



DOUBLE BLESSING

How to Get It. How to Give It.

Mark Batterson

New York Times Bestselling Author of *The Circle Maker*

Praise for
Double Blessing

“Practical. Encouraging. Motivating. God is the greatest giver of all, so it makes sense that He loves to honor stunning generosity. *Double Blessing* challenges us to reframe our perception of blessing, seeing God’s gifts as opportunities for increased ministry. Mark Batterson calls all of us to not only receive God’s blessings but also to excellently use what we’ve been given to bring glory to God and grace to those around us.”

—LOUIE GIGLIO, pastor of Passion City Church, founder
of Passion Conferences, author of *Not Forsaken*

“I love Mark Batterson’s transparency about his own journey toward incredible generosity. And his practical advice in *Double Blessing* will get you up and moving in the right direction before you know it. But I’ll warn you to keep a pen handy. He’s got some great one-liners that you’ll want to remember—and probably claim as your own!”

—DAVE RAMSEY, best-selling author and nationally syndicated
radio show host

“The word *blessed* has been hijacked to mean something completely different from what God intended. In *Double Blessing*, Mark takes us to the root of the word and shows us how much better for us God’s *true* blessing is than anything the world could ever give.”

—CARLOS WHITTAKER, author of *Kill the Spider*

“Through pure honesty and authenticity, Mark Batterson in *Double Blessing* reminds us of God’s powerful call for us to bless others through the blessings that we’ve received and to remain generous through all occasions. When these principles of giving and receiving are put into practice, we glorify God and make a tremendous impact on the lives of others.”

—ROMA DOWNEY, actress, producer, and *New York Times*
best-selling author

“We all aspire to glorify God in our daily lives, but we are sometimes unsure of what specific steps to take. Mark Batterson offers an honest and encouraging path to help us experience God’s blessings in a refreshing way—by blessing others through the blessings that we’ve received. I highly encourage you to read *Double Blessing*.”

—JOHN C. MAXWELL, best-selling author and speaker

“In this book, Mark Batterson has tapped into two things I am very passionate about: giving and prayer. If we all shift our focus from what we can get to what we can give, then God will, as Malachi 3:10 says, ‘open the floodgates of heaven’ in our lives.”

—DAVID GREEN, CEO of Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.

“In *Double Blessing*, Mark Batterson skillfully describes the nature of a loving and compassionate Father who naturally desires to bless His children beyond their wildest dreams. Batterson simultaneously underscores the personal responsibility of believers to live obedient and benevolent lives. Your desire to discover and walk in your birthright as a believer will increase exponentially in reading this book, as will your desire to be a blessing unto others.”

—JOHN K. JENKINS SR., pastor of First Baptist Church
of Glenarden, Maryland

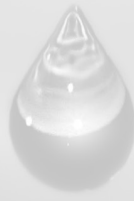
“Whenever Mark teaches or writes, we are wise to listen or read. He seems to sense what we need to learn. This book is no exception. Thanks, Mark.”

—MAX LUCADO, pastor and best-selling author of *How
Happiness Happens*

“God has blessed Mark Batterson with the spiritual vision and godly insight to provide every reader with clear direction through *Double Blessing*. Receiving a blessing is wonderful, but receiving a double blessing is what God desires for us to enjoy and embrace.”

—KEVIN WARREN, commissioner-elect of the
Big Ten Conference

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Mark Batterson



MULTNOMAH

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Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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*To those who have generously invested their time, talent,
and treasure in National Community Church.
Once a shareholder, always a shareholder.*

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Preface

ARIADNE'S THREAD

God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply.”

GENESIS 1:28, NLT

In Greek mythology, there is a legend about a labyrinth that was unnavigable and inescapable. Those who entered never exited. For within the maze meandered the Minotaur, a fearsome creature that was half man, half bull. Every nine years, the evil king of Crete demanded that the Athenians send seven boys and seven girls to be sacrificed to the Minotaur. As you might imagine, the Athenians did not take well to this tradition.

