. Get the clean and boundless life. Go for the overflow.