

FOREWORD BY JAMES W. GOLL

*Supernatural*  
PROVISION

WHERE GOD GUIDES, HE PROVIDES



MARK HENDRICKSON

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DESTINY IMAGE® PUBLISHERS, INC.

P.O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310

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ISBN 13 TP: 978-0-7684-4091-1

ISBN 13 Ebook: 978-0-7684-8876-0

For Worldwide Distribution, Printed in the U.S.A.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 / 15 14 13 12 11

# *Dedication*

This book is dedicated to our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Just as my previous generations have surpassed each of their parents in spiritual knowledge and experience, so it is my desire to create a position of faith for each of you to excel in your security in the love of God, to know the unmerited favor and provision of God and to be completely “comfortable in your skin,” knowing that you are as He is in this world (see 1 John 4:17). Each one of you is my joy and crown.

There have been times when I’ve restrained myself from sin and excesses so that I wouldn’t compromise your foundation, and there have been times when I’ve determined to press into God because I knew that your future exploits in God depended upon my successes in God. A part of my heart is, even now, living in your day and longing to see what you’ll see. I daydream about you and wonder what mind-blowing Kingdom realities you’ll experience. What as yet unheard of, stunning revelations will be commonplace for you? What bizzare signs and wonders will accompany you and stagger the hearts and minds of all who witness them? What new dimensions of Heaven will be easy for you to access? And truly, when I daydream about you, I see each of you as impassioned participants ushering the Kingdom of Heaven into this earth until, “*The kingdom*” (Rev. 11:15).

God’s promise to me is Isaiah 60:21, “*Your people shall **all** be righteous.*” So to each of you, I prophecy that your minds and spirits will easily recognize and readily respond to the voice of God, absolutely love the Presence of God, cherish and walk in the ways of God until you are unshakably established as marvelous kings and co-rulers with Jesus here on this earth!

# *Acknowledgments*

A huge “Thank you” to my wife Debbie, who is worthy of my love and gratitude for so many reasons. Thank you for joining with me in this life-long lesson of learning to trust God for everything...and then encouraging me to write about our adventures. We’ve had a few lean times and many amazing adventures...and in the end, it’s all good.

Immeasurable gratitude is due to both sets of our parents (two of whom have entered into their eternal reward). Thank you for loving Jesus so well. The lasting effects of your faith walk continue to echo through most everything we do and every decision we make. We’re eternally indebted to you. Thank you! We love you and are so very proud of you.

Thanks to my children, who’ve listened to me share my revelations so many times until it’s pleasantly kind of “scary” when I hear them echoing my concepts and terminology. You make me smile... and make me extremely proud as I watch your own confident faith in Jehovah’s unmerited provision gain you one trophy testimony after another.

Thank you to those who’ve suggested, and even prophesied, that I should write. Over the years, your gracious responses to my piecemeal writings have contributed greatly to the confidence necessary to tackle this project. Thank you to all those who proofread the manuscript and submitted copious helpful suggestions. And thank you to Cheryl, Amy, and Erinn for your gracious professional help with graphics and photography.

Thank You to my Heavenly Father for nurturing and affirming my heart with Your kind touch and voice. Thank You for helping me learn confidence and security in Your better-than-I-thought love. Thank You for lovingly taking me on a life journey to find my heart messages and for helping me to extract the “gold” from life’s lessons. You are the very best Leader and my best Friend.

# ***Endorsements***

I have known Mark for nearly 30 years and over the past decade I have personally watched him walk out the ideas expressed in his new book *Supernatural Provision*. His book should help everyone realize that the blessing of co-laboring with the Father was meant to be a joyful delight free from dutiful drudgery filled with fear and anxiety. He truly is an amazing man of humility and honor and I consider him a best friend whom I often look to for guidance.

Bob Hartley  
President and Founder of  
the Hartley Group & Deeper Waters Ministry  
bobhartley.org  
Kansas City, MO

My friendship with Mark and his lifestyle of simple faith has always inspired me to live a life of total trust in the provision of our Father. Now his book takes us to the bedrock of the words of Christ in Scripture and provides a roadmap inviting all of us to live in an all out pursuit of God's "higher laws" of supernatural provision. My heart longs for this and I invite everyone to this adventure of faith.

PASTOR GARY SCHMITZ  
Executive Director Citywide Prayer Movement KC  
citywideprayerkc.com  
Kansas City, MO

Living by faith today often means living by everyone else's faith. We make all of our needs known and even solicit support and call it living by faith. Mark and his family speak to God alone regarding their needs and they watch Him honor their faith as they trust in their sovereign Provider. We are so busy and so impatient that we have lost the posture of waiting on God for His marvelous faith building provision. We are so grateful that the

Lord has led Mark and the Hendrickson family to re-pioneer this critical facet of the Gospel. May this book profoundly impact, undergird and promote the spread of this rare but much needed prototype.

LARRY ALBERTS

Director of Families of Nations Gathering Unto Him

[gatheringuntohim.org](http://gatheringuntohim.org)

[wayofthelord.org](http://wayofthelord.org)

Blaine, MN

For the believer, life is not a strife-laden burden, but a romantic adventure with Jesus. *Supernatural Provision* can help you find a place of true rest in your soul.

BOB SORGE

author

[oasishouse.com](http://oasishouse.com)

Kansas City, MO

I highly recommend *Supernatural Provision*. There are so few books on this subject, especially one like this book which highlights God's desire to bless His people, in contrast to, as Mark points out, a "lower law" of sowing and reaping. He challenges the reader to come up in their faith, yet gives them great grace in the journey. Read this, but when you're done, keep it handy because you'll want to refer to it over and over again.

CHRIS DUPRÉ

Worship Leader / Pastor / Speaker,

Book author of '*The Wild Love of God*'

Song writer of 'Dance with Me'

[facebook.com/chrisdupre](https://facebook.com/chrisdupre)

Franklin, TN

I have had a 26 year relationship with Mark Hendrickson. He is a man full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and has lived this adventurous life of faith. I believe Mark. He deals with challenge of the "Good Fight of Faith." So you will be challenged and blessed in the reading of this account of a man and his day to day walk in the midst of the righteousness that comes by faith.

NOEL ALEXANDER  
Founder of Love Mercy  
Intercessor of the Nations  
lovemercy.com  
Olathe, KS

Mark Hendrickson is a man of integrity and faith who, along with his family, has earnestly pursued God and His kingdom as the foremost priority of life. This is one family's testimony of God's faithfulness to His kingdom promises. Inspiring, informative, challenging!

JOHN WESLEY ADAMS  
Associate Editor of the Life in the Spirit Study Bible  
Grandview, MO

It's been an honor of be a part of Mark and Debbie Hendrickson's life since 1983. In fact, I've personally watched them lean on, depend on, run to and watchfully expect God to break into and move in the area of finance, along with every other area they have contended for. Their journey is truly a journey of *Supernatural Provision*. Even now, I am reminded of the many times when Mark has shared stories of the provision of God and we'd say, "Mark you have to write these stores down. Your journey will give great encouragement to the whole body of Christ." This book is their story of *Supernatural Provision* in the everyday lives of someone just like you and me. I believe that as you read these pages you also will be greatly encouraged to expect God to meet you with *Supernatural Provision*.

JULIE MEYER  
singer / songwriter / speaker  
International House Of Prayer - KC  
juliemeyer.com  
Kansas City, MO

If there is ever a time that we need to know the ways of the Father, it's now. Many times, the Lord hides His servants in the crucible of testing in order to establish their hearts so that they can emerge to impart their revelation of the Kingdom to a world around them. Over the years of knowing Mark and Debbie, I have observed them increase in the out-of-the-

box way of knowing God as ‘Jehovah Jireh, the Lord our Provider’. They have learned some secrets of the ways of God that are essential for all of us to understand. *Supernatural Provision* is not just about principles, but it is the lifestyle and testimony they have lived-out in God’s provision. Be ready to be free from worry and striving in regards to God meeting your needs so that you can be free to just love God and love others.

ED KALNINS  
pastor  
wasillaag.org  
Wasilla, AK

Every once in a while in life, we bump into someone who gets it. Mark is one of those people. He understands that Jesus is our great Reward. He is our Prize, He is our Pearl and the Treasure we cherish. I’ve watched Mark live these truths for over a decade. And now in *Supernatural Provision*, Mark skillfully presents the keys found in Scripture to open new territories. He leads the reader right into the available and exceeding abundance God intends for His people. The bottom line? Provision Happens in His Presence. A must-read choice!

NANCY MAGIERA  
Founder & Director of The Chicago HUB  
hubministries.org  
Chicago, IL

Watching the Hendrickson’s lifestyle of ministry has been a source of great encouragement for me as they have lived and breathed the words written on the pages of this book, as well as THE Book, like few people I know. I have been fascinated and in awe of their lifestyle of ‘being about the Father’s business’ regardless of what it might or might not bring to them personally. I’ve watched them do this in every aspect of their lives over the past 25 years as they have hit some potentially devastating circumstances and yet, have not wavered from living life according to the words in this book. God has met them in amazing ways and they’ve been a blessing to those around them as well as those in far off nations. Their faith IN God has created in them the faith OF God. I HIGHLY recommend *Supernatural*

*Provision* as it lays out in a provoking way the higher road of walking with God as opposed to working for God. I love how Mark has laid out the truths so easily missed as we ‘do church’ in our western culture with the mixture of man’s ideas. To walk with God in the grace He intended seems very do-able in *Supernatural Provision*.

JOANN MCFATTER  
singer / song writer  
joannmcfatter.com  
Foley, Alabama

Many have written about God providing through our jobs, our financial acumen, and/or our investment portfolios. And that can be true, as it can be true on a certain level that God heals through doctors and medicines. But precious few have drilled down to biblical bedrock on the issue of provision. Mark has done so in *Supernatural Provision*, and what gives his book extra gravitas is that he is a practitioner. He has incarnated his book’s contents for decades. His book, and his life, are a breath of fresh, old (first century) air. Mark’s book could not be more timely, or necessary.

MIKE HIGGS  
President of Sondance  
author / prayer mobilizer / youth leader  
sondancers.blogspot.com  
Carey, Idaho

I’ve known Mark and his wife Debbie for 28 years and seen their faith rise up and believe for provision and receive it. Mark’s message about supernatural faith for provision will inspire your faith to soar to a new height. He’s a just man who has lived by faith. *Supernatural Provision* will be a great blessing that will help you stand strong in a time of testing.

BOB JONES  
speaker  
bobjones.org  
Ft Mill, SC

I’m so very happy Mark has written “a” book (because I have always found his newsletters to be rich and refreshing), and that he has written

“this” book (because I know Mark and his family have proved its principles where it counts—in the laboratory of life)! Over the years Sandy and I have been blessed to sit under the ministries of Mark and Deb and their amazing family. We’ve shared great times of fellowship in a variety of places, including their home. On every occasion we have been hugely impacted by their authenticity, warmheartedness, and wit. One of the things I love most about Mark is he has always been like a heat-seeking missile, his target being wherever even the smallest embers of revival fires could be found. On the ‘pioneer-settler’ continuum, Mark will always be found on the extreme edge of “pioneer.” The reader will find *Supernatural Provision* to bear this out!

DAVE NOEL  
Director of Indianapolis  
School of Supernatural Ministry  
Indianapolis, IN  
WeRevive.org  
IgniteIndy.blogspot.com

Everyone who aspires to live a life full of faith with their finances needs a go-around with Mark Hendrickson’s book: *Supernatural Provision*. He writes it from his family’s deep experience of living in Kingdom provision. I love the statement made several times that, ‘God is the best banker’. You the reader, will feel empowered to not see finances as scary; or giving extravagantly as a once in a lifetime opportunity, but you will be able to align your expectation for God’s provision with good theology and begin to make more conscientious choices on how to live in His abundant supply. Mark and his family have definitely lived this out and have become inspirations to us all.

SHAWN BOLZ  
Director of Expression58 Ministries  
Author of: *Keys to Heaven’s Economy*,  
*The Nonreligious Guide to Dating & Being Single*,  
*The Throne Room company*  
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# *Foreword by James W. Goll*

God calls us to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth! It is His original plan, and He has never changed the blueprint. He wants us to exercise dominion in the earth realm. But He does not expect us to do it all on our own, otherwise it would be by the sweat of our brow, and we would beat our chest like Tarzan and claim we are the greatest in the jungle.

Truth is, our God is the greatest in the universe and beyond! He is the greatest creator, the greatest imaginator, the greatest speaker, the greatest provider, and the greatest Father! He made us in His image also! So, wow, what a great deal is that! We are created to model God's eternal life realm in the earthly dimension. But it takes God to know God, and it takes God's supernatural assistance to walk in supernatural provision.

I believe in diligence. So does Jesus! Jesus is the one who said that if we are faithful in little He will make us faithful in much! The principle He taught His disciples, (that is you and me by the way,) that faithfulness brings increase. But He did not leave us just to walk in an earthly plane in excellence, diligence, and faithfulness. There is another dimension. There is a higher path. It is the "way of the supernatural."

I have personally written much about these supernatural ways in some of my books: *God Encounters*, *The Seer*, *Dream Language*, *Prayer Storm*, *Angelic Encounters*, and others. So when I saw that my friends of many years, Mark and Debbie Hendrickson, were tackling the much needed subject of *Supernatural Provision*, I thought, "Yes, Lord! About time!" I went on my first missions trip with Mark and his father to Guatemala many years ago. So this family holds a sweet spot in my heart today! In fact, I know for certain that this lifestyle of faith, provision, and the supernatural has been passed down to their kids, and it is becoming a generational legacy! Wow! I want that!

So this book is not about a theory. This book really is about *God's Ways not Human Ways!* Come on now, let's trust that our Jehovah Jireh really is our provider! Be inspired to model the life that the Hendricksons have lived for years, that the Holy Spirit really does above and beyond all that we could ever ask or even imagine! Why? Because that is His nature! Did you hear me? Our Father in Heaven is a good Daddy, and if He gave us His best in His son Jesus, then it is easy to believe that He also freely gives us all good things we need to do His will! Watch out! This book will expose old levels of doubt that might be unperceived and release you from the bondage of an orphan spirit that believes you are all alone and you have to work it all out yourself!

He is a good Daddy! Bill Johnson and others have said, "The best-kept secret in the body of Christ is that God is in a good mood!" But guess what, it is not even just that God is in a good mood! He has a good nature! Oh I love it! When that sinks down into your heart, your spirit and your mind get renewed by the truths of the written word of Scripture, and you get filled with the Spirit of revelation; then you know that you know that you know that you are not alone in this journey and that He is more than able. In fact, He is more than able, He is willing to do exceedingly abundantly above and beyond all that you or I can ask or think! Just awesome!

I have been challenged by the life this couple lives. They are modern-day epistles of the truths contained in this book. So with joy abounding, it is my honor to commend to you the life, the ministry, and now the writings of this dear family! Thanks, Mark, for picking up the generational torch and passing it on to the next generations!

With Gratitude,

James W. Goll

Encounters Network • Prayer Storm • Compassion Acts  
Author of *The Seer*, *The Lost Art of Intercession*,  
*The Coming Israel Awakening*, and many more

# *Foreword by Noel Alexander*

Mark and I have prayed together in hundreds of prayer meetings over the last 25 plus years. We've contended in prayer together for noble themes such as the massive outpouring of God's power and glory over the whole earth. And we've also prayed for personal and daily needs such as health and finances. Along the way, God has encouraged us by giving dreams to inspire us, and He's given us revelation in Scripture to increase our faith for persistence in prayer. Some of the answers to those prayers are still in the making. But some have been tangibly fulfilled and are now an integral part of each of our lives. One such area is the matter of God's provision.

Let's face it, almost everyone has some level of anxiety over the areas of financial provision. Even living in the world's most prosperous country, our American society is still saddled with this *giant* of anxiety over finances. If we're going to hit this thing head on, we have to grapple with understanding God's great intentions to give us the *free* gift of His favor in every area of our lives. It's all about God's love plus...nothing.

Martin Lloyd Jones, the famous minister of [Westminster Chapel](#) in [London](#), once said, "If you understand Romans 4:3, and get it by revelation, you'll probably find out that it's the most important passage in the Bible." This thing called *justification by faith* is something that you can't get by merit, "...it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any one should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

Romans 4:4 goes on to say, "*Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.*" Simply, this means that if a man works he receives a wage that is now owed to him. It's supposed to work that way. You work; you get paid.

But it's the unseen realm of Romans 4:5 that we're focusing on in Supernatural Provision. In this realm, a man does *not* work and yet receives. "*However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the*

*ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness*” (NIV). To be sure, for this thing to have effect in us, we must be connected to Jesus by faith. But when we’re connected to Jesus, then we’re connected to the promises of God. And it’s then that our faith can be credited to us and we’re given the right to appropriate even the natural things.

Now, I understand that intrinsically and purely this verse applies to salvation and justification by faith. So I’ve got that, but on the other hand, I live day to day. There is the whole realm of the economics of our day. The fact of the matter is that it all comes down to something called provision. And that is exactly where I believe another level of revelation becomes available for us from this passage.