On the occasion of the third Minotaur Games, the prince of Athens volunteered himself as tribute in the place of other young citizens. When Theseus landed on Crete, the daughter of the Cretan king, Princess Ariadne, fell head over ancient heels in love with him. She knew that no one who had ventured into the labyrinth had ever found a way out, so she devised a rather ingenious plan. Ariadne gave Theseus a sword to slay the Minotaur and, more importantly, a ball of thread. After tying one end to the entrance, Theseus unwound the ball of thread as he wove his way through the spiderweb of corridors. After successfully slaying the Minotaur, Theseus was able to moonwalk his way out of the labyrinth with the help of Ariadne's thread.¹

Life is a labyrinth, is it not? It's full of relational twists and occupational turns we couldn't see coming. We zig through big decisions and zag through bad ones. There are situations we get ourselves into that we don't know how to get ourselves out of. And we all encounter some Minotaurs along the way!

Weaving your way through difficult seasons of life can feel as hopeless as trying to escape an ancient labyrinth, but there is a way out. There is a ball of

thread waiting for you, but we must backtrack all the way to the beginning of human history to find its figure-eight knot.

Ancient Instinct

The Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler was famous for beginning counseling sessions with new clients by asking, “What is your earliest memory?” No matter how his patient replied, Adler responded, “And so life is.”²

Adler believed that our earliest memories leave a profound imprint on our souls. For better or for worse, it can be very difficult to escape their gravitational pull. Our earliest memories have unusual staying power.

Imagine Alfred Adler sitting down with Adam, the first Adam, and asking his trademark question. Adam’s early memories range from rib surgery to roaming the garden. Naming all the animals had to be an unforgettable experience, especially the pink fairy armadillo. Yes, it actually exists, and it lives up to its name! Then, of course, there was the awkwardness of nakedness after succumbing to the serpent’s temptation. And, I’m sure, subsequent nightmares of being naked in public! But none of those moments represents Adam’s earliest memory.

God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”³

Before original sin, there was original blessing. And so life is! That first blessing sets the tone, sets the table. It establishes the emotional baseline and spiritual trend line of Adam’s life. But it’s not just Adam’s earliest memory. It also reveals God’s most ancient instinct.

Blessing is God’s default setting—His first and foremost reflex. If you don’t believe that, you’ll doubt the goodness of God. And if you second-guess the goodness of God, you’ll forfeit His blessing.

God wants to bless you beyond your ability to ask or imagine.

There. I said it. And I believe it. The question is, do you?

The blessing of God is Ariadne’s thread, and we’ll thread that needle from

Genesis to Revelation. What happened at the very beginning has more to do with your future than you might imagine. And my prayer is that this book will begin a new season of blessing in your life. Of course, you've got to position yourself for that blessing. And I'll show you how to do just that. But the blessing of God is more than a mystery to solve. It's a decision to make, a habit to form, and a mindset to establish.

Original Blessing

I'm not sure what your earliest memory is, good or bad. But for many, memories of their earthly father do not mirror Adam's experience. In fact, you may feel cursed rather than blessed by your family of origin. If that's true, if that's you, it can be difficult to conceive of a heavenly Father whose deepest desire is to bless you. There might even be a generational curse that needs to be broken. But believe it or not, *God has blessings for you in categories you cannot even conceive of*. If you're going to live the happy, healthy, and holy life God has called you to, you've got to get that in your gut. God is in the blessing business! And as His children, blessing is our birthright.

Now, I know what you may be thinking. Am I promising health, wealth, and prosperity? The answer to that is an unequivocal *no*! God promises us something so much better than physical health or material wealth. Plus, some of God's greatest blessings are blessings in disguise.

