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Presentation Transcript
Sea of Galilee
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This is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries.

When He was a young man, Jesus' family moved from the countryside to Galilee, to the city of Capernaum. And there they established their building trade. Capernaum was a regional center located on the bank of a lake. In ancient times, the lake was called Chinnereth – and in Christ's time, Genneseret. Today, we call it the Sea of Galilee. If you go there today, you'll see that it's a pretty lake – 13 miles long and about 8 miles wide. It's deep blue and is located 800 feet below sea level in that natural rift between the two land masses of Asia and the Middle East. The climate there is subtropical. Peter and Andrew, James and John fished this lake for a living in Christ's time. On the bank of this lake, Jesus fed the multitudes and spoke to them. On this lake, He calmed the wind, and He also walked on water there.

At the north end of the lake, the Jordan River runs into the Sea of Galilee. The Jordan is in the snow fields of Mount Hermon, which is 9,000 feet above the Mediterranean. So it's quite a steep climb in a short space there. At the south end of the lake, the Jordan flows out of it and down the rift. Because the lake is constantly being replenished, it is, to this day, an excellent lake with clean water and many fish. Just as during the time of Christ, there are many commercial fisherman fishing on that lake today. You can go to any number of restaurants near that lake and eat freshly caught fish. One particular type has been named St. Peter's fish. Though I'm pretty sure, Peter would have taken any kind of fish that came to his net.

After leaving the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan continues south, down the rift, for 90 miles – 200, if you go by river, but 90 miles as the crow flies – to the Dead Sea. And in this stretch of Jordan, Jesus and John baptized people. Centuries before, Israel crossed the Jordan in that stretch into The Promised Land.

Despite the beauty of the Sea of Galilee, the most remarkable body of water in the area is the Dead Sea. It's 53 miles long and 10 miles wide. The Jordan River runs into this sea, and has for a long time, and yet there is no outlet. Where does the water go? Well, the Dead Sea is 1,300 feet below sea level. It's in the steep portion of the rift. There are cliffs on both sides – extremely hot. The water evaporates, roughly, as fast as it flows in. So, if you're up on the cliffs overlooking the Dead Sea, you see that it is also a beautiful deep blue lake. But, if you go down to the banks, you would notice, when the rays of the sun are just right, that the water appears to have an oily sheen on it. Since the creation, the Jordan has been washing minerals into that lake. And as the water evaporates, the mineral content has risen. It's filled, in fact. The lake is 25% mineral and 75% water – five times more dense than ocean water. If you try to swim in it, the water will sting your eyes. And, if you have any cuts, well, good luck with that! When you swim, you float like a cork. There are no fish and no plant life in this briny lake. It truly *is* a dead sea.

Jesus was familiar with this lake, too. If He did not see it as a child, then He must have as an adult. Jesus used water as an analogy of the Spirit. And on the last great day of the feast, He preached a sermon about it. Let's read a little bit about it in John 7:37:

John 7:37 – *On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, 'out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him would receive. For the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. It makes you wonder if He had the Sea of Galilee in mind, doesn't it? "...out of Me shall flow rivers of living water."* There was the outlet to the Sea of Galilee flowing on down through the rift.

How about you, though? Are you like the beautiful Sea of Galilee? Do you receive a supply of it from up above, and then let it flow out of you? Or, are you more like the Dead Sea – look good from a distance, but the closer we get, we see a bitterness and no real life there? Cool water clearly flows unendingly into that lake, but nothing flows out. Some people I know are like that. We can all be that way. I try not to be, but we all have our moments.

So what we're going to talk about today is flow. How are you doing in the flow department? There are a number of types of flow in life that I would like to talk with you about today.

The first one is what we just mentioned there about the Dead Sea – *receiving without giving*. Stuff flows in, but nothing flows out. I see this frequently with some of the PTSD people I work with. Many of them have been so burned by life's stress, they're fearful of further relationships. They feel isolated and separated. There may be many people who love and care about them, but they have withdrawn into a protective and lonely shell – flow in, but no flow out.

In a former pastorate, there was a man who was, to use the word, famous among the church people for his giving. He was poor himself, but he would drive long distances to help the elderly.