We have to know that the Lord is *into* provision. For 40 years in the wilderness, the Israelites’ shoes didn’t wear out and they never ran out of food. And just think of it: They came out of Egypt laden with treasure. There’s no doubt about it; God is into provision! Poverty is a curse. Plenty is a blessing.

Now I would tend to be more of a legalistic doctrinal person with blinders to peripheral meanings of Scripture, but the Lord came to me and said, “This whole thing in Romans 4 has to do with freedom. This is what the Gospel is all about.” I’m convinced that it’s impossible to make the Gospel bigger than it is. It’s awesome! Just think of it, for 4,000 years the Old Testament saints couldn’t do it. Then Jesus came. He did it and handed us the results. We’d be fools not to enjoy our inheritance!

Once I was sitting on my sofa watching Morris Cerullo on television. He was talking about financial provision when he said, “This whole thing takes faith.” And then he turned toward the camera and said, “There’s a pastor watching me right now!”

I said, “That’s me!” I turned to my wife Mieke, and said, “He’s talking to me.”

At that, Morris said, “Yes, you!”

I said, “Yes, me! Morris you are talking to me.” He said, “For you, it’s just going to come out of heaven. I know the faith thing is Jesus, but for you it’s just going to come out of heaven.”

He went on to tie this phenomenal gift of God's provision to our level of giving in every area of our lives: spiritually, naturally, and financially. If we want to receive God's way, then we must give God's way. Jesus said, "*Freely you have received, freely give*" (Matt. 10:8). And in accordance with Morris' words, provision seems to have literally come out of heaven. In the two years following, we paid off our house loan, which was \$145,000. I could probably go back and tell you where it came from, but on my salary, no way! It just came out of heaven. I still look back today and say that it's a miracle.

I'm quite in touch with the doctrines of grace, and I love theology because it's all about Jesus. And we know that it takes faith to believe and walk in these things. That's an entirely settled matter with me. But there's another realm where the Scripture says, "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Heb. 11:1). I know that spiritually that refers to Jesus. Faith is substance, which is Jesus, whom we don't see, yet believe. But still, we live in America with economics and all of those things. It is another level of faith to believe God for "*him who does not work but believes God*" and then to see provision coming out of the atmosphere and laid in our hands. It's tremendous. It's like "*out of the mouth of two witnesses let a thing be established*" (see 2 Cor. 13:1). The one witness is the faith I have in Christ who is unseen, but the other witness is the faith *substance* I have for natural provision. When those two *witnesses* agree, Morris Cerullo said, "It's like manna for you. It will just come out of the heavens." It's incredible. It's the super becoming natural, which comes into our hands and literally pays the bills that we all have.

In 2001, Graham Cooke prophesied "unparalleled and unprecedented favor of the Lord for those who have unwavering faith." I printed copies and went on a retreat with some men to read and pray over that prophecy because it resonated so deeply in our hearts. We made a determination to walk in the fulfillment of that word.

Now I love unparalleled and unparalleled favor. Who doesn't? Prosperity is the inheritance of the sons of God. Why should a King's son live outside of the provision of the King? But it was contingent on this, "When the economy of America goes down, you will go up." Somehow the

Lord gave me faith for this. I'm not an economist or investor. I just got a hold of this. I laid hold of it. The current shaking of the American economy has left millions in the midst of bankruptcy and sitting in the chair of fear because their jobs are on the line. There is nothing guaranteed. The economy has gone down, and in the midst of that time, the Lord has graciously waited to pour out His favor. In the middle of that shaking, I started going up. I said, "This is incredible." It was not a hope-so or a wish or a maybe. It literally happened to me, what Graham said: "You are going up," and I said, "I *am* going up." Provision just came out of heaven. And it's just going to come out of heaven for you also.

Some years ago, a friend called me from South Africa and said, "I was reading Isaiah 58:14, and I just had to call you. The Lord said, 'You will ride the heights and feast on the wealth of your father Jacob.'" I can honestly say that is what has happened. Now what happens tomorrow—well, that's another day. But I've been riding the heights of my father, Jacob.

We must learn to live like Jacob and his people in Goshen. The man who lives in Goshen knows how to go out into Egypt and how to come back in again. In the early days, Bob Jones said to us, "You guys are going to have to learn how to go out and come in. You don't go out and sleep in Egypt. You go out into Egypt and you take from there, then you come back into Goshen." What I'm saying is that we must be anchored in the blessing and favor of Goshen while at the same time we're able to walk out in Egypt without it diminishing our unwavering faith for supernatural provision.

Touching the aspect of faith is no small thing. This kind of faith is called appropriating faith. Yes, you appropriate for your salvation and your justification, then you wake up and find that it's yours. But there's another level of appropriating faith for living in the tangible prosperity of God. It's almost like faith has to be "ratcheted up" to be able to receive something out of the ethereal, apart from work. That is serious stuff.

This is a great, great subject. *Supernatural Provision* will be a challenge to the Body of Christ. But it's for everyone who has faith to cross the Jordan concerning this. Yes, there's provision in the wilderness, but then

there's a whole new land called the Promised Land where you live in houses that you did not build, you eat from vineyards that you did not plant, and reap harvests you didn't sow (see Deut. 6:10-11). You just walk into it. It's an amazing realm, but it's real. It just happens.

This faith realm is a wonderful realm. I wish I could touch it more, but it's a holy faith. This is God working. You don't want to treat it lightly. You want to treat it in a holy fashion, with "*clean hands and a pure heart*," because this faith appropriates things, and it brings substance to you. It's no small thing.

To use faith and wisdom together is to truly live. "*The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it*" (Prov. 10:22). People are so quick to spiritualize this...you know "rich in faith" and all of this. They imply that it means that we get warm fuzzies now and crowns on That Great Day. I understand that and it's all true, but still Monday comes around and you have children, you have bills, you have crisis, and you have fiscal responsibilities. That's when this *second wind* of faith must come in for us to truly believe God. This *second wind* is a quest which many will not attain, and for many, it's mostly frustration. But it's real nonetheless.

Jesus said, "*According to your faith let it be to you*" (Matt. 9:29). You want to use faith in a holy way. But then, I don't want to miss the benefits of faith either. It gives you substance and sustenance. There's a whole higher realm of appropriating faith that moves that lower realm away, and it believes God. It believes that God owns everything, and He gives from out of His goodness.

So we have the truth, and it will set us free; now how about something in our hands? I understand that we live by faith and not by sight; however, it's very fun to see it! I mean like the revival we've been praying into for over 30 years. I love prayer meetings. Sometimes I love prayer meetings more than anything else. But I will *really* be fulfilled and ride the wings of the wind when the Lord fulfills what we've prayed for. I'll think that I've died and gone to Heaven. I'll be like Simeon who prayed daily in the temple and finally exclaimed, "*Now my eyes have beheld...*" I believe the Lord is

going to give us what we ask for, and that's why we continue reaching in faith for massive revival to break out.

But as pertaining to faith for supernatural provision, the evidence is already here. As in First John 1:1, we tell you of those things which we have seen and touched. In these areas, we've dared to take Jesus' words at face value and believe that He meant exactly what He said, and His Word is happening in our lives. As Mark and I have experienced new levels of supernatural provision along the way, it's been our great joy to celebrate each other's victories. This supernatural provision revelation is no longer a theory or wish; it is now a documentable fact and substantial part of our history in God.

Mark's book may rock the boat of some people's traditional value systems, but then much of Jesus' ministry did exactly that same thing in His day. Get ready as *Supernatural Provision* opens up a new possibility of living without debt and with freedom from pressures and fears about provision. And be prepared for your understanding of God's goodness to be expanded beyond what you've ever believed.

Now may the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation be your escort.

Noel Alexander

# *Jehovah Jireh*

Genesis 22:14:

*And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen (KJV).*

Jehovah Jireh usually translates as “the Lord will provide” or “the God who provides” or “God will see to it.” The Hebrew word transliterated *jireh* is actually a form of the common verb *Ra’ah* (“to see”).<sup>1</sup> When Isaac asked Abraham where the lamb was for the burnt offering, Abraham replied, “*God Himself will see to it.*” He was confidently declaring that God had everything under His control and would provide what was needed at the right time.

The following word in Hebrew means Jehovah Jireh.

יְהוָה יִרְאֶה

It will be used as a separator when there is a significant change in thought. You may want to think of it as a *Selah* (commonly found in Psalms), which encourages the reader to take a moment to ponder the previous thought before proceeding further.

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## **Endnote:**

1. James Strong, *Biblesoft’s New Exhaustive Strong’s Numbers and Concordance with Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*, (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, Inc. 1994,2003,2006). H7200.

# *Introduction*

How many mornings have you jumped out of bed, eaten your breakfast, jumped into your car, and headed to work and just wondered why life had to be like this—so predictable, so bland, so ho-hum? Yet it seems that humans have resigned themselves to an almost mindless, methodic day-in and day-out routine. How robotic! How demeaning, to think that the bulk of our lives has to be frittered away serving a machine or a boss who may not care. And all for what? A few measly dollars each week! What is the value of people if most of the waking hours in their lives are consumed with this? What a sad commentary on God’s highest creation when they are enslaved to this back-breaking, mind-numbing servitude! Why is it that we’ve settled for what the world around us calls “normal,” but is really a life of servitude to an uninspiring taskmaster while we’re barely scrounging enough provision to pay the bills?

When we step back from our lives to try to get a better perspective and we clear our heads for a moment, the lifestyle that we’ve adopted as *normal* is quite overwhelming and even somewhat embarrassing. It just doesn’t seem right with all that we’ve come to know about God.

For much of my life I’ve tried to make a living from my carpentry skills while trying to juggle ministry at the same time. Carpentry paid the bills most of the time. Rarely did we have any money left over, and we’ve been in debt frequently. Debt and worrying about provision taxed our emotional and physical reserves. As my wife Debbie and I raised our family of four children, I kept thinking there had to be more to life than this. What would life be like if we didn’t have to worry about money another day in our lives?

For more than a decade, as a friend and I prayed into challenging Scriptures, we found hope rise in our hearts for just that possibility. Experiments in faith yielded slow but measurable results. As faith grew and

provision appeared, it freed me up from my vocation as carpenter and released me into what my heart truly loved—ministry, which has been our full-time activity for over twelve years. It's still a walk of faith, but our hearts are more alive and not dominated by fear of not having enough. There is always enough in our bank account to pay next month's bills. Occasionally it gets right down to the wire, but all bills have consistently been paid on time. There is an undergirding solid confidence in God's provision, which has lifted off the life-sapping preoccupation with working for a living. God has proven to us that He really wants to be our Provider.

A personal and gracious invitation is offered from God's love-struck heart to everyone who will receive it. Yes, He wants to be more than gracious. He wants to be our glory and the lifter of our heads. He wants to lift off the heavy yoke. In fact, did He not say, "*Come to me all ye that are weak and weary and heavy laden...and I'll give you rest for your souls*"? (see Matt. 11:28). Didn't Jesus say that He came to give us life, and life more abundantly (see John 10:10)? Then there must be a better reality available to us, better than the one we're currently living. And now for the good news: *There is a better reality!* It's waiting for those who've become friends with God and who are daring enough to get out of the boat to walk on the water.

This book's mission is to present a position of truth, which is in contrast to the commonly accepted mindset of earning a living. I'm going to raise a standard and offer an invitation to many desperate souls who want something more meaningful, even eternal, out of life.

Undoubtedly, this book will *push some buttons*, and readers may experience flare-ups of rebuttal from time to time. Yet I make no apology for presenting a fairly one-sided view regarding how to receive our provision because in my experience this view is rarely spoken about and even less is it successfully modeled. Throughout the text and at the end of each chapter, there are personal testimonies and study questions to jar our status quo mindsets. The intent is that the answers will reveal our hearts so that we can make an honest assessment of ourselves and thus initiate an escape into God's amazing care.

So I make this disclaimer: This writing is not a full treatise on the matter of finances and God's provision. There are many brilliant authors before me who have made finances their life study and have posited profound and invaluable concepts for acquiring and stewarding assets. Rather, *Supernatural Provision* presents a way of living free from financial anxiety that some brave explorers have found not only possible, but even exciting and liberating.

If you are inclined to try this journey into God's provision, be prepared for it to take from two to ten years before you find a position of faith and history that will make you confident in His supply. As you get to know the gracious heart of God and His intentions to truly take care of your every need, you'll be surprised to find that your faith will begin to support your walk with God. Living in this dynamic interaction between you and God will make your relationship with Him much more relevant and alive.

Maybe I should offer some qualifiers for this message. This message is dangerous to the lazy person, but liberating to the wise. The slacker might be tempted to use this message to justify laziness. But the wise will recognize golden nuggets of revelation when they resonate in the deep places of the heart. Some may think that I'm advocating a life without work or manual labor. That would be an incorrect assumption. Doubtless we've heard the phrase about the person whose head is in the clouds, "That person is so heavenly-minded that they are of no earthly good." Hear me out: That's not the objective we're reaching for here. There are some great merits to manual labor, which we'll discuss in detail. But I *do* believe that God has made it abundantly clear that He wants to be our sole *provider*!

There is a minority of people around the world who truly enjoy their workaday jobs. Maybe they've found a reward and joy in their daily activity that transcends pursuing a livelihood. To me, that's an exciting possibility. If I can find something that my heart delights in, then I'll never have to feel like I'm just cranking out uninspired dutiful labor for the rest of my life. When that happens, my life begins to have more meaning than just serving the *almighty dollar*.

I hope to establish a foundation for a better way of putting food on the table. In fact, I believe that this offering has been made to all who are willing and daring enough to break free of societal trends—to go exploring in God’s heart for a way that brings more freedom and vibrancy to every aspect of our lives.

With our global economies rocking and reeling, this may be the most timely book you could read because God’s economy is not affected by this world’s systems. His Kingdom reality is light-years above the kingdoms of this earth. He never needs a bailout or handout. He makes manna out of His spoken word, feeds five thousand from a lunch sack, and makes gold coins appear in a fish’s mouth. No earthly boundary limits His ability to demonstrate His unfailing extravagant love to His beloved.

Fellow pioneer, I hope you find this book refreshing and stimulating. May your heart leap within you as you hear the *rhema* voice of God invite you into a higher way. If you’re of sufficient character to handle the rigors of this journey and have a strong heart to press against the norms of this world and are eager for adventure, then read on. Keep this perspective of God in mind; He has hidden some precious things just for you and can hardly wait until you find them. Consider this writing to be vital permission and your launching pad into *Supernatural Provision*.

# CHAPTER 1



## *Lower Law vs. Higher Law*

“Luke, my son, God has two laws: a lower law and a higher law which govern how provision comes to us. Most people choose the lower law by default simply because they don’t know they have a choice, nor have they been able to observe a successful model of the higher law. If they’ve not seen a successful model, then they don’t know what to reach for.”

“Dad, do you have to call it a lower law and a higher law?” My son was feeling uncomfortable with the implied polarization that is created when you choose between the two laws.

“But Luke, in all of life we are faced with choices for the lesser or choices for the better. Scripture says, ‘Choose this day...’ (see Josh. 24:15), and whether we like it or not, when we choose, we automatically thrust ourselves into the terms, reputation, and outcome of that choice.”

My son Luke has a sharp mind and loves to *know what he knows*. If he’s going to believe something, he wants to have a strong foundation to support it and a solid conviction to motivate him. He has a healthy balance of openness to something new without being gullible. And that is just one of many great qualities I love and respect about Luke.

יהוה יראה

In fact, all of life is dominated by these lower and higher influences. Let’s just take a look at something so common that we hardly even consider it, gravity. We experience the pulling down of gravity upon us each and every day of our lives. Gravity never wearies or goes on vacation. We are slaves

to its tyranny. Its rule is so pervasive and so long-standing that we rarely even question its supreme dominance over us. But as demanding as it is, there are other laws that can at least temporarily help us escape gravity. Just one of those laws has to do with aerodynamics. If we have the right kind of airfoil to create lift and enough thrust to create airspeed over that airfoil, we can overcome gravity's force. Aerodynamics has revolutionized our world with global air travel. The world has gotten much smaller in the last 100 plus years, all because a new and higher law was discovered. In this simple, yet common example, we see that there are lower laws and there are higher laws, and the higher laws trump the lower laws.

Let's further consider these lower and higher laws. Some people are afraid to fly, mostly because they've never flown and they're afraid of the unknown, the "what ifs." They think that air travel is more dangerous than what they're used to, when in reality, flying is much safer than traveling in an automobile on the ground. Statistics prove that fatality rates are much greater while driving a car than flying in a plane. In this case, the higher way seems more risky, when in fact it is safer than the lower way of auto travel.

By and large, we humans have given up on any thought of overcoming gravity for long periods of time unless we are somehow able to escape into outer space. Have you ever daydreamed of a time when earth's never-tiring gravity has to yield its hold, such as when someone invents a *Back-to-the-Future* anti-gravity personal hover-board? Can you visualize a person moving along effortlessly in thin air? You say, "That's science fiction." It may be science fiction now, but it's quite possible that it will become a reality in the future. Countless areas of our lives have been revolutionized by the discovery of a previously unknown higher law which replaced a lower law.