The blessing of God is not an immunity card against pain and suffering. Jesus said point blank, "In this world you will have trouble."⁴ He Himself endured far more than His fair share of earthly troubles, including the Cross! What makes us think we can become like Jesus without going through some of the same struggles He did? But take note—this promise doesn't end with "trouble." Don't make the mistake of putting a period where God puts a comma! In the same breath, Jesus declared, "But take heart! I have overcome the world."⁵ There are sacrifices to be made—no doubt. There is suffering to endure—no question. But there is a blessing on the other side, a double blessing!

I had better add this at the outset: God doesn't bless disobedience! God doesn't bless pride or greed or laziness either! We've got to position ourselves for God's blessing, and that's what this book is all about. But make no mistake

about it—God has postured Himself to bless you from the very beginning. And this blessing is not just the opening act of Genesis.

A tag cloud is a visual representation of textual data, showing the importance of words by color and size of font. If you tag cloud the Old Testament, I'm not sure there is a word that is bigger or brighter than *blessing*. In fact, *blessing* is a flashing neon sign! If we're being honest, many of us have a hard time believing this because of the high volume of brutality and bloodshed before Christ. But the Hebrew word for "blessing," *barak*, is put on repeat 330 times! It means "to bless the one who blesses you."⁶ And in the New Testament, we get two flavors—*makarios* and *eulogētos*.⁷ The concept of blessing may be Greek to you, but by the end of this book, you'll know how to get it and how to give it. We'll explore the dimensions of blessing in much greater detail, but I want you to understand up front that blessing is the central storyline of Scripture from start to finish.

Blessed to Bless

The blessing of God isn't easy to quantify or qualify. It is tangible and intangible, timely and timeless. It is universally offered to everyone, but the blessing of God is as unique as your fingerprint. Some blessings are as simple and straightforward as the sunrise. Others are more difficult to discern, like the blessing of brokenness. But of this I'm certain: *the blessing of God is the solution to your biggest problem, the answer to your boldest prayer, and the fulfillment of your bravest dream.*

As the subtitle of this book suggests, we'll explore *how to get the blessing* and *how to give the blessing*. There is an art and a science to both. But make no mistake—the endgame is not getting but giving! God doesn't bless us to raise our standard of living. God blesses us to raise our standard of giving. In the words of Winston Churchill, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."⁸ That idea is as old as the Abrahamic covenant:

I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you,
 and whoever curses you I will curse;
 and all peoples on earth
 will be blessed through you.⁹

The covenant of blessing established with Abraham is as valid today as it ever was. Why? Because God keeps His covenants! Even better, the old covenant has been updated and upgraded by what Christ accomplished on the cross. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Simply put, *we are blessed to bless*. The way we turn a blessing into a double blessing is by flipping the blessing. The secret of the double blessing is simply this: *the way you get it is by giving it*. That is counterintuitive and counter-cultural, but that is the miracle at the other end of Ariadne's thread. And you will be a bigger blessing to more people because of it.

Whirlwind Tour

Before we embark on this pilgrimage of blessing, let me take you on a whirlwind tour from Genesis to Revelation. Remember, one end of Ariadne's thread must be tied to the original blessing: "Be fruitful and multiply."¹⁰ The blessing of God then weaves its way from the Garden of Eden to Ur of Chaldeans where God establishes the covenant of blessing with Abraham. It is followed by a cryptic yet prophetic encounter with Melchizedek. The blood and wine offered to Abraham by the priest-king of Salem foreshadows the new covenant, and Abraham atones with a tithe of all his goods.¹¹ The blessing of God survives a soap opera known as Isaac and Jacob, proving itself bigger and better than any mistake we can make. The blessing turns Jacob into Israel, who then pronounces longer and stronger blessings on his twelve sons, the twelve tribes of Israel.¹²