He would visit the sick. He would attend all church activities. He and his wife and his children were all outgoing and friendly. As I moved into this congregation, I was looking forward to working with this spiritual giant. He was older than I was and I thought he would be able to help me, both in experience and the in the efforts of being a church pastor. When I got to know this man, he did not appear to me to be at all like the glowing reports I had heard for the last several years from the members. His attitude was different. He stayed home a lot. He didn't help people much. He had withdrawn and complained a lot. When he found out about some of the troubles the church was having back in those days, his bitterness seemingly overflowed its bank. One Sabbath, he gave a terrible sermonette in which his bitterness uncovered itself for all to see. He had become just like the Dead Sea – still attending, still receiving a steady flow of truth and respect from the congregation. The people there cared about him. Many of them were worried about him, but he had quit giving. There was no flow out. Gradually, he grew cold and bitter. And that can happen to anybody.

This attitude, we are told, would be present in the church of our time. In Jude 1:18, we learn:

Jude 1:18 – *...how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time, who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts – sensual persons who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.* So people that complain that complain and mock and don't have anything good to say.

So the lesson for us there, in this type of situation, is that we continue to let stuff flow out and not to be like the Dead Sea.

The second type of flow I want to talk about is *freely giving*. And what is that? Well, that's where we let stuff flow out and it's not predicated on our getting anything back. This is not like the Sea of Galilee, because the Sea of Galilee *has* to have a steady in-flow in order for stuff to run out at the other end.

I used to backpack in the mountains a lot, and most of the backpacking trails we would take would be along a creek. And there would be periodic lakes – you know, one at one level, and another up higher with a stream in between. When the snowfall stopped late in the summer, and the creek stopped flowing into the first lake, then gradually, it's level would go down to where it wouldn't let any more water out, and the water there would start to warm and grow the things that grow in warm water. So it wasn't as fresh. There's one up in the Pecos Wilderness like that. It's called Little Pecos Baldy Lake – right below the mountain. By the time I would get there in the late summer, all the snow had melted off the mountain and the water had a funny taste to it. So we had to be very careful about drinking that water. There was no water flowing out of it by that time.

The Bible calls this type of love sacrificial love. And Christ is an example of that in a way. If you look in Romans 5:8, it says:

Romans 5:8 – *God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* You know, Christ died for people that really didn't care anything about Him and didn't have any intention to follow Him or obey Him. It was with the hope that they would, at some point in the future, that He made His sacrifice, but that really hadn't happened too much – maybe a few people over time.

Romans 5:10 – *If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* So we're reconciled by His death and saved by His life.

So, those of us who had not accepted Christ – I'm talking about us as a human species – we were considered enemies of Christ. And today that's still true. Those of us who have not given ourselves to Him are enemies. Now, all of us, at one time, have been alienated from God and have been enemies. And, while we were like that, He gave His life for us, making no demands. God the Father also is an example of free giving, without expecting anything in return.

Think about ancient Israel. He loved her. He provided for her. He blessed her. And she turned away from Him. She never kept her vows. It was all a one-way thing.

Parenting can, sometimes, be an example of this. Parents who continually give to and provide for an unthankful child...it just feels like the well goes dry sometimes.

I had a lady come in to see me for a while who had an older daughter that was doing very well for herself, but her son, who was just out of high school, had been caught stealing things. He had been caught driving while intoxicated. He had punched his father in the face at one point. He'd been in jail. He hung out with a bad crowd and he got stabbed by one of his "friends." The mother was struggling with dealing with this son. She had run out of gas, so to speak. When I first met her, she told me all the things that she'd done in his life. They could see early on he was headed toward trouble. She told me all the things that she'd done to try to get help. She was a nurse, so she was connected in the community with the helping organizations. And when she listed off all the things she had done – it took her about a whole session to do that – it sounded like a highly skilled professional social worker who had pulled out all the stops to try to help somebody. And everything she had done had failed. And she would sit in my office and weep for sheer frustration and spiritual exhaustion from dealing with this recalcitrant, unrepentant child. So she had sacrificed and sacrificed and sacrificed until there just wasn't anymore there.