Let's look at a few of those areas. What about communications in many forms: telephone, computer, and Internet? In 1844, Mr. Samuel Morse exclaimed via the very first telegraph transmission, "What hath God wrought!" Never before had it been possible to send a communication through a wire. The higher laws of electricity had just empowered humankind to make a quantum leap beyond all historical forms of

communication. Then around 1895, Mr. Marconi further upgraded communications when he invented wireless transmission via radio frequencies. These new laws have become our new norm. And those new laws continue to become outdated frequently. Consider the more recent inventions of fiber optics which conduct mind-boggling terabytes of information per second and pulsed laser light beamed millions of miles to a spacecraft careening through our solar system. Each new invention radically supersedes the previous norm with a more powerful law.

Consider the computer sciences. Since the 1980s we've experienced the explosive growth of the Internet and the personal computer, which has caused knowledge to expand exponentially for even the average user. All of this advancement was brought on by the discovery of higher laws of digital and integrated circuitry technology. Now thousands of space-hogging analog components have been transformed and miniaturized onto a micro-chip smaller than a fingernail. The mortality rate of society's prized lower laws is increasing daily because knowledge is abounding. This must be the age referred to in Daniel 12:4, "...until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

Let's get a little perspective on this for a moment. From all outward appearances, it looks as though we're bettering ourselves as a society. We're racing forward at light speed on every technological front, and we award ourselves and our research sciences for their great breakthroughs. But what is God's perspective?

*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:9).*

Even the very best of our stunning accomplishments, when compared to God's thoughts and ways, are like the distance between earth and sky. In fact, as great a difference as there is between the natural heavens and the earth is the difference between our thoughts and His. His higher laws, higher wisdom, and higher ways are that much greater than ours.

יהוה יראה

Let's explore some *spiritual* higher law possibilities now. I find it stimulating to ponder the meaning of verses like Isaiah 60:8, "*Who are these who fly like a cloud...*" What does that mean? Is this verse speaking of air travel that has just been invented in the last 100 plus years? Or is it speaking of something yet to be discovered? Could it offer a prophetic portent of something beyond our earthbound imagination? Or do we just relegate the meaning of this verse to some ethereal fuzzy meaning?

OK, I'll admit that I've always been intrigued by science fiction. Even as a schoolboy, I found that science fiction helped to satisfy my mind's quest to be exhilarated with possibilities of things beyond the normal. Normal was so boring, and I didn't like being bored, so I escaped to another world. Now as a more mature man, I ponder the possibilities of heavenly realms and how to apprehend them in this present world. For instance, here's a statement by Jesus that intrigues me to the core of my being:

*If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? (John 3:12)*

I can't tell you how much this whets my appetite to know more about these heavenly *laws* for which we have no earthly parallel. Can you just let your mind go there for a moment—heavenly realities and norms that humankind has *never* seen? What would that be like?

You may say, "Mark, slow down; I'm not sure that I'm on the same page with you yet. What do you mean 'heavenly things' and 'earthly parallels'?"

Well, here are a few biblical examples of non-earthly things: people walking on water (see Matt. 14:29), ax-heads floating (see 2 Kings 6:1-6), Enoch and Elijah escaping death (see 2 Kings 2:1-11; Heb. 11:5), Moses' shining face (see Exod. 34:33-35), water out of a rock (see Exod. 17:5), and water becoming wine (see John 2:1-11), just to list a few. So the next question is, where were the earthly parallels for these things when they occurred? Was there a previously recorded precedent in Holy Writ? I'm sorry. I don't think we can find such a precedent. And where are the earthly laws of physics to support the manifestation of these heavenly things? Of course, there are none. So, there *are* evidences of unearthly and "super" natural possibilities. How's that for just getting started?

In each of these occasions, spiritual hunger and obedience coupled with the sovereign invasion of Heaven's superior laws empowered people to trump natural laws with the greater influence of *supernatural* laws.

I believe Heaven is brimming—and even bursting—with desire to unveil these *supernatural* realities. This is an exciting discourse for me! Any takers? Would you like to go further? Heavenly realities await those who seek for and make a courageous attempt to escape the grip of prevailing world mindsets. In fact, God is delighted to watch His “kings and queens” contend for the secrets hidden in His heart.

*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter (Proverbs 25:2).*

## יהוה יראה

As we finished our talk, Luke's response was, “I think I can see it Dad; I believe you have a point.” And since then, he has experienced several overt displays of God's sovereign intervention of provision in his life. In fact, I truly rejoice with all of our children each time they share about another unmerited gift of favor from Jehovah Jireh. When you and I receive a solid foundation of truth, teaching, and example, it gives each of us a platform upon which to build. And when satisfying successes occur, it creates an eagerness to walk out even further on the water of revelation and supernatural possibility.

### **Personal Testimony—God Is the Best Banker (Dividends at just the right time)**

Years ago, after a geographic move, I no longer needed my work truck. I sold it and saved the money to pay for a new concrete driveway, patio, and sidewalks at our residence. It was late in the year, and by the time I got all the forms in place and ready to pour concrete, a snow and ice storm accompanied with a deep cold spell stopped my home improvement project dead in its tracks. With winter in full swing, it seemed we would have to wait four or five months to pour the concrete in the spring. My wife Debbie

and I have always been strong believers that God pays much better dividends than any bank does. Since that project money wouldn't be needed for several months, we felt impressed to give it away to some needy people.

Normally at that time of year, the ground freezes and won't thaw until March. But in the middle of January, several weeks of unseasonably warm weather melted the frost out of the ground. A few of those days had temperatures around 70 degrees. During that time, some friends were visiting us, and when they saw the installed, but unused concrete forms they asked, "When are you going to finish the project?" I explained that we hadn't anticipated the unseasonal weather and that we didn't have the money to do it right now. He asked how much it would take to finish. I told him, after which he looked at his wife and said, "Where is our checkbook? Let's write them a check for the full amount." And within a few days the concrete was poured.

You see, when we put our investments in the *Kingdom Bank*, God saved those investments and gave them back exactly when they were needed. He proved that He is the best banker ever!

### **Let's pray:**

*God, obviously You are much bigger than I can comprehend. Even so, all my life I've lived pretty much within my comfort zones. I guess I've needed them to make myself feel secure, but ultimately I end up feeling small and unfulfilled. Earthly things just seem to lose their appeal and reward after a while. I really want to know who You are, and I'm intrigued about those heavenly things Jesus referred to. Is it possible for me to get weaned from this world's way of thinking and begin to think Your thoughts? I want to try. I'm giving You permission to walk through my mind and even go deeper into my heart with "words of life." I promise I'll listen and give You a chance to change me. Maybe I could just ask one thing: Would You be gentle with me as I let You change me? Thank You. Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. Can I identify other lower laws in history that were trumped by a higher law?
2. Cite two incidents in Scripture where heavenly laws trumped earthly laws. (I'll start with a fun one: You know donkeys can't talk! But Balaam's donkey did.)
3. Why do these higher law incidents happen? Is it due to the faith of a person or the sovereignty of God? Or is it the result of people and God laboring together?
4. How would I respond to an invitation or command from God if there were no precedents for what I was being asked to do?
5. What does my answer to Question #4 reveal about my understanding of the nature of God?

# CHAPTER 2



## *By the Sweat of Your Brow*

Let's explore the difference between the lower law and the higher law governing God's provision in our lives. Bear in mind that both laws are instituted by God. We choose which law we want to live under. This chapter may be a little tedious, but necessary, as we establish some principles for the rest of the book.

My father came from a long line of patriarchs who practiced a strong work ethic. I can remember hearing him say that a man shouldn't be "work brittle." In other words, a man should not be afraid of a hard day's work.

So as young kids, upon arriving home from school, the first thing my sister and I were required to do each afternoon was to work an hour around the yard, garden, or house, whatever needed attention. Our family planted a sizeable garden with a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. And so whatever phase the garden was in, there was always work to be done. We were constantly rotor-tilling, planting, watering, picking rocks out of the soil, hoeing, pulling weeds, picking off the bugs, pruning plants, or gathering the produce.

### יהנה יראה

We lived in a nicely renovated, but old sandstone-and-frame abandoned school building that my father bought for a song. Our yard and garden used to be the playground of the school house. Evidently, playing marbles was the sport of choice because for all the years we lived there, after every rain, a new crop of marbles seemed to pop out of the ground. When the rain

washed away another layer of soil, my sister and I were re-commissioned to gather the exposed marbles and whatever else shouldn't be in the garden soil, bits of toys, glass, tin cans, and rocks, etc.

Since we lived within six blocks of the Mississippi River, throughout the summer months we had to fend off a kazillion mosquitoes each time we stepped out of the door of our house. You can imagine how many welts we sustained after a session of picking raspberries in that lush, humid, and mosquito-infested environment.

Back then, I'm sure that I didn't have as much appreciation for those experiences as I do now. I realize that those early years of work put something deep down into my character and inner man which serves me very well today. Some of the premises learned were, *If there's a job to do, "knuckle down" and "git 'er done."* And obviously, that character component is a large part of what sustains humankind from generation to generation. We'll explore more of the merits of hard work in Chapter 7. But now in contrast, let's see what God's perspective is about toiling for our living.

## **Before The Curse**

When Adam was created and placed in the Garden of Eden, we must remember that God called both of them good, the Garden and the man. This was the finest of all possible arrangements. Also remember that there was no sin at this point, and therefore, no consequences of sin. Life was optimum. It was paradise!

Adam walked and talked with God in the cool of the day. Here we have two beings totally in love with each other and communing about life, the Garden, and (soon-to-come) Eve, etc. And even though one of Adam's job descriptions was to tend the Garden, I'm sure that there was an enjoyment factor that inspired and motivated him each day and beyond. I have to believe that Adam was truly in love with his *job* and life. Just think of it: Each day God came and spoke into Adam's heart and life. They communed together as they walked through the Garden.

Now it goes without saying that Adam had no need to fear for his provision. We don't know much about his subsistence, but I'm sure that he didn't toil and sweat for it. Remember, toil and sweat came as a result of the curse of sin. So how did Adam make his living? How did he pay his bills? How did he put food on the table? We don't know the details of course, but obviously God provided for him!

Now you may ask, "How could God provide for Adam with things like food? You can't expect God to take care of things that we must take care of ourselves!" But, don't forget that those concepts only appeared *after* the Fall.

In disbelief, you may ask, "Where did God ever feed anyone? Or where did God ever pay anyone's bills?"

Since you asked, I'll give you a sneak peak of something we'll talk about later.

- Elijah was fed cakes from the hands of angels (see 1 Kings 17:3).
- Jesus and Peter's temple tax was paid by a gold coin found in a fish's mouth (see Matt. 17:27).
- Five thousand people were fed with five loaves and two fish (see Matt. 14:15-18).
- Jesus cooked bread and fish upon the fire for His disciples while they fished (see John 21:10-13).
- Israelites were fed manna six days a week and wore shoes which never wore out while they were in the wilderness (see Deut. 8:3-4).

You see, God is a very relevant God. He wants to be our very present help in time of need. And yes, He wants to be our Jehovah Jireh in everything pertaining to life and godliness.

Let's ask ourselves, in how much of our lives do we really depend on God and really need Him? It seems to me the problem is that we help ourselves so much that we don't really need Him or let Him do His *God-stuff* in our lives. I don't know about you, but that hits uncomfortably close to home!

## After the Curse

Unfortunately, we must now talk about the sad consequence that has bedeviled humanity since Adam's Fall. Sin must always have a just response: either the penalty for the guiltiness of sin or a sacrifice to make atonement. We know that God's sentence for the guilt of Adam and Eve's sin was that they were banished from the perfect life in the Garden and sent out to "seek their fortune" accompanied with much toil and sweat.

*Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:17-19).*

For six thousand years this sentence has been largely unquestioned and embraced by all humankind as the gold standard for making a living. It actually works fairly well, at least by our familiar standards. Of course, we don't have much knowledge of the standards before the Fall, so it's difficult to compare our current standards to the pre-Fall standards.

It works like this: A person goes to work and puts in a day's worth of labor and gets a day's worth of wages afterward—most of the time. Yes, across the world there is much disparity in the broad spectrum of just how much a day's labor is worth, but for the most part, the law of sowing and reaping actually works fairly well. If you "work your fingers to the bone" all week, you will be rewarded with a few beans to put on the table for the family. In fact, this God-given law works so well and is so far-reaching to all people groups, that the heathen and even the atheists use this law, and it works for them too. You see, even the atheist unknowingly believes in and uses God's laws. It's ironic! Isn't it amazing how good God is to let His laws work for everyone, even His enemies? He rains on the just and unjust alike (see Matt. 5:45). He's such a great God!

Part of the curse of the original sin was that humankind now had to labor or toil for provision. And just to make sure that we've got it, let's say it again: Labor and toiling for our subsistence are a direct result of the "curse." Yes, it is a tough sentence, but it does have the promise of the reward of provision if we abide by the terms of the sentence. You see, God gives mercy even in the midst of judgment. Since His heart is so endeared toward us, He always leaves an "out" for us if we'll try to do it His way. This is just another of the myriad facets of God's nature. He's so good!

## יהוה יראה

But before we wrap up this chapter regarding the curse of sin, let's look at another facet of difference between the lower law and higher law or, in other words, the difference between law and grace. Here's a quick overview.

### **A Better Covenant**

In the Old Covenant, sin could only be temporarily atoned for by the shedding of the blood of bulls and goats, etc. Spilling blood was the only means to repeal guilt. There was a very intricate code of protocols which demanded that blood had to be shed and applied at precisely prescribed times and places. This was an extremely tedious and exacting burden for God's people. But sin must receive its just consequence *or* there must be an atonement. Of the two choices, the sacrificial system was obviously the best choice.

Now in contrast, the New Covenant offers Jesus' blood which was shed to pay, once and for all, for the sins of the whole world. We no longer need to offer the blood of animals, for we have a better sacrifice, a better atonement, yes even the Perfect Sacrifice (see Heb. 7:22; 8:6; 12:24).

This sacrifice was made one time and is offered to whosoever will! (See John 3:16.) It is more real and valid than the sun coming up each morning. It is offered more freely and with more love than the most highly valued gift we may offer to someone we dearly love.

But the choice still remains ours. With few biblical exceptions, God honors when we exercise our free will in our lives. In other words, He lets us have what we choose. We must decide whether to receive His gift as the higher way or to reject it and continue to live under the terms and consequences of the lower way. Oh, it's true that not many people make animal sacrifices anymore, but on a much more subtle level, we still make ourselves pay "penance" when we fall. Our pride and lack of understanding about God's love make it difficult to freely accept the gracious and unmerited gift of mercy and forgiveness. So we burden ourselves with condemnation, and we distance ourselves from God until we somehow think that we've paid sufficient dues to allow ourselves to grovel back to God.

You know, when we say it like that, it just sounds awful, doesn't it? Yet that was the order of the day all through the Old Covenant. The Law made people *jump through hoops* in order to get right with God. Sadly, this is the way many of us still attempt to manage our *fallenness*. But the New Covenant is a much better way; it is a higher way. This magnanimous offer cannot be trumped. There is no better atonement. Jesus' blood paid it all for us, and He is waiting for anyone and everyone who will receive it. Try speaking this over yourself, "Jesus became the curse so that I don't have to bear the curse." Of course, we know this is true, but we must begin to let its truth and power permeate our reality.

The fact is that most believers would probably agree with the above fundamentals of the New Covenant. But for the deeper meaning and reality of those truths to come alive in revolutionary and transformational mindsets, and in actual practice in our lives, is quite another thing. We hold most of these tenets of faith quite dearly, but their transforming power is limited at best. Obviously, God is not the limiting factor. Rather, it is most likely that we haven't had a true heart and spirit revelation on these matters. Our heads concur, but it's likely that our hearts haven't yet encountered the power of these truths. Let's field a few questions in order to get a better idea of how deeply our tenets of faith are operating in our lives. For instance:

- Did Jesus' blood pay for *all* of my sins? Even the secret ones? And the big ones?

- Do I try to *pay* for my sins—maybe by condemning myself until I can face Him?
- Have I received full pardon and separation from my sins? Or do they still haunt me?
- Do I believe that God is *really* good? I mean, better than I can imagine?
- Do I believe that God has really good thoughts about me? All the time?
- Do I really believe that I'm valuable to God? His favorite in all the world?
- Do I believe that He really loves me even when I've failed?
- Do I believe that Jesus loves me just as I am? Or only when I'm good?
- When I fail, do I confidently run *to* God? Or in insecurity do I run *from* God?
- If I run *from* God, what does that say about my understanding of God?
- Do I feel totally secure and safe and loved in His arms?

You see, the answer to these questions will help us discover, not what our brains believe, but what our hearts believe. Our brains know the right answer, and we've trained them to respond accordingly, but the truth in our hearts is revealed by our actions. In fact, the way to know what our hearts believe is to listen to our conversations with God the next time we and He are alone. Jesus said that we'd know a tree by its fruit, so our actions will tell of our inner reality. We'll need to come to terms with the above questions because the answers create the foundation for much of our life experiences.

Now just so you know, our discourse here isn't at all meant to be an indictment against us; rather, it is to help us come to terms with ourselves so that we can move ahead into God's awesome love and His great plan for us.