During four hundred years of enslavement in Egypt, the blessing survives unspeakable suffering and indescribable setbacks. The blessing finds its voice at a burning bush on the back side of the desert, giving a man named Moses the holy confidence to confront Pharaoh.¹³ On the eve of the Exodus, the blessing of God is the blood of the Passover lamb that provides a hedge of protection for God's people and delivers them out of bondage. During Israel's wanderings, the

blessing becomes a cloud by day that gives shade and a fire by night that gives light.¹⁴

While in the wilderness, a priestly blessing is pronounced on the people of God.¹⁵ That blessing sets them up and sets them apart. God doubles down with an elevated blessing on top of Mount Gerizim.¹⁶ The blessing then parts the Jordan River, fells the walls of Jericho, and delivers the hill country called Hebron.¹⁷

Ariadne's thread then weaves its way through a shepherd's field, a fugitive's cave, and into the Valley of Elah where David defeats Goliath. The thousand year-old blessing that David inherited from the line and lineage of Judah, finds its prophetic fulfillment in the Son of David, in the City of David a thousand years later.

The Lion of the tribe of Judah is birthed in Bethlehem—*God with us*. The blessing seems to take a wrong turn at the Garden of Gethsemane, down the Via Dolorosa, dead-ending at Calvary's cross. But that's where the curse is broken and the blessing is bestowed—*God for us*. The covenant of blessing becomes the cup of blessing, the bottomless cup of God's grace from which we drink every time we come to the Lord's Table and celebrate our communion with Christ.¹⁸ The blessing is signed, sealed, and delivered on the third day with an empty tomb. With it, a fine-print footnote the Father had not forgotten: "I will give you the sacred blessings I promised to David."¹⁹

The last thing Jesus does, before His ascension, is raise His hands and bless His disciples just as the ancient priests of Israel did.²⁰ Adam's first memory becomes their last and lasting memory. Ten days later, a second blessing was bestowed on the disciples in an upper room. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost—*God in us*.

Eternal Blessing

What is the blessing of God? It's God—God *with us*, God *for us*, God *in us*. To reduce it to anything less dishonors God and devalues the blessing. God *with us* is joy unspeakable and the peace that surpasses understanding.²¹ God *for us* is His favor, the X factor between the best we can do and the best God can do. And God *in us* is power, resurrection power.

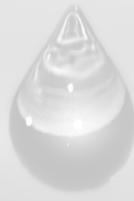
Every spiritual blessing belongs to us by virtue of what Christ accomplished through His death and resurrection.²² And when we finally arrive at the end of God's revelation, God's most ancient instinct finds its eternal expression. It's there that we tie the other end of Ariadne's thread to the last blessing in the Bible. The original blessing becomes the eternal blessing:

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.²³

In the pages that follow, we'll pull the thread of God's blessing all the way from Genesis to Revelation. My prayer is that this book would be the genesis of God's blessing in your life and a revelation of the bigger blessing He wants you to become to others.

Can I make a suggestion as we begin this journey together?

Don't read this book by yourself. Reading it with a friend or family member has the potential to turn this book into a double blessing. Some books are best read by yourself, but *Double Blessing* is best experienced in community. Reading it with someone else will multiply the blessing.



Part I

DOUBLE BLESSING

How to Get It

DOUBLE PORTION

Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit.

2 KINGS 2:9

On January 6, 1998, I was sitting in a doctor of ministry class at Regent University in Virginia Beach when I got called out of class to take a phone call. Nothing on earth can psychologically prepare you to hear the life-altering words that you've lost a loved one.

Bob Schmidgall wasn't just my father-in-law; he was a spiritual father. He planted and pastored Calvary Church in Naperville, Illinois, for thirty-one years. It was his example that inspired my dream of pastoring one church for life. He was my mentor, my model for ministry. He wasn't perfect, but there was a unique anointing on his life.

Two days before that phone call, my father-in-law celebrated his fifty-fifth birthday. He was in the prime of life, the prime of ministry. At his annual physical, his physician had told him, "I could drive a Mack truck through your arteries." How could he die from a massive heart attack days later? If you've walked through the valley of the shadow of death, you know it poses questions that are unanswerable on this side of eternity. And while God gives the oil of joy for mourning,¹ our grieving doesn't resolve until we enter a dimension of reality the Bible calls heaven.