I also, sometime after that, met a fourteen-year-old. When she was born, she was born addicted to cocaine and her mother gave her up for adoption – either that or the state took her away. I'm not sure on the details. But I think her mother gave her up. And she was adopted by a couple who genuinely wanted her. She told me that she knew her adoptive parents loved her, but she didn't love them. She wanted, in her fourteen-year-old mind, to go find her bio-mom and live on the streets with her while she did her cocaine. Her adoptive parents were worried that she would run

away to find her. Both her parents sat in my office and wept bitterly while they told me this story. I have no doubts that they genuinely cared for her. Now I get that urge to find herself through her bio-identity is strong, but sometimes children just have to grow up to figure things out. And until then, parenting can be very thankless and it can be completely sacrificial giving without much coming back. So that's another kind of giving to think about.

The third kind of giving we could call *responsive giving*. God's plan to teach us to love Him is based on our ability to do this. This kind of giving is what people can do. 1 John 4:19 identifies this.

1 John 4:19 – *We love God because He first loved us.*

This is like the waters from Mount Hermon flowing down into the Sea of Galilee from God. And then, because we have that constant influx of fresh water, it is flowing out at the other end of the lake to God and the rest of God's children.

Some of us are able to respond and give back when someone gives to us. You live me. I love you back. The best part about you is, that you love me. If you didn't, I couldn't care for you. I mean, I think that's kind of the way we love God. We love God because He takes care of us and blesses us. I think we're supposed to grow to the kind of love that's sacrificial and committed to God, but I think God accepts us the way we are in our weakness.

Have you ever had a friendship where you have what you think is a good relationship with someone, but if you ever let down, it just kind of dies? You know, you move away, and then you write and they write. And if you make the effort to be nice to them, then they're nice to you. But, if you let go for a while, or get busy for a bit, then nothing comes your way? It seems like it's a one-way street?

I had a man come to me once and he was an alcoholic. His first wife left him with two children, because he was an alcoholic. But he had cleaned up his act and was now making monthly child support payments. And he was trying to live a better life. He'd remarried and had a son. And he and his first wife were happy, and so he kind of straightened things out. And he told me that his two daughters by his first wife would only contact him when they wanted money. He said that he desperately wanted to be in relationship with them, but he thought the only way that was happening...it wasn't really a relationship. It was just that they were using him to get what they wanted. I told him what I thought he could do is just send a slow dribble of text communication every week or so. "Hey, how are you doing?" Don't make any demands and don't offer anything. Just check in and let them know that you're thinking about them. That's all. He said, "But what if they want me to give them money?" And I said, "Do you think that child support covers everything that they need?" And he said, "Most of the time, but sometimes not." I said, "Well, then you could just tell them that their mother is supposed to provide those daily things for them, but if there's something that comes up that's bigger that they really need help with, you could

probably help them do that. But you just need to figure that out so that they know that they can't just use you. But the important thing is to just let them know that you're thinking about them. You haven't given up on a relationship with them." So just not too long ago, I met his new wife, and his two daughters who were from his former wife were with her. They had moved in with him. I met them when they were much younger, and it seemed to me like they were really doing good. They were happy to talk to me and I could tell that his second wife was really happy to have with them as well. So I can see that he had won them over by just reaching out, reaching out, not putting pressure on, not making demands, but just letting them know that he cared for them – a steady trickle in. And then on big events, where they needed help – maybe a prom dress or something, a good thing to do – something note-worthy – but still his former wife responsible for the day-to-day stuff that he was providing already.

So children, most of the time, can normally give if someone is giving to them. Most of us are like that, too. God expects us to be like that – that we love Him, because He loved us first. So we see people that are like that and I think we shouldn't be too hard on them, because those folks are us.

And here's something else I wanted to point out about this. I'm not talking so much about friendship as I am about committed relationships. Friendship is *not* a committed relationship, like baptism or marriage or parenting. People move in and out of our lives. Time and distance and interests take a toll on human closeness. I used to know a number of people when I was operating my rock crawler. I ran with the rock crawler crowd for a while. But when I stopped doing that, they gradually faded out of my life. And it's not because they're angry with me or anything. It's just that we don't have much in common any longer. So that's just the way life works.

And we have all been takers from God. We love Him because He first loved us. And it should be noted that both giving responsively – which is given in response to the love of others – and giving freely are still expressions of love, according to what God has to say. When we love God because He first loved us – I mean that is a quote right out of the Bible, right? – God calls that love. So I think He hopes for better things from us, and I think He's going to get His way, but He doesn't hold us against it. We can't love the way He loves. Why can't we? Well, because we run out of gas. We *have* to be replenished. Even when Jesus was on the earth, He had to be replenished.