## יהוה יראה

The intention of this chapter is to establish that there is a lower law and a higher law for dealing with our sin. God gave us both of these laws. Jesus' sacrifice satisfied the appetite of the Law. As Jesus said it, this higher law doesn't abolish the old law; it fulfills and trumps it.

*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill (Matthew 5:17).*

We must now choose which law we will live under. People may say that they don't want to make a choice, or they just ignore the choice. But even in not choosing, they are still making a choice. Although most people don't intend to, they don't realize that they continue to live under the remnants of the lower law with works, sacrifices, penance, and sin consciousness, etc.

This may be too close to home for our comfort, but is probably more prevalent in our lives than we care to admit. But I think we're getting the picture now.

### **Personal Testimony—Family Van Miracle (Too much sweat)**

After the sale of our house, we loaned \$10,000 to a friend who was in dire straits with his business. He promised to pay us back within one year. We had reserved that money to purchase a house, but felt like God is the best banker, so we loaned the money and trusted that God would know when we needed it. The money was never repaid. After seven years, we sent my friend a "jubilee letter" stating that the debt was forgiven. We suggested that he throw a party to celebrate the goodness of God.

About that same time, we desperately needed an upgrade from our older family van because the engine was failing fast. While we were on vacation at our relatives in a large city, we diligently searched for vans, but to no avail. We found one, but it was beyond our budget. After several hard days of searching, we were worn out. It was just too hard. It felt like we were striving in the flesh. So late one night, I was walking on a nearby soccer field in the dark and talking to the Lord. I said, "*God, there just has to be a*

*better way! This feels like I'm sweating to make it happen. I'm not going to do it any longer. I'm sorry for working so hard at this. Whenever you want us to have another van, that will be the perfect time. Amen."*

That very evening, when I returned to the house after my prayer time, my father-in-law surprised us with the news that six or eight people were combining their gifts of money to buy us one of the vans we had looked at, priced at \$14,000. My father-in-law had already talked to the owner and got the price reduced to \$10,000. To our great delight, we picked up the van that next day. It was much nicer than anything we'd owned up to that point.

Did you catch the fact that it was the same amount of money that we had forgiven our friend? This occasion and several more similar to it make us quite confident that Jesus really meant Luke 11:4 when He said, "*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*"

### **Let's pray:**

*Jesus, I know that You've paid for all my sins and You say that You've removed them from me as far as the East is from the West, never to be remembered against me anymore. But Jesus, sometimes I have trouble believing that and letting You do that. I suppose it's because it almost seems too good to be true and I feel unworthy. Then I find myself trying to pay for my own sins. Even after I've asked You to forgive me, I dig them up again reminding myself of how I've failed. Maybe it's because I'm not really sure how good You are and so I keep my distance just to be safe.*

*Jesus, I don't even like the way that sounds. It bothers me and I'm sorry that I think this way. Would you help me know how good You are and how completely You've forgiven me? I want my heart to feel as free from my sins and failures as the Bible says that I am. I'm beginning to believe that You are for me more than I've experienced, and there's a strange, wonderful feeling of desire coming alive in my heart to know You more. I'm going to try to believe and receive Your goodness, forgiveness, love, and provision in my life. I want everything that You have for me.*

*Thank You for being patient with me. That really means a lot to me right now. Thank You for loving me. I love You, too! Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. Name a few aspects of a strong work ethic which enhance our Kingdom walk.
2. What aspects of a strong work ethic could interfere with God being our Jehovah Jireh?
3. What does “work brittle” mean?
4. Name two curses that are a result of Adam’s original sin.
5. There are only two ways to deal with sin; what are they?
6. What is the definition of the word *toil* found in Genesis 3:17?
7. In what ways have I lived under the lower law?
8. Why and how does the New Covenant trump the Old Covenant? Remember that God instituted them both.

# CHAPTER 3



## *Take No Thought*

In the first chapter, we established that there is a lower law and began to identify the higher law. In this chapter we'll discuss several key aspects of a higher law which are an integral part of the message Jesus introduced in His earthly mission.

First let's establish that these higher laws are for us. Remember John 3:16 and the words "whosoever believes"? "Whosoever" is fairly inclusive. From this we know that everyone is offered this new higher law. Every human being born on planet Earth is offered this generous and love-filled opportunity for redemption from our sins.

So what are some of the key aspects that make this higher law more advantageous and attractive?

Here are the basics:

- We have the blood of Jesus as atonement for our sins
- He frees us from our heavy sins and fills us with abundant life
- We are offered a personal relationship with God without the need for a high priest
- We have a wonderful one-on-one with the most loving Person in the universe
- We have Holy Spirit as our guide, comforter, and helper
- He helps us find God's design for our lives and empowers us to fulfill His purpose.

Remember, part of the curse found in Genesis 3:18 was that people had to till the ground and that it would yield thorns and thistles. That's hard. But

then do you remember what Jesus wore on the cross? A crown of thorns. In the Old Covenant, people had to work under the curse of thorns, but Jesus took that curse of thorns upon Himself and thereby openly displayed that we are now free from that curse. This is yet another evidence of God's good intentions toward us.

The New Covenant introduces God the Father as a loving and happy Papa and Jesus who is the lowly Lamb and devoted Friend who sticks closer than a brother. Holy Spirit is with us 24/7. He empowers us and constantly points us to Jesus. This is a stark and refreshing contrast from our understanding of God in the Old Covenant, who was good but hard. And this is all made possible by the sinless sacrifice of Jesus and the ceaseless advocacy that He makes for you and me before Papa God. The Godhead works together so wonderfully to incorporate us into Their grand plan of God and humanity, enjoying each other for eternity. Yes, God longed to have someone to show His affection to and someone to fellowship with, so He made you and me. That's just how good He is!

But now beyond these stunning and exciting new discoveries of God and relationship with Him, we find that the deal gets even sweeter. In the area of provision, we find quite a few challenging statements by Jesus that are quantum leaps beyond anything we've ever read about in the Old Testament. In fact, these statements are so radical that most of the time we relegate them to some sort of spiritual application, or we just ignore them, except to quote them occasionally as irrelevant religious mantras.

These statements are not to be viewed as hurdles that God demands we jump over and then gets ticked off if we don't make the jump. And please don't think of them as hard lifeless commandments. Rather, consider these statements as being offered from our happy Papa who is delighted about opening up exciting new doors of Kingdom possibilities. He and Heaven's host are cheering us on into things that defy earth's ways and reason.

So what I'd like to do is list a few of these challenging statements and ask that we only *look at them at face value* for now. Of course, most of these statements can be countered with a contrasting verse in the Bible, but for right now, let's try to not go down the road of rebuttal. We're not going to

pigeonhole these passages into our traditional, religious, modern, or western world paradigms. Let's try to read them as if we're reading them for the very first time. What do they say? Could we mine out powerful hidden truths that will transport us into *heavenly things*. Ready? Here we go.

## **Challenging Statement #1**

*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble (Matthew 6:34).*

Now I know that I've found myself worrying about tomorrow at least once or twice. Ok, maybe frequently. How about you? This is a serious indictment upon our present-day lifestyles. Many of us need day-timers and planners to detail our hectic schedules so that we don't forget our all-too-important appointments. We make plans for next week, next year, next decade, and even our children's future, etc. So what's with this verse? Is Jesus saying what He means? And does He mean what He's saying? "Do not worry about tomorrow." At first glance this idea just seems irresponsible, doesn't it?

For a moment, let's consider the physical consequences of worry. The medical profession clearly declares the pressure and health-compromising effects that worry has on our emotions and physical well-being. It can raise blood pressure, can lead to disease and other bodily breakdowns. It robs needed space in our minds and emotions for more constructive things, and it usually makes us less pleasant to be around. I think Jesus is onto something which has broader implications than we realize.

But before we get bogged down with wrangling over how literally to take this verse, let's move on to some other strange sayings from Jesus.

## **Challenging Statement #2**

*Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing (Luke 12:22-23).*

Uh oh! Here we go again. Jesus is admonishing us to not be concerned about temporal things. How does He expect us to survive if we don't worry about something? "Jesus, You know that if I were to just forget about the temporal areas of my life, it would mean chaos in short order. I have to do something, don't I?"

But now just imagine for a moment how much more free life would feel if we weren't preoccupied with scheduling our tomorrows? For most of us, a great deal of time and mental energy is consumed by worry or planning each and every day.

I hope that right about now you're beginning to get excited about where this could lead. So since we're having all this fun, let's look at the next challenging statement.

### **Challenging Statement #3**

*Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? (Luke 12:24)*

You have to ask yourself, why did Jesus put this verse in the Bible? Was it so that we would know how much our Father loves birds? We know He loves birds; He created them. Perhaps Jesus just wanted to share a short nature lesson today. Is that it? Surely that can't be all there is to it. There has to be more here.

Ok, I know that most birds live at the mercy of whatever food is available. They forage. Most birds don't prepare and store for the future, and yet they seem to survive fairly well. So, maybe Jesus' focus is on the issue of sowing and reaping rather than a study of birds, and if so, what is He saying about sowing and reaping?

When we begin talking about sowing and reaping, it sounds quite similar to what we teach in our religious gatherings. In fact, it's one of our pet church doctrines regarding the people's financial giving. We admonish people to sow so that they can reap. Of course, we know that God gave us this law, so it has to be good. Then what is Jesus saying...that there is

something better?... something higher? Maybe Jesus is inviting us into a life of total trust in the provision of our Father. Could it be true? And is it possible?

Our Lord wasn't lying when He told us that He would take care of our needs just like He does the sparrow. He said in Luke 12:22, "*Don't worry about what you eat or drink or wear.*" These are not big concerns to Him. When we worry about temporal things, it keeps us in bondage and makes us vulnerable to the enemy. Really, the only true freedom is found in Revelation 12:11: "*they loved not their lives unto the death*" (KJV). The degree to which we are dead to this world is the degree to which we can be worry free. Of course, God never promised us we wouldn't have trials, but He did say that He would be with us through our trials. He promised that He'd never leave us nor forsake us (see Heb. 13:5). He'll fight *for* us until He sees His perfect will come forth in us. We may want to give up, but He won't give up on us, and He won't let us give up on ourselves either.

So actually I believe that Jesus is presenting us an invitation into the higher ***law of blessing***. You see, with sowing and reaping, our reward is directly tied to our labors. If we work, we eat. Why would Jesus tell us about the birds that neither sow nor reap if He wasn't inviting us to follow their example?

Jesus said that He would bring us rest, and the book of Hebrews tells us to *strive* to enter into that rest. Evidently it's going to require considerable energy and initiative on our part to get weaned from these lower laws, which have become so engrained in our foundational values. How are we going to reconcile these two laws? Obviously, the lower law still works and will likely continue to be an effective mode for provision-gathering until the end of time. But what if a higher law is available, just for the receiving, and all we have to do is learn to walk in it?

I understand that this possibility, this revelation, seems a long way off for many of us. But that doesn't mean that it isn't valid. It could simply mean that we just haven't taken Jesus' words literally. The voices in our society and our world (and even in some of our churches), scream much louder than the Word of God.

It's important to note that the transition into the higher law *will not* be accomplished by just memorizing the principles, or even by making a radical throw-caution-to-the-winds, leap-of-faith decision. It can only come by a supernatural revelation. I believe that this is all God is asking: Simply acknowledge His Word as true and then ask Him for a revelation of this higher law. He's asking us to live above the law of sowing and reaping. Wow, so much to process here!

I believe that this is all God is asking: Simply acknowledge His Word as true and then ask Him for a revelation of this higher law.

Let's take a little segue. Knowing the Word of God in our heads is one level of *knowing*. But that level of *knowing* has very little ability to empower us into full experience of the verse. The greater level of *knowing* is when we receive a revelation. And revelation is what Jesus told Peter that He would build His Church upon. When we receive a revelation, it not only creates the foundation, but also includes the authority and power to accomplish it. For me, most revelation comes when I've sought for it, when I've gotten hungry for it. Of course, God invites us first, but we must respond. Somehow, our hunger helps to soften our hearts, and it also seems to affect God. Throughout the Bible, when people cried out for God, He always answered. When the breakthrough from God comes, that is usually when a revelation comes to us. That revelation becomes our manna, or the food which sustains us. That is when we begin to truly know the *life-giving power* of that verse. Now, it is not merely knowledge of the facts; it becomes *life* and power to live. This kind of knowing is what our spirit person craves and must have in order to truly live.

Well let's try another one of Jesus' challenging sayings.

#### **Challenging Statement #4**

*So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these (Matthew 6:28-29; Luke 12:27).*

*I'm thinking, Now wait just a minute, Jesus. I know that You're not just giving us a botanical lesson here. And if that is true, then You're messing with my mind, because this is the only way we've ever known how to acquire provision since the beginning of history. In fact, isn't that what Our Heavenly Father told our forefathers to do, till the ground? (See Genesis 3:19-23.) This has been going on for 6,000 years, and even though we're not exactly fond of this method, it does yield good results...most of the time. And now You want us to trade in our old ways for something new. I'd like to buy in, but You're going to have to help me here.*

*Jesus, if I remember right, the word toil is the very word used by Peter (see Luke 5:5) when he responded to your inquiry about the fruitfulness of his all-night fishing expedition. He said he had been toiling all night. Are you trying to tell me that I shouldn't toil for my provision in life? Jesus, this is really stretching me! I thought that toiling was the accepted norm for how to make a living.*

If we take a quick look at the Strong's concordance for the word *toil*, we find that it's the Greek word *kopiaō*, which means "to work hard."<sup>1</sup> We'll want to keep that in mind when we refer to the word *toil* again soon.

So let's settle it once again, did Jesus really mean what He said? And did He really say what He meant? If you're like me, this is making you feel a little uncomfortable. But as difficult as it may seem, you and I know that we *must* come to terms with these red-letter passages in our Bibles. After all, this is the Son of God speaking here.

Now let's try another challenging statement.

## **Challenging Statements #5**

*Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it (Mark 10:15).*

*Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3).*

Here Jesus introduces the concept of becoming like a little child. In the first verse it seems as though one must become as a little child before even entering into the Kingdom. Then, in the second verse, Jesus seems to indicate that you have to be converted *before* you can even *become* like a little child. Now that is some radical teaching right there!

Evidently conversion is only the elementary first step to even approaching this God-life. Only then can we get small and simple enough to progress further. What a novel idea!

Could it be that getting saved, being converted, is only the door into more levels in God? And is Jesus saying that if we can get smaller, childlike, we can then enter the heavenly realms? Perhaps Heaven isn't that far away if only we could just get simple and believe like a little child.

This subject is what fuels my spiritual motor. This tantalizes my appetite to know and experience more of this higher life in God.

But sadly, most kingdoms of this world are built upon how much *higher learning* and complex maturity one possesses. People don't usually get to climb the ladder in our world until they've gotten another distinguished degree, until their pedigrees are longer than their names. But here, Jesus presents an upsidedown kind of idea: Get smaller to advance.

So what will the rest of the world around us think if we don't adhere to their norms? And then closer to home, what will our friends and church think of us if instead of getting more complex and busy, we tend toward a simpler approach to life? Could it really work?

*Jesus, this sounds so good and so simple, but it's so scary. It's such a radical departure from most everything I've learned. Something inside wants to go for it, but I know I can't just fake it. You sound so entreatingly and believable. Help me, Jesus. I want to do it Your way.*

## **Challenging Statement #6**

*And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content (1 Timothy 6:8).*

Now, even apostle Paul is getting into simplicity! Doesn't he know we must have 401(k)s and IRAs and investment portfolios, and iPods and PDAs and Bluetooths, and GPSs and, and...? How are we supposed to live without our gadgets? Oops, I mean, without our necessities in life? Now, don't get me wrong. These can be assets in a person's life, but all too easily we can become servants to them. Maybe we should relegate this verse to another one of those feel-good mantras; it just sounds so warm and fuzzy. But then again maybe it does have relevance to us in our modern world?

Like I said, *“Jesus, You are really stretching us!”*

## **Challenging Statement #7**

*And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:29-32).*

Again, the message is *in-your-face*. Jesus says that there is a better and higher way than the way we're accustomed to. And along with this message, Jesus also indicates that our Heavenly Father will graciously support all those who are willing to embrace it. Lord knows we will need lots of help if we're going to escape the gravity of this world's conventional mindset and try to enter into these Kingdom realities! And did you catch the tender sentiment of how He dearly cares for us when He called us His “little flock”? One could almost begin to feel loved and safe enough to give these challenging invitations—which are really promises—a try.

We're supposed to be God's special people, set apart and highly favored and all the rest of that good stuff. Then why is it that most of us live like the rest of the world in our earthly goals, our labor-intensive lifestyles, and temporal world expectations, etc.? Where is the specialness and reward from Heaven for those who are the apple of God's eye? Where is the “life

and life more abundantly” for those who wear Christ’s name? Maybe we’ve just dumbed down so far that we’re not even aware that there *is* a higher way of living within the favor of Heaven.

What an alarming thought, that maybe we’ve become like the frog in the pot of water which is so gradually heated that the frog dies before it realizes it’s being boiled alive. We’ve been brainwashed so long about the noble merits of earning a living that we’ve missed the facts that there are Kingdom realities out there that transcend fallen humanity’s highest ideals.