The days following his death were an emotional blur, and that's the grace of God. The spirit goes into shock, much like the body. I don't remember much from the days surrounding his death, but there is one moment I will never forget.

After driving from Virginia Beach back to Washington, DC, in record

time, Lora and I caught the next flight to Chicago. A few hours but what felt like a lifetime later, we found ourselves at Friedrich-Jones Funeral Home in Naperville, Illinois. It's hard for me to describe what happened next, and I can't explain why I prayed what I prayed. But as I stood at the foot of my father-in-law's casket, I asked God for a double portion of His spirit. I'm not sure I knew exactly what I was asking for, but I knew I needed His anointing if I was going to honor my father-in-law's legacy. So I asked God for a double portion, not unlike the prophet Elisha.

Double Down

Toward the end of his ministry, the prophet Elijah knew his days were numbered. So he said to his apprentice, Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"² I suppose Elisha could have asked for any number of things, including Elijah's estate. But Elisha made no bones about what he really wanted:

Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit.³

Is it any coincidence that Elisha's curriculum vitae includes twenty-eight miracles, exactly twice as many as his prophetic mentor?⁴ I think not, but let me flip the script. The true measure of Elijah's success was not the fourteen miracles he had a hand in. It was watching the next generation do things he didn't even dare dream of. Simply put, success is succession. Please don't read that as a platitude. Success is handing the baton to those who come behind us and cheering them on as they run farther and faster than we did.

My undergraduate education began at the University of Chicago. The U of C has produced ninety-eight Nobel laureates, but I'm not sure any of them left as big an imprint on that university as its famed football coach, Amos Alonzo Stagg. Stagg coached the original Monsters of the Midway for four decades, winning two national titles in 1905 and 1913. His brainchildren include the huddle, the inside kick, the T formation, and the forward pass.⁵

Amos Alonzo Stagg invented football as we know it, but that isn't his greatest legacy. When he accepted the invitation to coach, he gave an acceptance

speech of sorts to the university president: “After much thought and prayer, I decided that my life can best be used for my Master’s service in the position you have offered.”⁶ Stagg would coach football until the age of ninety-eight, but he didn’t just coach his teams. He disciplined his players.

After one of his winning seasons, a beat reporter congratulated the coach on a job well done. Instead of passively receiving that compliment, Stagg coached that young reporter. He said in his straightforward manner, “I won’t know how good a job I did for twenty years. That’s when I’ll see how my boys turned out.”⁷

As you might imagine, Amos Alonzo Stagg was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame. What you might not know, however, is that he was inducted as both a player and a coach. But it gets even better. Stagg was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame too! In fact, Amos Alonzo Stagg coached football, basketball, *and* baseball at the University of Chicago. He actually turned down six offers to play professional baseball, but he helped a lot of future major leaguers with another one of his inventions—the batting cage!⁸

Legacy isn’t measured by what we accomplish in our lifetimes. It’s measured by our coaching tree, our mentoring chain. It’s measured by the fruit we grow on other people’s trees. It’s measured by the investments we make in others that are still earning compound interest twenty years later. It’s measured by every blessing we bestow.

The relationship between Elijah and Elisha prototypes what the double blessing is all about. After receiving Elijah’s mantle, Elisha flips the blessing by turning it into twenty-eight miracles for others! In the process, Elisha becomes Elijah’s legacy.

Elijah was Elisha’s double portion. And Elisha was Elijah’s double blessing. Whose double portion are you? And who is your double blessing?

Hit Your Knees

Under Bob Schmidgall’s leadership, Calvary Church grew to become one of the largest churches in America at the time. More significantly, it was one of the most generous mission-giving churches in the country. Of course, he kept that fact concealed as best he could, not wanting the congregation to become

self-satisfied with their level of sacrifice! And he and my mother-in-law led the way, often making financial pledges that outpaced their income.