Let's look at another example of responsive giving. It's found in Matthew 5:43.

Matthew 5:43 – *You have heard it said that you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, "Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, so that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven – in other words, so that you may learn how to love the way He does. For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

Now enemies don't love us. Right? So how is this responsive? Well, enemies don't give to us. So when God tells us to love our enemies, He's telling us to love the way He does – sacrificially, without anything coming back. And you might say, "Well, that's pure love, not responsive." Well, not really, it isn't. That would be like the Sea of Galilee continuously emptying with nothing good coming in – no water to replace it. Flow out, no flow in. Clearly, that can't happen for long. We would go dry. And that's true of all of us. We can't continually give without being replenished. That's just the way human beings are. It doesn't matter how many enemies we have and how many of them we've forgiven their sins against us. The Sea of Galilee is replenished from the snows on Mount Hermon and we are replenished from God. And God doesn't need to be replenished. But we do. Even Jesus, as a human, was aware of His in-flow and His out-flow. There's a story in Mark 5:25 about that. It says:

Mark 5:25 – *Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years and had suffered many things from many physicians, and she spent all she had and was no better, rather grew worse. You know, some things just never change. And when she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Immediately, the fountain of her blood was dried up and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd, and said, "Who touched my clothes?"*

So He was very well aware that, as a human being, out-flow. He was aware of that. And we also know that He spent significant amounts of time fasting and praying to God, because with out-flow comes a need for human beings to be replenished. So the idea that we can give and give and give without being replenished is a fantasy. We're all like the Sea of Galilee. We can only give what has first been given to us. So the idea of freely giving, for us, is predicated on the idea of being replenished by God.

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:16:

2 Corinthians 4:16 – *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.* See, there it is – out, in.

2 Corinthians 9:7:

2 Corinthians 9:7 – *So let us, each one, give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having sufficiency in all things, have abundance for good works.* See how that works?

This principle was fundamental in the Old Testament as well as the New – Deuteronomy 6:17. You know, there are a lot of people that hate the law of God – right? – but they like the New Testament. Well, here is the New Testament in the Old:

Deuteronomy 6:17 – *Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God, which He has given you.*

God does not expect us to give what we don't have. So, when we are blessed by God, and we give to Him and to others, we are like the Sea of Galilee.

What's it like when we have plenty from God and we don't spread it around – don't give it to God and others? Well, we're like the Dead Sea – flow-in, but little or nothing flowing out. I mean, you think of all these people who are mindlessly rich, like Jeff Bezos, who just made a hundred billion dollars in the last year. How much of that does he give to charity? Well, compared to you and me, he probably gives a lot, but maybe not percentage-wise. Do you think he gives ten billion to charity? That would be ten percent of a hundred billion, right? Maybe he does. If he does, good on him. That's a good thing.

Look in Titus 3:3:

Titus 3:3 – *For we ourselves also were once foolish and disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.*

Interesting use of words there, isn't it? The pouring out of water. "Come to me and drink." Right? You know, sometimes I feel like I'm repeating often-told stories and going over the same material and yet we all keep making the same mistakes. We get over-extended or we don't let enough out, and we become stagnant. We need to be reminded that human beings are helpless in spiritual things. They're against our nature, so we need constant reinforcement and reminding to not hold in think that we don't have enough, but let it flow out and we'll be replenished by God.

Let's go – to wrap this up here – to Ezekiel 47, and verse 1.

Ezekiel 47:1 – *Then He – that's the God of the Old Testament, who was later Jesus – brought me back to the door of the temple. And there was water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (the front of the temple faced east). The water was flowing under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. So a constant flow of water coming out from God – constantly. And in verse 9:*

V-9 – *And it shall be that every living that moves, wherever the river goes, will live. And there will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there. For they will be healed and everything will live wherever the river goes.*

So this is a picture for the future – a prophecy about a great resuscitation – a replenishing – yet in the future. And at the same time, this river symbolizes the power and the Spirit of God, which comes out from Him, flowing constantly for all of us then, and also today for those in His church. “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink,” Jesus said. “He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him would receive, for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

No need to fumble around in spiritual exhaustion. No need to give in to it. As the Sea of Galilee is refilled daily, so also we can be refilled by the Spirit of God. There’s always going to be enough of it to do good things for people. That’s God’s promise to His people. All we have to do is come to God’s river and drink.