It’s probably safe to say that most people put earning a living before pursuing their life in God. Smith Wigglesworth once said, “People are too busy making a living to make a life.” It works like this most commonly: If the time needed to secure our provision doesn’t leave any open spaces in our week, then we postpone our God-times, in favor of our job demands. Ephesians 4:17-18 tells us that when this happens, we get “*alienated from the life [flow] of God,*” which leaves us to the “*futility of [our own] mind.*” Oh, may this never be! Left to our own devices, we humans always mess things up. We need heaven’s favor and grace. Of course, the answer to this is to keep the First Commandment first.

Let’s start by praying: *Jesus, I want to know more about this higher way that You’re offering. But it seems almost unattainable. I feel like I’m so stuck in the pervasive and overwhelming ways of this world that I’m desperately in need of Your help if I’m ever going to break free.*

## **Challenging Statement #8**

*Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him (John 6:27).*

Remember, we’re looking at these verses at face value—without our *mature* rationalization or preconceived notions.

Notice the sharp and unmistakable command. It’s going to be very hard to justify any kind of labor that is for the intended purpose of gathering things that perish. The directness of this command is as if God Himself is looking

us in the eye and watching to see if we flinch or try a “yes, but” back at Him. Now obviously the verse goes on to admonish us to labor for that which is eternal.

So what am I going to do with this verse? Can I just ignore it? Can I rationalize it away somehow? Maybe it is just intended for the era when Jesus lived. That would sure take some pressure off, wouldn't it?

Looking at Strong's for the usage of this word *labor*, we find that it's the Greek word *ergazomai*, which means, “occupation.”<sup>2</sup> Are you feeling like you're getting hemmed in on all sides? I'm feeling a little pressure here. But then again, if we're going to be serious about our obedience to God, we have got to wrestle with this. Of course, the immediate follow-up point to “*do not labor for the food which perishes*” is that we're admonished to “[labor] *for the food which endures.*” In other words, make it our occupation to find eternal food.

Now just in case we're tempted to contend in favor of the post-Fall six-days-a-week work mandate, what are we going to do with God's command in Exodus 23:12, when He says, “*Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest?*” If we're going to apply this literally as our mandate to engage in income-producing work, then why do we only work a five-day work-week? You see, we're going to have to get off the fence about this matter. We must either work vocationally six days a week, or we must explore a new definition of *work* as Jesus explains in the New Testament.

## **Challenging Statement #9**

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God (Philippians 4:6).*

Now we have apostle Paul promoting Jesus' theme regarding this carefree approach to life. Doesn't “anxious for nothing” mean being free from care or worry? But how does the concept of carefree living fit in our modern world? Hasn't our society established that the acceptable mode of life is about carrying more and more responsibilities and duties? For

instance, it's pretty in vogue to say that we're under a lot of stress. I suppose that implies that we must be very capable and indispensable—you know, somebody very important.

When Paul says, “*Be anxious for **nothing**,*” what kind of world does he think we live in? He should know that *stuff* happens. Life is not always a “bowl of cherries” where I live. Sometimes, I have to wonder if all those scriptural mandates are applicable to all people and for all times. Maybe there's a proviso for when Scripture doesn't apply.

Yet if we read all of Paul's writings, he seems to know all about our world, and he argues that there is no reason to worry about *anything*; but rather, just simply, like a little child, ask our deeply caring and loving Father for what we need.

Can life really be that simple and that easy?

And now, as if we haven't had enough to thoroughly knock us off balance, Jesus throws in a one-liner so other-worldly and frustratingly without elaboration that it just leaves us to gasp in wonder and acute curiosity. I know we've mentioned this verse earlier, but we have to revisit it to mine out some more gold.

## **Challenging Statement #10**

*Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? (John 3:11-12)*

*I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now (John 16:12).*

Now if I had been there when Jesus spoke in John 3, I think I would have jumped up and shouted, “Whoa, Jesus! Hold it right there! What did you say? Don't leave me hanging. You mean to tell me that there are other realities that we know nothing of? You have just ignited a forest fire of curiosity that will eat me alive if you don't tell me more.”

As a further teaser in John 16, Jesus says he has many more things to tell us, but we're not able to handle them yet. Now if that doesn't pique my curiosity, I don't know what does. It makes me ravenously hungry for more. My earthly norms just don't satisfy in light of the fact that Jesus has higher things available and He's waiting for my preparedness to receive them. The feeling I have now is similar to a toddler who had been stubbornly holding onto his familiar and comforting binky, then suddenly lets go when a tempting lollipop is offered to him. I want the *more!* I desperately want the higher things that Jesus is referring to. Oh, I hope this ignites you like it does me. I have to believe this is exactly what Jesus hopes will happen in our hearts when He lures us with these kinds of enticing invitations.

Oh, how I would love to have been there to implore Jesus. But I wasn't there, and so I have to "search this matter out," like kings are supposed to.

First of all, Jesus acknowledged that Nicodemus was having trouble understanding the elementary things of the Kingdom—You know, those easy spiritual things which have earthly parallels. Jesus mostly used parables, earthly stories, so that it would be easier for us to wrap our minds and faith around the particular Kingdom truth He was presenting. Jesus knew that we were extremely earthbound in our thinking. We eat, sleep, live, and breathe earth stuff every day of our lives, which tethers our thinking to earth's ways and laws.

But Jesus says that there is a heavenly reality which operates in ways and laws that have no earthly counterpart. And if we have trouble accepting heavenly truths, which are manifest in earthly parallel forms around us, how will we ever be able to accept, believe, and live within heavenly truths, which will require simple child-like faith. In other words, we're being asked to believe and obey Jesus just because He said it. And of course when we know His heart and recognize His voice, this gives us assurance to believe, simply believe Him.

You may wonder if there are examples of heavenly realities for which there are no earthly parallels. Try these for starters:

- What about Balaam's donkey speaking? (See Numbers 22:28-30.)
- What about water turning into wine? (See John 2:3-10.)

- What about Peter walking on the water? (See Matthew 14:28-31.)

When we know His heart and recognize His voice, this gives us assurance to believe, simply believe Him.

Where is the earthly law of physics or any human precedent that says people can walk on water? If we could find a scientific law of physics for walking on the water or a historical precedent, it would surely boost our faith. But no! There is neither to give us that confidence. To walk on the water, Peter had to do it based completely upon Jesus' invitation, "Come!" Inherent in Jesus' words was the power and grace that was necessary to conquer gravity. Walking on the water trumps all of earth's laws with a higher law, a law that comes from the Law Giver, the One who gives the laws. Remember, He's entitled to trump any of His laws with a better law anytime He wants to.

To better understand this let's consider Esther's king, Ahasuerus. When he found that he had been tricked into issuing a decree to kill all Jews, he knew he couldn't rescind the old law, but he could issue a higher law to overrule the first law.

Ok, let's try another heavenly law for which there is no earthly parallel.

What about Jesus expecting figs from the fig tree *when it's out of season* for goodness' sake? (See Mark 11:13-14, 20-21.)

*Jesus, did You forget about something here? There's no way that this fig tree could bear fruit at this time of year. Everyone knows that nature's laws say that it can't bear fruit out of season. Surely You're going to have to extend some mercy to this poor tree. I'm sure that it would like to bear some figs for You if it could, but there's just no way!*

So what do you think? Was Jesus just plain forgetful here? Did He have a mental lapse?

Of course that's not the case. So there must be a higher law upon which Jesus based His request. Consider this: Do you remember Second Timothy 4:2, which says that we must "*be ready in season and out of season*"?

That's right: We must be prepared to bear fruit in our lives even when we're out of season. Jesus expected that tree to be ready out of season. And that was one of the principles He was teaching the disciples that day.

But where is that principle previously displayed in earthly form or example? Was there any? Of course the answer is No! Then it seems that we must begin to live by hearing and faith, rather than by sight. We must be able to walk by hearing the voice of God versus requiring the familiarity with what we've experienced in the past or the comfort with what we can see ahead. We must learn to be instant in obedience simply because we've heard our Lord's voice. Of course, He would never ask us to do something impossible or something that He wouldn't give empowerment to accomplish. So bottom line, we're being invited and admonished to live above the world and its lower laws.

I believe that this fig tree passage is displaying one of those heavenly things we just read about in John 3:12.

So are you saying that the fig tree should have been able to pop out figs instantaneously? Yes, that is *exactly* what Jesus had in mind. You see, when the Son of Heaven makes a request, there is no acceptable response other than, "As you wish, my Lord."

I imagine that right about now we may be tempted to say, "But, but, but..."

Let's try another verse to validate this truth. Remember Hebrews 1:3 that Jesus is "*upholding all things by the word of His power.*" In other words, when Jesus speaks, a power force is released to enable victorious compliance no matter whether there are earthly laws to support it or not! God is the One who spoke earthly laws into existence, and His word is still holding those laws in their status quo. Yet He can create a higher law anytime He wants. That creative "word of His power" was what produced the gravity-defying power which enabled Peter to walk on water. That "word of His power" is how fig trees should be able to produce figs out of season. That "word of His power" is how we can be ready in or out of season. A valid and current word of God always supersedes every other law.

To further make the point, Jesus said in John 4:35, “*Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!*”

A valid and current word of God always supersedes every other law.

True to Jesus’ form, He presents another reality that defies earthly principles. How are we supposed to understand His charge when He tells us, “Lift up your eyes and look at the white fields ready for harvest”? Let’s break that down a little. We’re supposed to look up. But where? I present to you that what Jesus meant was look into the heavenlies. That is where we’ll discover Heaven’s heart and Heaven’s perspective regarding the fields. We’ve looked too long with earthly eyes. Like a chicken, we’ve been looking down and pecking around in all of the “stuff” under our feet. We’re admonished to be like the eagle soaring high above the polluted air of earth—up where our view is clear and uncompromised. We’re to look at the fields from Heaven’s vantage point. Even though earthly perspectives say there are yet four months until harvest, Heaven’s perspective is that the fields are harvestable *now*. A stark contrast of realities, isn’t it?

This must be our mode of living, living *from* the heavenlies. There is so much more we could say about living from the heavenlies! Like where do Christians go when we die? And when do we die? So if we’re dead and our life is hidden with Christ in God, where are we now? Are we not with Christ, seated at the right hand of God? This is powerful! When we get this, it will change everything! This *must* become our experiential and relevant reality even while we’re here on earth. (Read more about this in Chapter 11.)

יהוה יראה

Just for a teaser, I'll throw this in. We may not have noticed that in Heaven's reality, there are no seasons. Consider Revelation 22:2, "*In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*" Note that each tree bore its fruit every month, not just once a year or just when it's in season. Fruit was harvested all year long. So from Heaven's perspective (where Jesus lived from) that fig tree should have had figs on it.

Here we can see that limiting ourselves to *only* earthly paradigms to determine and define heavenly realities will keep us from living in those heavenly realities.

But the point is that those heavenly realities are supposed to be our norm. And if that's the case, then we must begin to live more in the heavenlies than we do here on the earth; remember that we're seated with Christ in the heavenlies (see Eph. 2:6). We must base *our* realities on *Heaven's* realities. If there is a conflict between our experience and God's Word, then God's Word is more true and more real than any or all of our earthly experiences. Bottom line, if Heaven said that it is time for harvest, then Heaven trumps earth any day of the week.

What we're getting down to here is the discovery of our basic need for and dependence upon hearing the *now* voice of God. And further, we're addressing our fundamental commitment to obedience, regardless of whether it makes sense to our reason and intellect. Our childlikeness is being tested at this very point.

It seems that every place we look we're being invited and pressed into a new paradigm. And to top it off, life's difficult issues and faltering national economics are actually *helping* us to reckon with these matters.

## יהוה יראה

So let's review this chapter and see what we've learned.

Jesus is inviting us to transition out of the Old Covenant lower law and into the New Covenant higher law which we call Grace. For most of us,

these truths relate to our salvation and our doctrines, that is, the difference between blood sacrifice versus Jesus' sacrificial atonement, etc.

But He's offering so much more than that. Jesus not only paid the way for true sonship with God and lavishes incomprehensible favor upon us, but He also offers us a new way of living in practical day-to-day issues. This new approach to living challenges our established and acceptable societal norms. It is nearly beyond our ability to believe. And yet the mystery is that what He's offering is so doggone simple if we can just believe and receive it. It's a way of thinking and a lifestyle that is a radical departure from earthbound norms. It's so simple that we're tempted to say, "That's unbelievable!" But of course that would be like a slap in Jesus' face because He's the One offering the gift! Maybe we need to get serious about becoming childlike in our believing and change our response to a faith-filled phrase that my wife Debbie coined, "*That's so believable!*"

Well, evidently we have some unlearning and relearning ahead of us, don't we? Bottom line, do we like the invitation? Sure we do! And if we could *really* believe that it's *really* true and that it's *really* for us, wouldn't we *really* want to live this way of life? Sure we would! Wouldn't it lift off the heavy yoke of life and make life so much easier and more fun? For sure!

### **Personal Testimony—Rent Suspended (Creative provision)**

Shortly after moving to a new area about 20 years ago, I lost my job. Since we were new to the area, I had very little reputation in the work world; so getting another job was difficult. But God knew just how to do the unthinkable to lessen the financial burden.

We were renting a house from Randy, who was buying that house from another man. About the time I lost my job, the other man decided to refinance the house. There were about six or eight months that Randy didn't have to make any payments to the seller. So Randy volunteered, "You know, since I'm not making payments, you don't have to make the rent payments, either." We were incredulous and thanked him profusely for the timely blessing that lasted a good portion of the year.

There was no toiling or sweating to get this favor from our landlord. In fact, I never even asked him to consider such a thing. Don't you just love the creative ways God makes His provision come to us, or in this case, He lightened the load considerably.

### **Let's pray:**

*Jesus, I feel trapped by many of the lower laws. I've been steeped in them so long that they seem normal. I'm not even sure how to extricate myself. But I'm feeling an excitement that there is another reality "out there." I recognize Your voice and I like Your invitations. Worry and toiling for my living have sapped my energy and passions. I truly want to be free of living in a reality that is lesser than what is available. Maybe I just got too "mature" to let you be God in all areas of my life. I want to return to childlikeness. Would you help me find my way out of the lower laws? I want Heaven's realities to be my new norm. Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. Was Jesus serious when He said, "Take no thought of tomorrow"? If I was to "take no thought of tomorrow," what impact would that have on my life?
2. Considering how much time toiling requires, if I didn't have to "toil for my living," in what areas of life would I be liberated to do my Father's will?
3. In Matthew 6:28-29, is Jesus really saying that there is a way that is higher than sowing and reaping? Describe what that looks like.
4. Given the state of my life and lifestyle, would I say that I am childlike and worry-free?
5. Name three areas in which I want to experience breakthrough from anxiety and toiling.
6. Is it possible to get childlike enough to just simply accept Jesus' easier way of life, even in our modern world?

7. If Jesus asked me to do something that has never been done before, with my level of commitment to obedience, how would I handle that invitation?

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**Endnotes:**

1. James Strong, *Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*, (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, Inc. 1994,2003,2006). G2872.
2. Ibid. G2038.

# CHAPTER 4



## *Are Not We Much Better Than They?*

In the last chapter we explored Luke 12:24. If God takes care of the ravens, then He'll surely take care of us because we're much better than they. Then how does God intend to provide for us? Let's explore the matter.

We read in John 3:12 where Jesus ever-so-briefly references Heaven's reality, which is vastly dissimilar from earth's. Remember the part where He talks about heavenly things without earthly parallel? Well, I for one want to see if it is possible to live in this higher world. I want to live in a higher reality than do the teeming masses of over 6.7 billion souls wandering around on the face of this planet, all of whom are trying to just survive from day to day. I'm a blood-bought, saved, raised, empowered, glorified, and highly-favored child of Almighty God. Isn't that what we learned in the last chapter? We're better than flowers, we're better than birds, and we can expect favor beyond what the "nations of the world" experience. Shouldn't there be a perk to this highly favored status? Shouldn't being a son of God yield something more than just an afterlife benefit? Don't misunderstand me; I love musing on eternity...living face-to-face with Jesus forever; it doesn't get much better than that! But Jesus also says that there are aspects of Kingdom benefits that we get to experience here in this life:

*...Receive a hundredfold now in this time...and in the age to come, eternal life (Mark 10:30).*

I am confident now that God has a *favored status* and a higher law of provision for His people than what the world around us gets to experience. So my mission is to receive the revelation more clearly, grow in the faith to embrace it, and increase in grace to live in it more fully.

Jesus continues to give us tips for how to get started on this journey into the higher laws. The following passage in Matthew 6 shows quite clearly that all the things the heathen seek after (food, water, and clothes) will be supplied *if we seek first* the Kingdom of God. In other words, we must keep the *first things first*.

*Therefore do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you (Matthew 6:31-33).*

And just for fun and a fresh take on it, let's read this same passage in the Hawaiian Pidgin Language Bible:

*So, eh! no go worry an say, "Wat we goin eat?" o "Wat we goin drink?" o "Wat we goin wear?" You know, da odda peopos all ova da world dat donno God, dey try get all dat kine stuff. But yoa Fadda inside da sky, He know you guys need um. Main ting, make God yoa Boss, cuz He da King. Do da right ting jalike He do, an you guys goin get all da stuffs you need (Matthew 6:31-33).*

If you just think about it, the human race is like a colony of billions of little ants who all scurry to work each day, struggling to gather for themselves the basics to sustain life. But God declares that there is a higher way of gaining the things necessary for life. All we have to do is simply fall in love with Him and pursue Him with all of our heart—*first*.