Bob Schmidgall is a difficult portraiture to paint. When he prayed, you felt like there was no way God wouldn't answer! When he preached, it stretched your faith to believe God for bigger things. But the thing that had an impact on so many was the way he went out of his way to serve those in need. If he passed a motorist stranded with a flat tire, there was a very good chance he'd help change it. He often found himself at the hospital at all hours of the night, reading a scripture and offering an encouraging word. When I speak at churches or conferences across the country, I'll occasionally share a story about him. Almost without exception, even two decades after his death, someone from the crowd will catch me and tell me something that Bob Schmidgall did to bless them in a life-changing way.

As I stood at the foot of his casket on the day he died, thoughts and feelings flooded my mind and my heart. But this I believe: God has honored that double-portion prayer in ways I never could have conceived of.

Can I take a little pressure off your prayer life? God's blessings aren't contingent on your ability to combine the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet into some kind of abracadabra. And you definitely don't have to tell God how to do His job! News flash: God does not get nervous! And neither should we! That said, God won't answer 100 percent of the prayers we don't pray. So we do have to ask, as best we can. But we have to do more than that. One of the most common mistakes we make is thinking we can attain the level of success others have achieved without the corresponding sacrifices! Before you envy someone else's success too much or too long, you might want to count the cost. That person's success is the by-product of sacrifices others were not willing to make!

The first thing to give out on my father-in-law's pants were the knees because he spent so much time on them praying. To ask for a double portion of his anointing without hitting my knees like he did would have been disingenuous and dishonoring. The blessing of God is not a substitute for praying like it depends on God or working like it depends on us. It's a supplement. If you want success without sacrifice, good luck with that because that is exactly what you'll need—*luck*. The blessing of God is anything but a good-luck charm. You can-

not earn it, but you'll have to work for it. And while it's absolutely free, it'll cost you dearly! If you want a double blessing, be prepared to double down on your work ethic and prayer ethic!

That's why Elijah responded to Elisha's request this way: "You have asked a difficult thing."⁹

Bold Prayers

When my father-in-law passed away, National Community Church was a two-year-old toddler. We numbered fewer than a hundred people, and we wouldn't become a self-supporting church for another year. I wasn't entirely sure National Community Church was going to survive, but I banked on this core belief: *God honors bold prayers because bold prayers honor God.*

When I initially prayed that double-portion prayer, I surmised that it might translate into a church twice the size of Calvary Church. And that would have been a bold prayer back then. But I'm now convinced that a double portion means so much more than "times two"! God has answered that prayer in ways I did not propose and could not have predicted. The double portion I prayed for came through two anointings, without me even knowing. One is a calling to pastor, and the other is a calling to write. While it sometimes feels like I'm holding down two day jobs, I cannot imagine my life without one or the other.

Over the past two decades, National Community Church has grown to the size Calvary Church was when my father-in-law passed away. And I would be surprised if we did not double in size over the next decade. Of course, that's out of my control. We plant and water, but God gives the increase.¹⁰ Pastoring a church in our nation's capital isn't always easy, but I wouldn't want to be anywhere else doing anything else.

I love to preach, but most of my impact is through written words, not spoken ones. Somewhere along the way, I went from being a pastor-author to being an author-pastor. Of course, I'm grateful I get to do both. For the record, I still have some God-sized goals that haven't happened just yet, like the film scripts I've been pitching but striking out on. And I've experienced my fair share of failure. But I genuinely believe that whatever measure of impact I've experienced as a pastor and as an author traces back to that double-portion prayer at the foot

of my father-in-law's casket. I hope it honors his legacy and flips the blessing, just like Elisha's double portion.

Prisoners of Hope

The concept of the double blessing has been used and abused by name-it-and-claim-it preachers for longer than I've been alive. I understand the dangers of misinterpretation and misapplication as it relates to God's promises, but we better not throw the blessing out with the bathwater! We must understand what it is and what it isn't. The double blessing is not *health, wealth, and prosperity*. It's not a 200 percent return on every investment either. It's something bigger and better than that.

There are half a dozen "double promises" in Scripture. The prophet Isaiah promised a double portion of joy or prosperity, depending on your translation of choice.¹¹ The apostle Paul conferred double honor on those who lead well.¹² And as we've just explored, a double portion of Elijah's spirit netted twice as many miracles in the ministry of Elisha. But perhaps the most unique binary blessing in the Bible is declared by the prophet Zechariah:

Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;
today I declare that I will restore to you double.¹³

The prophet Zechariah declared this double blessing to Jewish prisoners of war, but he called them prisoners of hope. Those are polar opposites, are they not? So which is it—prisoners of war or prisoners of hope? That depends on your perspective, doesn't it? If you let your circumstances define the way you see God, you are a prisoner of perspective. Or worse, a prisoner of your past mistakes! But if you let God define the way you see your circumstances, you are a prisoner of hope.

Please don't let anyone name you except God. You are not the labels people put on you. You are who God says you are! You are the apple of God's eye.¹⁴ You are the object of His affection.¹⁵ You are more than a conqueror.¹⁶

Israel had experienced a bitter defeat at the hands of Babylonians. They were at the mercy of their captors, who had defiled their temple and mocked their

God. But God reminded them of who would have the last laugh. For their pain, He prescribed the promise of double blessing.

The NIV says, “I will restore twice as much to you.”

The KJV says, “I will render double unto thee.”

The NLT says, “I will repay two blessings for each of your troubles.”

We’ve got to be very careful not to turn biblical principles into quadratic equations. Yes, better is one day in the courts of the Lord than a thousand elsewhere.¹⁷ But I’m not convinced that the psalmist was formulating a one-thousand-to-one ratio. After all, the blessing of God’s presence cannot be reduced to hours or minutes any more than to dollars or cents. A day is like a thousand years to God,¹⁸ yet He exists outside our four dimensions of space-time. So time is immaterial to an eternal God.

That said, let’s not underestimate the blessings of God either or ignore the fact that God is the one who promises a double blessing. I recognize that this promise was given to Jewish refugees living in the fifth century BC, but I also believe it belongs to us. Why? Because the God who made the promise is the same yesterday, today, and forever.¹⁹ Because every spiritual blessing is ours in Christ.²⁰ And because “no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.”²¹

You cannot claim the promises of God like a game of Pin the Tail on the Donkey, but every promise has your name on it. Every blessing in the Bible is part and parcel of our spiritual birthright by virtue of what Christ accomplished on the cross. Positioning ourselves for those blessings begins by kneeling at the foot of the cross and ends with us casting our crowns before the throne of God. In between, we flip every blessing.

The Best Is Yet to Come

The book of Job may be the oldest book of the Bible, but it strikes a timeless chord. Everything that was precious to Job—his family, his health, his livelihood—was taken from him. Job didn’t just survive those setbacks; he gave God the sacrifice of praise. At his lowest point, he blessed the God who gives and the God who takes away.²²

At my father-in-law’s funeral, I did my best to pull a Job. Fortunately, our

friends and family did a better job of consoling us than Job's did consoling him. I'll never forget the person who picked up all our shoes and shined them before the funeral. It was a small act of kindness, but it meant the world to us. And it's those kinds of blessings that I make a mental note of and try to flip.

There was also a word of encouragement that our family held on to. If Bob Schmidgall had a Jonathan, it was Betta Mengistu. And during our darkest days, Uncle Betta's words were a lifeline: "When we have a setback, we do not take a step back, because God is already preparing our comeback." Spoken by anyone else, those words would not have carried the same weight. In fact, they may have had the opposite effect. Spoken by him, they helped us bear the burden of grief.