As a matter of fact, the First Commandment in the Old Testament is still the First Commandment in the New Testament. It must still be our supreme objective today. In the passage we just read, Matthew says it all so simply: Just do the first things first and the rest of these things will fall into place.

Now let's be clear here. When the Bible uses the word *commandment*, that is exactly what it means. It's not to be taken as the ten suggestions or

just optional activities. *Selah* (stop and think about this for a moment). But with that being said, we now realize in the New Covenant that having the honor to love this big-hearted God is so much *better* than a command: It's a privilege! And we're invited to enjoy a Person. It's a daily life lovingly offered from the Supreme Being of the universe. This offer is pregnant with affection and oozing with favor and gifts, an offer that none will want to refuse once they've met this One who *is* Love.

There is a well-known phrase popularized by author John Piper that concisely states man's purpose: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Or as he paraphrases yet another way, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." <sup>1</sup> In this we see that God is most happy when we've fallen head over heels into enjoying Him. I don't know of any other gods who find their delight in this manner.

We have a "so believable" God. Once we find Love and feel awakened love in our hearts, love's motivation will transport us far above the obligatory commandment realm and into the realm of delightful privilege. Hopefully, our hearts are awakened with more incentive to reach out to Love, to get to know Love, and to enjoy Love.

God has invited all of His people to live under this *avored* status provision. Simply love Him first, and you'll rise above the curse of toiling for our provision. He'll become your Jehovah Jireh.

Wow! It is just that simple!

The follow-up question is, "Then, how do I love Him first and with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength?" For every person, this is going to be a unique and personal journey into a profoundly intimate relationship with God. Some of our journey will depend upon how we're wired. Some will find God in solitude, some in the congregation, some in the Bible, some in nature, etc. But find Him we must. It is my experience that our hearts will be made tender even in the searching. And when we do find Him, and meet with this most wonderful Man whose eyes are filled with love and tender understanding. His embrace melts away tears and fears and His kind words speak destiny and confidence into every fiber of our beings. Who wouldn't

want to love this kind of Man, this kind of God? Who wouldn't want to make Him their *first* love? *Selah!*

## יהוה יראה

I mentioned earlier that most of the human race lives under a wholesale grace that God gave to Adam. That wholesale grace knows no distinction; there is no discrimination from one person to the next. God said that if you till the ground you will have a paycheck at the end of the week which will provide the necessities of life. Adam proved it, and every generation of responsible, ant-like laborers has proven for 6,000 years that a good hard week's worth of work will yield some type of satisfying reward. The funny and mystifying thing is that God doesn't care whether you love Him or declare Him to be your enemy. This wholesale grace is received and enjoyed by one and all. What an awesome God to be so good to His creation!

But with this free grace, there'll be no excuse when the masses of humanity stand in front of the Judgment Seat on that Great Day. On this earth, He was a good God who truly rained on the just and unjust alike. Each and every person was given this wholesale grace with the hopes that it would draw their hearts into gratitude to this Giver God who has a most generous heart. (For more on this, take a look at how clearly it is stated in the first chapter of Romans. Verses 20 through 21 state that every person has been able to see God at least in creation.)

All of this is true about the masses of humanity, but what continues to intrigue me is, *What about the people of God? Is there anything special for them?* Take a look at the favor that God had in mind for the children of Israel.

*For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden; but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the*

*very end of the year. And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled (Deuteronomy 11:10-15).*

Did you catch the radical change in workload? In Egypt they used a foot pump to irrigate their crops. In the Promised Land, God said the heavens would rain on their crops and He would send the grass. As long as they loved God with all their hearts and souls, He would provide for their land all year long.

The Israelites had many distinctive characteristics about their identity that truly set them apart from the rest of the world. Their God literally dwelt among them providing food, protection, and direction in obvious ways. They had manna provided for them six mornings a week for 40 years. They had the Shekinah Glory of God over the Ark of the Covenant. They had a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God was in that pillar! And in their Promised Land, God would see to it that they had plenty of rain and grass for their livestock. No other nations had this distinctive luxury. All other nations just existed as lost peasants of the earth, hoping to not incite their gods to anger. But the Israelites had the overt, undeniable, and manifest presence and favor of their God.

Knowing this just makes me exclaim, *“What! They didn’t have to toil and labor to produce their manna; they lived in the Old Testament and under the lower law and yet they still experienced this favored status! Don’t I live under an even better covenant with God? Don’t I have a better sacrifice for sin? Don’t I enjoy another part of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, whom the Israelites had no knowledge of?”*

I’m telling you, this makes me all the more desperate to see, receive, and live within the distinctive “much-better-than-they” (see Luke 12:24) provisions that are afforded to us in this age.

In Exodus 32:10-14, Moses, a desperate and determined man, stood in the gap and interceded when God's anger was kindled against the people of Israel. In essence, he said, "Remember your reputation among the nations. The nations are watching how you treat your people." And then again in Exodus 33, Moses implores,

*And He said, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth" (Exodus 33:14-16).*

First of all, Moses had the audacity to initiate a stunning and even brazen argument with God. He, a mere mortal, is dissuading God from the execution of His anger against the people, even at the possibility of his own peril. It's almost unthinkable that Moses had the guts to *resist* God. Yet he was empowered by such compassion for his own people, and he understood the basic character of God so well, that He stepped into the *line of fire* between God and His people. And then to top off this incredible moment, God listened and relented. What an occasion of intense passion, discourse, and resolve between God and a man! This powerful God-and-man interaction gives us some understanding of how much clout each of us has with God, and how much God desires to interact with each of us.

Second, Moses reminds God that the only thing that distinguishes His people from the rest of the people of the earth is His presence and favor. Moses isn't contending for something that is outside of God's original intention. Rather, Moses reminds God to remember the fame of His name among the nations and His long-standing word to raise up a people for Himself in the earth. Now if Moses can contend for a special favor from Heaven for God's people, then surely you and I can do the same, especially since we are invited into this favored status by Jesus Himself. Why should I live under the same laws and bondage as the heathen? We should expect to at least live in the supernatural reality and provision of God that the Old Testament saints enjoyed. And I believe that there is even more than that.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not pushing for a laissez-faire life. I'm simply trying to believe and live within all of Jesus' invitations. All I want is *all* that the Old Testament saints experienced *and* the promises that Jesus offered in the New Testament. I don't think that is asking too much or overstepping our boundaries with God or pushing Heaven too far. Actually, I believe God has the biggest smile on His face at this very moment as He sees our hearts begin to reach for more.

It seems to me that the biggest hurdle is not that we must try to get God to make it available; He's already done that. But rather, the hurdle is between our ears. Our minds are our biggest offending giant. Our mental paradigms of receiving provision need to be regenerated and renewed (see Rom. 12:2) so that they line up with the Word of God. Immersing ourselves in God's Word and spending time with Him creates the atmosphere for our hearts to be changed and our thoughts to be realigned into conformance to Heaven.

At this time, it's ok for these new thoughts to be foreign to us. Remember, His thoughts are not our thoughts. So, we don't want to automatically reject them, defend ourselves, or feel badly because we don't "own" them yet. Rather, we'll want to take a posture of examining them in light of His presence and Word, allowing Him to lead us into all truth.

*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth (John 16:13).*

Obviously, this doesn't mean we are to be gullible or mindless in our approach to God's entreaties. But if we'll sincerely hold these things before Him and under the light of His Word, we can trust that the Spirit of truth will lead us. That's His promise.

Unfortunately, we've not seen very many impressive examples of living under God's provision, so we've just relapsed into the *normal* life of toil and sweat.

But now is a good time for us, the believers, and God's highly favored ones, to find the gold mine of divine provision that has been right under our noses all the time. What a shame it would be to have it available, but not participate or walk in it. It would be a sad commentary for us to live all of our lives with the distinction of the favored status of kings and priests unto

our God, yet live like peasants. Sadly, not only would we have missed the blessings of divine help, but what would Jesus' heart feel when He has offered His very best and we hadn't received it? Or worse yet, what if we stood looking at Him in disbelief, saying, "You can't be that good!" Rather, our humble and correct response is to receive it freely and with joy, in the same spirit in which it was offered.

### **Personal Testimony—Give and It Shall Be Given (Heaven's economics)**

Over the course of our marriage, Debbie and I have been given five different automobiles. Almost all were complete surprises and came from people who owed us nothing. It's been an amazing godsend to receive these timely blessings. But in the same way, we've also given away five automobiles. It's so rewarding to see a person's heart melt with gratitude as they receive something rarely given or received for free.

Recently, a friend said something that has stuck with me, "The world's system is to buy and sell, but the Kingdom way is give and receive." It makes life so much more meaningful to see Heaven's fingerprint in the circumstances of our lives.

#### **Let's pray:**

*Jesus, I don't want to even imagine living life without You. I just have to have more of You and Your presence. I want to see Your fingerprint on all of my life. Whenever I lean to my own ways and strength they leave me bored, empty, and floundering. Like Moses, I say, "If You don't go with me, I don't want to go." I believe You truly want to accompany me with Your presence even more than You did with the Israelites. I'm sincerely asking the Spirit of truth to lead me into all truth regarding Your great provision for my life. Amen.*

#### **Study Questions:**

1. In Matthew 6:33, what is the predicating factor in order for me to enjoy Heaven's provision?
  2. What was the First Commandment in Moses' day? What was the First Commandment in Jesus' day? Have I made it my First Commandment?
  3. What does "seek first" look like in a person's life?
  4. Should the New Testament saints experience and walk in more of the favor of God than the Old Testament saints? List some differences that we should expect.
  5. So the question is, *Am I living at least at the level of the Old Testament saints with God's sovereign and supernatural displays of provision, protection, and direction?*
  6. How many good examples have I seen of people experiencing supernatural provision?
    - a. Does this affect my faith to believe for supernatural provision?
    - b. Is not having a good example a justifiable excuse to not reach for it?
  7. What kind of statement would it make to Jesus if I never accepted and walked in all that He joyfully offers to us? What would it do to His heart?
- 

**Endnote:**

1. John Piper, "Christian Hedonism: Forgive the Label, But Don't Miss the Truth"; <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/articles/christian-hedonism>; accessed October 10, 2011.

# CHAPTER 5



## *I Must Be About My Father's Business*

In the last chapter we discovered that the First Commandment is still the First Commandment. So what does it really mean to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Does it mean that we must become reclusive monks in order to be untainted with the affairs of this world? After all, how can a person love God completely without having some special exemption of protection from the world's influence? And must we be consumed by some 24/7 religious activity in order to keep myself free of sin?

Obviously, the answer to all these questions is No. It isn't necessary to wear a special religious title to fulfill the First Commandment. Those involvements may be a specific call of God upon an individual, but they're not required in order to fulfill the First Commandment. But still the question remains: How are we supposed to love God with all of our beings?

There is a saying, "Life by the mile is a trial, life by the yard is hard, but life by the inch is a cinch." Bottom line, all God ever asks of us is simple obedience. In other words, a lifestyle of minute-by-minute obedience has the net effect of loving God with all that we are. Obedience is both the test and the evidence that we're keeping the First Commandment first.

Obedience is both the test and the evidence that we're keeping the First Commandment first.

Obedience applies to every area of our lives. Religious institutions have sought to make well-defined and often enumerated laws to keep us within acceptable Christian standards. Of course, the most immature need some rules to train them, but for maturing believers, many of religion's imposed rules ultimately create *apron-strings* which cripple our growth. God wants us to be governed by our own hearts, as in Hebrews 10:16 where God says, "*I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.*" Jesus always admonished the religious and sinner alike that obedience and the Christian life were much more a matter of the heart than about externals. Rules are lifeless and hard taskmasters that never bend or give mercy. There is a saying, "Where there is much love, there is little law. Where there is little love, there is much law." Instead of rules, Jesus always pointed to a heart relationship with the Father, an intimacy of relationship which inspires believers toward Christian life and actions based out of a love for our Father. In this context, obedience isn't a cold duty; it is now a matter of being in love with our Father and letting our renewed minds, which are aflame with awakened and impassioned desire, compel us toward right living. That intimacy and friendship with God will make us want to walk carefully with the desires of His heart in mind.

So let's take a look at a comment made by Jesus when He was in the temple at 12 years old. His response to His parents was telltale of the compelling passion He lived under.

*...Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?* (Luke 2:49)

Jesus was so intent upon bringing honor to His Father that even at an early age He committed His life to fulfilling His Father's will. And because of His great love for His Father, He had only one objective that determined His words and actions: He must do only what He saw His Father do.

*...I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner...I can of Myself do nothing...because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me (John 5:19,30).*

This is, no doubt, something that both haunts and inspires us at the same time. We probably feel somewhat guilty for not living up to this standard, and yet something inside yearns to be sold out and completely His. We know this should be our ultimate and life-consuming goal—so consumed in love with our Lord that we only bring honor to Him. Is it possible to be single and radical in our passions for God? It must be because in John 2:17, it was said in reference to Jesus, “*Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up!*”

Even though we start out sincere and committed, our most pure and heartfelt intentions often get watered down until we can end up conducting our lives, our devotions, and even our religious gatherings in autopilot. We slump down to denominational protocols and traditional dogmas. We know the familiar ropes, so there is not much need to put our heart into it or pay the cost of finding new manna. If this is left unchecked, vibrancy begins to wane from our hearts and then from our religious expressions. It’s imperative that we cultivate a keen ability to detect the telltale signs of this diminishing vibrancy. This is part of maintaining the life-flow with our Source, God.

A rather distinguished indigenous Chinese pastor who was a prolific church builder in the underground churches of China and had been horrifically tortured for his faith, was escorted around many of the largest churches in America. After the tour, he was asked for any comments. His response was indicting and embarrassing, “It’s amazing what you can do without God.”

Obviously, we haven’t come to terms with our acute need for help from Heaven like Jesus did. I suppose it goes without saying that our standards are too low to need much supernatural help. Marching through our predictable church bulletins each week is a cakewalk. Some of us are haunted with the knowledge that we fall far below scriptural norms. Our *norm* should be the reality of the New Testament *plus* the “greater works

than these” mentioned in John 14:12. Whew! Oh, do we ever need more of Heaven in our lives, our churches, and our world!

*Jesus, my life is just way too small and restricting. I feel like a wing-clipped bird struggling to fly. I feel stirrings in the deep places in my heart. I can almost see myself flying where eagles fly, and it’s making me want to find my wings. Please help me.*

## יהוה יראה

Now, what happens if we’re not doing our Father’s business? Or worse yet, what happens if we actually resist it? Maybe we can find some lessons from Jonah. Let’s take a look.

*But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord (Jonah 1:3).*

Of course we all know the story. Jonah didn’t want to heed the word of God (the Father’s business); rather, he ran away from God’s will. Actually, he literally ran the opposite direction. Ninevah was about 550 miles east and Tarshish was about 2,500 miles west.

Now here’s a little insight that is profoundly applicable to the message of this book. When Jonah pursued his own business, he had to *pay the fare* himself. The provision of God wasn’t present to accommodate him. So he found himself not only one ticket poorer, but he also found himself in a *storm* that forced him to reckon with his disobedience. And not only did he have to endure the consequences of the storm and ride in God’s specialized transportation system to get him back, but in the course of the awful ordeal, Jonah seriously jeopardized the lives of those on the ship with him.

I wonder how many of us have discomfited the lives of our friends by leaning on them for some sort of accommodation when we were outside of the will of God? Just a thought.

The first point is *when we’re outside of the will of God, we must pay the fare!* In other words, we must provide for ourselves. Ultimately and in the

big picture, Jesus paid the complete fare for us on the cross, even while we were yet sinners and outside of the will of God. There is no arguing this wonderful truth. At the same time, there is no denying that as we walk within the will of God, the grace of God is poured out in greater measure, which will bring us to the next point.

This same principle can be seen in the Fall of Adam and Eve. Before their fall, God provided for them. After the Fall they had to till the ground by the sweat of their brow. Their Fall was really a desire for self-rule. They traded God's rule for their own. And since they chose to rule themselves, they had to then pay their own way with hard toil to make a living. But the opposite, of course, is if we get yoked with Jesus, He promises that His yoke is easy and His burden light.

The second point is, *when we're in God's will, He will pay the bill*. There is a motto I really like:

### **God's will is God's bill!**

Wow! This is "take home" material, folks. It's so simple, yet so profound! In fact, it's so good that you could nearly sum up *Supernatural Provision* with this one little phrase! And don't be surprised when you find yourself saying it almost without thinking. Every time you say it, this truth will etch itself deeper into the core values of your being and you'll find yourself inspired right into God's provision. Come on now, this is good stuff.

The subtitle of this book reads, *Where God Guides, He Provides*. And that is exactly what happened for Jonah. When he finally decided to concede to God, God's specially designed mode of travel was waiting to escort Jonah back, free of charge! Oh, the timing of God to have that whale waiting! Sure, it would have been nice to have a nice luxury cruise liner to transport him back, but God knew Jonah needed a little extra time to repent and agree with God, three days worth of time. Sorry, Jonah!

It's quite possible that some of us are in a self-induced storm, or the belly of a whale. Take courage, God is still in control. He has a great end to our stories.

Remember, the good thing about obedience and being about our Father's business is that He pays the bill. We can do things our way and **we** pay our

own bill or do it His way and **He** will pay the bill. “*To obey is better than sacrifice*” (1 Sam. 15:22). God’s ways are always better than our own ways.

But now here comes God’s goodness to Jonah again in Jonah 3:1, “*The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time.*” Isn’t God good? So redemptive and longsuffering!

And of course we know the rest of the story; Jonah complied and spared a city from destruction. God will give us all a second chance if we’ll seek, find, and walk in our Father’s business. He wants to show Himself strong to us and through us. He really does.

### יהוה יראה

How about a little teaser: I thought that in Jonah’s time God’s kind intentions were only toward His chosen people, Israel. Why then did God show mercy and salvation to Ninevah, a heathen Gentile city? The goodness of God in the form of the Gospel wasn’t going to be offered to the Gentiles for another 800 years. I wonder how many areas, things, and people we’ve completely written off in our minds as being unredeemable, and yet, if we were to be moved with God’s kindness that leads people’s hearts to repentance, we might find weren’t as beyond hope as we thought?

### יהוה יראה

You may be asking, “Ok, we’ve determined that Jesus’ mandate was to fulfill the Father’s will. And I do want to bring pleasure to God, but how can I apply this, and what impact does this have in my life?”

Let’s take a look at what Jesus received when He did the will of the Father. The thing we’re looking for is, how was He obedient and what was the reward for His desire to please His Father?

*I have food to eat of which you do not know...My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work (John 4:32,34).*

To get a better understanding of John 4:32-34, let’s discuss some physiology and our body’s functions. When we eat a bite of food, the food supplies nutrition for all of our body’s needs. It yields nutrition for our

bones, blood, hair, organs, muscles, skin, etc. Our Creator's intricate design of our bodies is truly amazing. It's a major miracle that one portion of food can be disseminated into so many different parts of the body and carry life-giving nutrition to each part.

Now that we've established the principle of all of our bodily needs being supplied by eating a portion of food, let's unpack what Jesus said. He said that if He did the will of the Father, it was meat (or food) to Him. So what was His food? It was to *do the will* of the Father, or in simple terms, just being obedient to the Father. All He had to do to have *all* of his needs supplied was to be obedient to His Father.

Since this is so central to our book, let's read it just one more time:

All He had to do  
to have *all* His needs supplied  
was to be obedient to His Father.

Some, struggling to believe the full impact of this premise, might say, "Ok, I don't have any problem believing that if I'm obedient I will get that good warm fuzzy feeling and have basic peace and confidence with God. I'll probably even receive some crowns somewhere out there in eternity, but I don't think we should expect *everything* in our lives to be supplied, especially not the temporal things. Let's just keep the spiritual activities connected to the spiritual areas and I'll handle the practical things in life."

Unfortunately, this is probably the mentality of most people, but now let's go back to Jesus' actual statement, "*My meat is to do the will of the Father.*" We've learned that eating a piece of meat will supply all our body's needs, right? Then it should also be true that eating one bite of *obedience* will supply all our needs, natural and spiritual. So if Jesus' formula is true, then this shouldn't be too much of a stretch to believe.

The disciples had asked Jesus if He wanted anything to eat, and the object of their question regarded His bodily needs. But Jesus said that His spiritual activity (obedience) satisfied even His natural needs. And of course, it goes without saying that it also supplied for His spiritual needs. So to wrap it up: We can now believe that simple obedience and desire to please our Father

will unlock Heaven's provision for both the natural and the spiritual areas of our lives.

All that our Heavenly Father is asking from us is a desire to hear and commitment to follow.

Now fellow believer, are we ready to be honest and vulnerable with Jesus? All that our Heavenly Father is asking from us is a desire to hear and commitment to follow. It's called simple obedience. He can work with that. And He'll bless that. It creates a launching pad for Him to perform "so believable" miracles of provision for every area of our lives. Are we ready? Let's lose ourselves in our Father's business.

### **Personal Testimony—God's Will Is God's Bill (Where God guides, He provides)**

Several years ago, Debbie and I made four or five trips to different destinations in California (on our own volition and with our own resources). Some of the trips involved public ministry and some were motivated because we felt compelled to serve the people we were going to meet. Other trips were because we were on a mission to feed our own hearts.

It was surprising to watch the Lord supply from totally unexpected sources. One such supply was most amazing. While we were there, I opened our email to find a one-time gift from a person in Europe whom I had only met twice. The gift was completely unexpected. I felt that I had *sown* very little into this person's life. His sizeable gift and successive ones have been extremely timely. Not only were the trip costs more than paid for, but it reminded me again of God's great promise to give us all the necessary provision when we are engaged and committed to our Father's business—or simple obedience.

**Let's pray:**

*Jesus, can it really be so simple that all we have to do is be obedient and then life's needs will be taken care of? Is it really that basic that if I will seek first the Kingdom of God that all these other things will be added unto me? It feels like You're way out there, Jesus, almost too far to believe. But I'm feeling a little like Peter right now. I feel stuck in a stinking and rotting fishing boat with gnarly fishermen, and if I was sure that You're asking me to come out there with You, I'd be there in a heartbeat! Just say my name, Jesus. Just let me hear Your voice clearly, and I'll begin stepping over the gunwales of this boat right now. I believe You, Jesus, and I want to be where You are. Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. Do I have to be a monk or a pastor to love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength? Why?
2. What was Jesus' food?
3. Is Jesus implying that this should be my food also? Explain.
4. What is a one-word definition for doing the will of the Father? (Tip – see 1 Samuel 15:22.)
5. When God says that He'll supply *all* our needs, should we believe that He'll take care of our temporal needs, also? Why?
6. What is God requiring of me if He is offering to take care of all my natural needs? (Tip – see Matthew 6:33.) Explain.
7. Is it possible that I have caused discomfort, or even duress, in my relationships if I wasn't in the will of God? In what ways?

# CHAPTER 6



## *Jehovah Jireh— God, My Provider*

Abraham stood in the middle of a test of epic proportions. He was being asked by God to sacrifice Isaac, the son of the long-awaited promise. This was Abraham's miracle son. And now, the same God who gave the promise was asking to have the son back (see Gen. 22:14).

What would your response have been?

If Abraham hadn't known God's heart, and if he hadn't been friends with God (see 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23), he would probably have experienced confusion and disbelief, and perhaps ultimately, disobedience. But Abraham knew his God, having talked face-to-face with Him on many occasions. He knew his God was Good. And even though Abraham had no idea how God would do it, he knew that God's plan for this strange request was going to have a good outcome. God Himself would see to it. He had seen ahead and had a plan beyond what Abraham could have known at this time.

Well of course, we know the rest of the story. God supplied a sacrifice to replace Isaac. From this passage, God discloses one of His attributes. *He will see to it*; He will take care of us—thus, Jehovah Jireh. At this point, we've just discovered another of His many names, each describing another amazing facet of His heart and nature. What is God saying to us when He wants us to call Him Jehovah Jireh? Is it just a title or moniker without meaning? Or does it have relevance and impact in my life?

As you probably know, in Jewish custom, names were used to signify a meaning or express a sentiment about either the name holder's origin or destiny. For example, consider *Jacob*, whose name means trickster—and trickster he was, when he stole his brother's birthrights. God later changed his name to *Israel*, which means prince because he had wrestled with God and people and won! (God really liked that, by the way!)

How would you like to have had the name "trickster"? What a badge to wear all of your life! Just think of it: Wherever you turned, every time people used your name, they were reinforcing your identity as a trickster. That would be tough. But how awesome to be renamed "Prince" by the God of Heaven! Now, that's a name one would be happy to wear and which would most likely elicit many of your princely virtues just because you wore the name.

We can see that God named people in Scripture in order to ordain the path of their lives. But let's take it a step further. If God used that principle to call forth a specific attribute in a person, then wouldn't He certainly abide by that same principle when using His own name? In other words, if He's going to wear a name, then He *must* fulfill the implications of that name. Remember, He's God and He cannot lie.

God's name is Provider. That name has meaning; it defines Him and also mandates His activity toward us. And since He's a God who cannot lie, then we can believe that He truly wants to fulfill the meaning of His name to us, in us, and through us. He wants to be our Provider.

Bill Johnson says, "We should have more faith in God's *identity* than in His *activity*." For reasons that you and I may not know until eternity, God may or may not do the things we ask, or He may delay His answer. But even though we don't understand His activity or lack of it, does that change His identity? No. He's still the best loving God you and I will ever meet.

Here's another thought: God was our Provider in the Old Testament. Among many things He did for us, He *gave* us bread to eat. But in the New Testament He *is* our Provision. Now *He* is our Bread of Life. Did you get that? Not only does He provide bread, but now He is our Bread (see John

6:32-35, 48-58). Not only is He our Provider, but now He is our Provision. This just brings it one step closer. Jesus is everything we need.

But we create a problem for ourselves when we begin to worry, stew, and fret, and then sweat to get our own provision. Our striving muddies the waters of receiving from Him so much that we can't see God's hand or hear His voice for all the cloudy waters. Can you imagine what God must feel when He sees us scampering around trying to devise another scheme to squeeze another dollar out of someone? If it weren't so sad, it would probably be funny.

Just take a look at ourselves for a moment, all a-dither with activity, and we've gotten ourselves so booked up with schedules that the next possible date for a respite from our *busy-ness* is quite possibly on next year's calendar. I can just imagine God saying, "If I didn't love them so much, this would be entertaining." But the fact is, God's tender and compassionate heart pains along with us as He experiences our anxiety. Consider Jesus when He wept over Jerusalem. His heart was broken because of their blindness to their day of visitation. They'd have to continue now in their same state because they didn't receive the greatest gift humankind has ever been offered. Jesus is not a distant, unfeeling God. His whole Book unveils one story after another of His unflagging pursuit of us in hopes of winning our hearts so that we would *rest* in His overwhelming goodness. Remember, "*It's the goodness of God that leads men's hearts to repentance.*" I hope your heart says with mine, "Oh God, pour your goodness out over here! I'll let you win my heart any time."

He's the Big *G*—the Giver God who loves to provide for us. It's His nature! It was never His intention for the sons of God to be relegated to mundane, life-sapping tasks in this life. But sadly, we've picked up some doctrines of demons about God's love and His ways with humankind. We've believed that He's hard, distant, and not that interested in the details of our personal lives.

To make a point, consider this cynical example of an erroneous view of God.

## **Hypothetical Conversation Between God and “Joe”**

God: Joe, I’m putting you on the earth for about 70 years.

Joe: Great, God, with You around this should be fun!

God: Yeah, I’ve got a mission for you.

Joe: Cool, I like adventures.

God: Are you ready?

Joe: Yeah, what are we going to do?

God: You see that pile of big rocks over there?

Joe: Yeah, are we going to do something exciting?

God: Not exactly. Take this sledgehammer and make small rocks.

Joe: I don’t understand, but I’ll give it a try.

God: By the way, I’ve gotta leave right now. You hang in there.

Joe: Don’t be too long, I’m looking forward to being with You.

God: Try to win a few converts to bust rocks with you.

*(Time passes – Joe is 20 years old)*

God: Hey, you’re still busting big rocks into little ones?

Joe: I’m trying. I thought You had forgotten about me.

God: No, letting you bust rocks is how I show love to my people.

Joe: That seems strange, but my church told me that too.

God: I’m just testing you to see if you have a good heart.

Joe: My friend told me that You’re not too interested in my life.

God: Not too much. Life’s hard. Just grin and bear it.

Joe: Ok, I’ll try to hang in there.

God: Now, endure this back-breaking job for the next 40 years.

Joe: I don’t know if I can.

God: Here’s enough strength to barely make it through the week.

Joe: Well, thanks for the blessing!

God: Don’t forget to tell everyone how exciting Christianity is.

*(Time passes – Joe is 60 years old)*

God: How did you do without me around?

Joe: It's awfully hard, God.

God: Well, did you forget that life is hard?

Joe: Amen to that!

God: You shouldn't expect too much out of me.

Joe: Well I haven't seen much, to be sure.

God: Life isn't supposed to be fun, you know.

Joe: Seems like I've always been in tests, God.

God: One of my favorite things is to give tests.

Joe: I'm just hoping that I passed a few.

God: I'll try to see if we can get you some crowns in Heaven.

Joe: Well, thanks. Thanks for at least some kind of reward.

God: Aren't you happy that I've been your God all through life?

Joe: I tried to be, but it was hard to be happy.

God: Well you're nearly through, just a few more hardships.

Many people have this misconception of God, thinking that He is a hard taskmaster and that it is a noble virtue to not need God or expect too much from Him. I wonder how many "Joes" are reading this book? How many Joes are *nobly* marching around the world thinking that they are good Christians for not expecting too much of God?

Ok, so if it isn't a life sentence of busting up big rocks into little ones, then what does it really mean for God to be my Jehovah Jireh? Does it just mean that He'll make me healthy enough to go to work all week so that I can drag back home and drop into bed sore and tired, exclaiming, "What a great God we serve?"

Or maybe it means something a little better than that. If I look to Him as Provider, maybe He'll give me a better job with a *pay raise*. Then I can toil all week so that I can drag myself home and drop into bed sore and tired... with a boat in my garage, and now exclaim, "We really serve a great God!"

Perhaps it means that if I apply my cunning and astute innovations, I'll devise methods to make others do the work for me so that I don't have to do all the toiling. I can let them do it. Then we could shout it out, "Wow! We really serve a great God!"

Don't these three scenarios just sound silly? 1) We just barely have enough strength to make it through the week and pay the bills. 2) Or maybe the same with a little extra to buy a boat. 3) Or maybe we get someone else to do our work. In light of the higher Law of Blessing and how much our Father is in love with us, how could we ever let ourselves succumb to such a slavery mentality? But then, isn't this the common belief system of most Christians?

Another very sad synopsis of life is: "Life is hard, and then you die..." Obviously, this is a cynical perspective. But the sad fact is that much of our upbringing has taught us to believe that this is pretty typical of God. The truth is that our enemy, the devil, has attempted to sell God's people a *bill of goods* that diminishes the goodness of God in their minds, robs faith from their hearts, and destroys victorious living right out of their experiences.

Do any of these scenarios sound like our concept of Jehovah Jireh? Maybe we wouldn't want to admit that they are our concepts or convictions, but do they reflect our experience?

## יהוה יראה

While we're talking about the principle of God living up to the meaning of His name, let's look at His Word in First Timothy.

*But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8).*

In Chapter 9, we'll talk about this verse to find out what God is expecting from *us*. But let's see if we can get any insight from this verse about the commitment that we can expect *from God*.

What does this verse say about our Heavenly Father? Well, if we just think about it for a moment, we'd have to realize that our Father would

have to set the standard for providing for his own house. He would never ask us to do something that He doesn't do or hasn't modeled for us. What kind of a Father would He be if He didn't do what He asked us to do? And then, remember that God can not lie, either in word or in principle. He must keep His word and stay true to the principles of His Word. If God says that we must provide for our own, then He must also provide for His own. That's it, in a nutshell. If He asks us to do a thing, then He must do the same thing. Because of God's nature, He has committed Himself to provide for His people. From this verse, Jehovah Jireh's commitment comes through loud and clear. He *will* take care of us.

As you're processing this book, you may want to respond to God's invitation found in Isaiah 7:11, "*Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above.*" You see, God wants to bolster our faith and confidence so much that He asks us to ask Him for a sign for good. Can you believe that? So go ahead. Give Him a try. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

## יהוה יראה

Now let's take a look at what Jesus said about a heavenly kind of banking system:

*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19-21).*

Treasure could be defined as anything that has value and captures our hearts. Of course, what is one person's treasure may not be another's treasure, but if we're honest, most of us are held captive by fear of a lack of provision in our lives and struggle to get more. So like so many other passages in Scripture, this is a great sounding philosophy, but we hardly know what to do with it in real life, because most of our culture and our personal lives consist of laying up treasures *on this planet*. The passage actually says, "*Do not lay up for yourself treasures on earth.*" I don't know

how much more clearly it can be said. We must come to terms with verses like this! The sad truth is that our lives are so intricately intertwined with the world's system of laying up treasures on this earth that even this one verse will probably haunt us for quite some time.

### יהוה יראה

Remember, I said that most passages in Scripture have a complementary perspective in the Bible. Those perspectives may seem opposing at times, but really aren't when we find the way and times that God intends to apply them in our lives. There are many books written by brilliant authors and clinics taught by anointed speakers on how to gather finances using great business models. Verses like Proverbs 6:6-8 regarding the ant's storage of food from harvest time point to a perspective of preparing for the future. *Supernatural Provision* is not trying to diminish the message or effectiveness of such teachers or those Biblical perspectives. I have not forgotten and am not naively ignoring these complementary views. Rather, as I've stated earlier, my intent is to focus on a perspective of provision that is rarely talked about: dependency upon God's great goodness.