Hold that thought.

A few years ago, I was part of a panel at a conference with Bob Goff. Bob is one of my favorite people on the planet, and he has a way of saying things that simplifies and amplifies the good news of the gospel. I can't remember the question, but Bob's answer was incredibly encouraging: "The best chapter titles come later."

Maybe you're in a chapter titled "Setback," be that a bitter divorce, a bad decision, or a difficult diagnosis. You can't have a chapter titled "Comeback" without having a prior chapter titled "Setback." That's the story of Job's life, isn't it? The book of Job reads like a tragedy until the last chapter, but God gets the last laugh. The best chapter is the last chapter, and it could be titled "Double Blessing."

When Job prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes. In fact, the LORD gave him twice as much as before!²³

Is there someone you need to pray for? Like Job it may be a friend who offended you, or it may be a boss who betrayed you. Not only does the act of forgiveness break the curse of bitterness, but it also invokes the blessing of God. Let forgiveness begin a new chapter in your life!

Now, did you notice the specificity of what God did? It says that the Lord gave him *twice* as much as before. But who's counting, right? I'll tell you who—the God who catches our tears in His bottle.²⁴ Please don't turn this passage into

a formulaic promise, but please know that the Lord doesn't lose track of the things we've suffered.

The LORD blessed Job in the second half of his life even more than in the beginning. For now he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 teams of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys.²⁵

What I find fascinating about this double blessing is the fact that it's in alignment with old covenant law. If a thief was found guilty of stealing an animal, the price of recompense was paying back double.²⁶ Why wouldn't that hold true for the thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy?²⁷

If you have experienced heart-wrenching loss like Job, finding a new normal is not easy. It takes time to get back on your feet, and I would exhort you to take your time! If you try to shortcut sorrow, it short-circuits the soul. While I cannot promise that the pain will go away and never come back, the peace of God will help you manage it. And the promises of God will help you overcome it.

When your heart begins to heal, will you be bold enough to believe God for a double blessing? Will you be brave enough to believe that God wants to bless the second half of your life even more than the first half? Remember, a game is never won at halftime. And it's not lost either! Because I believe that the blessings of God overtake obedience,²⁸ I believe in second-half rallies and fourth-quarter comebacks! And I believe that for you. The question is, do you?

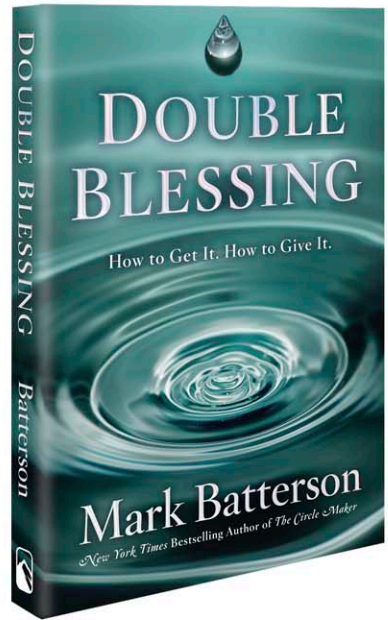
Now let me double back to Zechariah's promise.

I'm partial to *The Message's* paraphrase: "This very day I'm declaring a double bonus." If you are in relationship with Jesus Christ, there is no double jeopardy. Your sin is forgiven and forgotten. Yet as amazing as that is, it's only half the gospel. Not only is the debt of our sin paid in full, but the righteousness of Christ is also transferred to our account. And, I might add, all of it. If that's not a double bonus, what is? And it includes every spiritual blessing in Christ.

I've lived through chapters titled "Failure," and they're frustrating. My storyline contains "Heartache," and it still hurts. My table of contents includes "Pain" and "Suffering," but there is a God who is working all things together for the good of those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose.²⁹ And because of that, the best is yet to come!

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