### יהוה יראה

Nothing about this world encourages us to simply obey God. And nearly everything about us humans presses us toward self-preservation and self-exaltation as compared to casting ourselves into the care of an unseen God. But when we're brought face-to-face with God's Word, such as "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth,*" we must either get ruthless with this world's ideals that have become rooted in our lives, or we must make this verse some kind of fuzzy spiritualization for which there seems to be no practical application. No one will disagree that deciding to be radical is extremely difficult when the world—and even most of our fellow Christians—are screaming at us to stay in the conventional system of acquiring provision. We're all just too insecure to risk radical obedience to Scripture. Further, most of us are just not sure if we could trust God to take care of us. And we don't want to have to face the nearly guaranteed misunderstanding

of our friends. So we play it safe. We don't rock our boat or anyone else's boat. We have our life jackets on good and snug. And we cling to the hope that the boat that we're in won't spring a leak and capsize.

Nearly everything about us humans presses us toward self-preservation and self-exaltation as compared to casting ourselves into the care of an unseen God.

But there is a serious problem here:

*For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it (Mark 8:35).*

Again, Jesus hits us with a staggering blow to our comfort and self-preservation. And yes, we *must* do something about it. Either we get radical with verses like this, or we wimp out. And if we espouse the idea that it's just fuzzy philosophy, won't we be haunted by the fact that we took literally the verses saying, "*Do not kill*" and "*Do not steal,*" then we claimed that "*Do not lay up treasures on earth*" was just ethereal and clergy-talk? Oh! This is getting *close to the bone*.

About now our disquieted consciences may be starting to beg for some kind of token response. So we might squeak out a feeble, "Ok, ok. Maybe I'll try to live a little more dependent upon God when I can, but I'm sure that life in Jesus' day was a lot different than it is now. And I'm sure that if He was living in my world, He would update these verses. He'd let us download version 4.0 of the Bible or something more practical."

But somewhere down deep inside of me, my spirit man shouts at me, "Wimp! What happened to your courage? Where's the bravado of a God-man or a God-woman? Where is abandonment to God! What happened to '*It's all for You, Jesus*'?"

And so our personal battle continues over these unsettling passages. But most of humanity's lifestyle continues unabated. We go on laying up treasures on earth, trying desperately to save our lives with the world's systems. Once in a while, a little storm rumbles through, at which we give

token lip service and a tug or two at the oars of our boat toward some kind of lifestyle change. But largely, our boats get swept along for a ride in the tide of the ocean of humanity. Of course, we make sure that we have several life preservers around us in order to diversify and hedge lest something doesn't work out. But the truth be known, we're constantly haunted with knowing that everything of this world will come crashing down, maybe sooner than later. We just hope that it will be sometime after we're dead and gone.

Isn't that sad!

But still we have to come back to, what are we going to do with Jesus' invitations? No, I should say, *What are we going to do with Jesus' **commands**?*

Maybe another of the Psalmist's *Selahs*, which means, "Stop and meditate on this," would be appropriate here.

## יהוה יראה

I once heard Kris Vallotton, one of leaders of Bethel Church in Redding, California, say that many years ago he made a vow to God to "never work for his living again." Now that rocked my boat. I did a double-take at this profound and unusual statement. At first I wondered if that vow was legitimate. Can a person make that kind of commitment before God? Is it ok? Is it righteous? Would God even allow a person to make that kind of vow?

I now believe that it is not only ok, but I have come to the conclusion that this is what God has been asking of us all along. So I've been inspired to reach for the same. I'm confidently asking God to increase my faith in these matters. How childlike could I get? How simply trusting could I get? How **good** could God be in my life, and in yours?

I'm not at all advocating that we quit our jobs and become reclusive monks or let other people work to support us while we do nothing. It's so much different than that.

You see, most people in our world live for Friday afternoon and the respite from work that the weekend offers. Let's be honest. Most people only endure vocational work because it seems like an inevitable and necessary evil in this world. Yet, they find very little, if any, true enjoyment in their job. But as hard as we try, our provision is rarely abundant. Many don't know how next month's bills will get paid. And some of us have even attended financial success seminars without much betterment of our lives. We fret occasionally about finances, but mostly we just wear down until we simply accept this form of lifestyle as our norm.

### יהוה יראה

Jehovah Jireh has provided for our family much better than my *arm of flesh* ever has. For over a dozen years, I've tried hard to not work for my living. Do I work? Sure! But not for my living! I'm determined to let my Father be my Jireh-Provider while I try to do my part, which is *being about my Father's business*. (Before I forget, let me say that for about six months in this time I worked vocationally, which resulted in hourly and contractual wages, but I will elaborate on that in the next chapter.)

This adventure into trusting God tests my mettle every once in a while, which inevitably draws me back to whether I really trust God or not with my money and my life. Oh, it gets down to the deadline sometimes with finances and bills, and then I just need to *have it out* with God, not unlike David at Ziklag. I refresh my heart with what I know about my good Father. I refresh my heart with how good He is, both according to the Word of God *and* in my experience. I refresh my heart with the testimonies of His surprising supernatural provision in our lives. I remind myself of how God has consistently supplied throughout our 30 plus years of marriage while only having seven years of guaranteed weekly paychecks. I then tell my emotions to be quiet, to yield to God's Word; and while holding a gold coin in my hand (I'll explain the gold coin later), I confidently smile and exclaim to God how cool this next provision story is going to be. Invariably, God comes through with another installment of His sovereignty and kindness. He always proves that He's a much better God than I thought.

You may say, “Well, you have a ministry, and you probably send out a fundraising letter.” I have no permanent pastorate; I do not solicit meetings, and as a matter of principle, we do not send fundraising letters to solicit money because I don’t want my arm of flesh to become the reason or source of my provision. What I do have is a commission from God and a message to proclaim. We rarely even bring up finances on any of our travels and ministry trips. Only once can I remember that I’ve suggested to a group how much to give us as an honorarium, and that was because they insisted they were so naive that they needed a suggestion. Bottom line, I just don’t want to get involved with the required mental energy and mechanics of securing finances. The resources of my mind and my emotions can only be sliced so many ways, and I just don’t have any slices left to give toward worrying and securing money from people.

Even our ministry and trips are not primarily determined by finances, but rather, by whether our Father is commissioning us to *do His business*. Of course, we didn’t instantly find ourselves at this level. We had to grow in faith and confidence that what we were hearing was accurate and that it was our Lord’s voice. As confidence increased, we found that we didn’t have to know as many practical details in order to proceed. We just rested in knowing that God’s will is God’s bill. If I can verify that He has truly initiated the thing in front of me, then I can rest in knowing that He will provide because, *where God guides, He provides*. We’ve found this to be so liberating. We don’t have to carry the concern of wondering how finances will work out back at home. And you know, the more we get simple like this, the more it seems like Heaven rallies to our aid. I can’t possibly tell you how good this feels to me! I continue to feel more inspired and empowered to be obedient in these matters and let Heaven do what Heaven loves to do with our provision. It’s an amazingly liberating concept to think that God loves to help humans and is just waiting for us to align with Heaven so that the grace can be poured out upon us.

Listen as this verse makes that point:

*For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His (2 Chronicles 16:9 NASB).*

This verse says that Heaven is on an unrelenting and persistent search for an opportunity to pour out *strong support* on anyone who will dare to belong completely to Him. Does this entice and excite you as it does me? Would you like to be strongly supported by Heaven? Just imagine what that would look like. I'm telling you, I am really keen on discovering whether I can go the distance with God in this matter. I'd love to get weaned from earthly mindsets and just see how dependent I could be upon God.

Sometimes I feel like little "Johnny" in the elementary classroom who excitedly waves his raised hand hoping to get the teacher's attention. Only, I'm waving my hand before Heaven: "I've got my hand up over here, Jesus! I want to volunteer for this!"

God is proving Himself to be such a great Jehovah-Jireh that I'm more determined than ever to not let conventional provision-gathering mindsets pressure me when making decisions that involve finances. You see, I'm trying hard to not compromise this foundation of faith that God is establishing in my life. Who knows how far we could go if we really believed God and trusted Him for everything—if we really had no agenda but God's! I sincerely want to find out.

And here's a thought to ponder: Heavenly Father is a much better boss than the best boss on earth. Just think of what it would be like to have Him as your boss. Could it get any better than that? Heaven would never make an error in any payments or dividends. Heaven would never miss your investments when you "lay up treasures." Heaven always knows when you have needs. In fact, Heaven knows even before you ask. Heaven gives abundantly above all you can ask or imagine. And Heaven's wisdom is infinitely better than ours when we must make decisions. What an amazing deal God is offering us. He would love to be our *boss!*

When provision didn't arrive until two minutes till 12, I used to think that God was stingy or reluctant to help us. I thought that it may be a commentary on His reservations about me, or maybe it was a sign of my level of fallenness, that He was withholding from me to try to teach me a lesson. But I have a different and better view of this dynamic now. I believe that many times when it seems like He has us on a "short leash" it is

because He loves being with us. Could it be that He uses temporal motivators to get us into His presence? I believe this perspective could launch us into vibrant access as we commune with God about our needs. You see, not only are our needs being addressed, but His needs are being satisfied also. He gets to spend time with us! The next time finances get a little slim, throw off all shame and hesitancy as you open up the lines of dialogue, and begin to thank God for another reminder of how much He loves to spend time with you. You can say something like, “O, Jesus, I feel Your longing. You just wanted to be near me. So here I come. I’m coming in close to spend time with You.”

You see, when we become more aware of His needs, His desire and longing for us, we interact with Him much more easily. As we grow confident in His loving favor, we relax from our insecurities and realize He just wants our confident and happy partnership in the forming of another amazing provision story. So approaching deadlines are not a time for nail-biting; they’re a time for leaning into the favor of God and enjoying His enjoyment of us as the details unfold around us. This is a major revelation; a paradigm shift. When the eyes of our hearts have been fitted with these glasses, life takes on a whole new meaning, and circumstances are much easier to walk through.

## יהוה יראה

You ask, “Do you have to be a spiritual giant of some kind in order to do this?” No! Quite to the contrary. It’s all about simplicity and childlikeness, remember? So, what if we mess up? What if we lean to the arm of flesh and then realize we’ve gone down a dead end street? Remember, children make mistakes, but they’re usually steered back in the right direction fairly easily. They don’t have too many deeply ingrained demands, unlike many of us grown-ups. The point: The more simple we become, the easier it gets to be led by our Wonderful Father.

So it’s easy and simple: If you miss it (or err), ask for mercy, and then when the next walk-on-the-water opportunity presents itself, ask for grace. It’s all a matter of childlike dependence upon God; just needing God and

needing to hear from God for everything is the objective. *And He loves it!* His heart is designed to be the Giver God. He loves to give, if only we have a heart simple enough to need Him.

## **Personal Testimony—God Is My Jireh (Sweating vs. trusting)**

All of my life I've been involved in ministry. But for many years I also worked in the housing and construction trades. For me personally, I can't think of any manual labor that would suit me better than construction. I met new people nearly daily. I could see the reward of my labors in a short span of time. I had opportunities to try to connect with people's hearts around eternal themes, which is very stimulating to me. I've always enjoyed trying to find an open door into people's hearts because I find that most people enjoy talking about their hearts and God as long as they know they will receive respect and care from me in the discourse.

But for many years I struggled so desperately to try to put beans on the table. I tried to get jobs that paid well, and I tried to get more dependable jobs. But the fact is that I could never quite seem to pay the bills. Fortunately, God was so good to us that an unexpected gift from a benefactor always showed up just in the nick of time. Thank God for the gifts that came through at "two minutes 'til 12." For Debbie and me, this whole issue was quite emotionally taxing. We tried to not be overly consumed by it, but the fact remains that we just couldn't quite pay our bills from my vocational income.

In the early '90s, a good friend of mine, Gary, began to stimulate my thinking about living in supernatural provision. Gary and I met nearly every week for about a dozen years and went mining through the Word of God to explore all we could about ceasing from our labors. It was a stretch for us, and we knew that we were pushing the conventional belief systems. Yet we found that it was in the Bible. So we began to pray into it and believe for it. Could God really become our Jehovah Jireh? During this seemingly all-too-slow process, a few promising signs for good began to create greater faith in our hearts. God was really in this thing!

Then in 2000 our family made a geographic move which gave me a natural and clean break-point, so I asked the Lord if I could cease from vocational labors. Since then, I've tried diligently to not saddle my mind with the burden of securing finances or even worrying about finances. Many people have asked me to work for them for wages, but I've almost always turned them down. Occasionally, if I have time, I respond with, "No, I won't work *for* you, but I will come *help* you for a day or so for free." This is almost always followed by the usual confused look on their face which says, "What do you mean?"

So at this point I give a brief explanation of how I'm letting God be my Jehovah Jireh, and yet, how I still have a desire to help people with the skills that I've acquired over the years. I further explain how this would be a great occasion to get some fellowship while accomplishing something meaningful for a friend. They shake their heads, not really understanding, but can't disagree that they're being offered a pretty good deal.

As an example, a few years ago my close friends pressed hard for me to remodel their basement. I declined from doing the whole job, but said I would help for two or three days doing a small part, as long as I could work with their son. You see, they had previously asked me to mentor their son, and this occasion would be a great opportunity to serve them with my skills *and* do some *eternal investment* with their son. As it happened, their son and his friend made for a great team when we painted their basement. And in the course of work, we had some very constructive and stimulating discussions about life, eternity, and things that matter.

The point is that I must watch over my heart to not let it get compromised by distractions or dissipations, which is what I felt would happen to my heart if I contracted the job. I believe that our hearts only have a certain capacity to adequately carry life's issues. You and I must get familiar with the capacity of our hearts and learn to guard our hearts from being diminished by anything, even if, at times, that thing seems to be a good thing.

This revelation and life-mode is working well for our family, and has for more than a dozen years.

## Let's pray:

*Jesus, could this be reality for me? I'm asking You to show me. If it is, would You give me some signs for good to increase my faith? I'd like to open up some areas in my life and devote those areas to "being about my Father's business." It just sounds so good that I want to give it a try. The more I get to know Your heart, the more I want to be where You are, say what You're saying, and do what You're doing. Be patient with me, Jesus. I'm coming if You'll help me. Amen.*

## Study Questions:

1. What is the meaning of God's name, *Jehovah Jireh*? Does He want to be that to me?
2. What are the limits to God's goodness toward His people in Ephesians 3:20?
3. How literal should I take "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth"?
4. How much self-preservation am I practicing in my life?
5. How can I strengthen and encourage myself in the area of God's provision?
6. What do I do if I fail? Do I run to Him? What does that say about my view of God?
7. When's the last time that provision came in a way that I knew it was from *Jehovah Jireh*?
8. The next time some amazing gift of provision comes to me, could my response be, "That's so believable!"

# CHAPTER 7



## *Does Manual Labor Have Any Value?*

Let's start off by asking a couple questions:

- 1) Are you saying that I should never have a vocational job anymore?
- 2) Does manual labor have any value when living under this higher law?

The answer to the first question is, "No way!" and to the second, "For sure it does!"

Let's start with just a few of the benefits that manual labor may offer in both the natural and the spiritual realms, e.g.

Manual labor may:

- satisfy a pressing need or necessary chore
- facilitate the building of self-discipline
- promote physical health and fitness
- offer a service to humankind
- satisfy someone's need
- afford the personal satisfaction of a job well done
- be an expression of obedience to God, parents, or a boss
- be an expression of our love to God or friends
- facilitate relationships with those we work with
- facilitate discipleship of those around us
- be a way to express a God-given gift or a developed skill

And we could come up with many more great reasons for manual labor. They're all good, yet we still haven't even touched on the aspect of gathering provision. So there *is* value, even Kingdom value, in manual labor. Now granted, these benefits may occur in the context of a wage-producing *job*, but the point we want to make here is that we're not trying to create a breed of manual-labor-eschewing couch potatoes. What joy would there be in that? We'd just grow plump and lazy in body, soul, and spirit. There are just too many benefits from work for us to sit around in inactivity. So I'd like to divide this chapter into the following two categories, each having good and Kingdom reasons for manual labor.

1) Personal Development

2) Kingdom Opportunity

Within each of these categories, we'll explore the benefits of manual labor while not leaning on our own strength to secure our provision.

## **1) Personal Development**

To begin with, Paul says, "*For bodily exercise profits a little*" (1 Tim. 4:8).

I imagine that you're a lot like me. My body requires constant discipline to keep it under subjection to acceptable standards. And at this point, I'm not only referring to size or weight. Health issues have surfaced several times throughout my life—making the matter of diet and exercise a very serious component of my thinking and weekly regimen. Giving attention to these areas, which aren't exactly exciting, has become an integral part of my life. And for any person of good character, the commitment to accomplish non-exciting things to attain a positive outcome must become a part of the basic approach to life. It's called self-discipline or self-control. Consider Jesus:

*Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ...that every tongue*

*should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (Philippians 2:6-7, 11).

Here we see that Jesus did not consider Himself robbed to lay aside His heavenly position and become “dust” in order to redeem us back to God. In fact, the Bible says that He endured the cross *for the joy set before* Him (see Heb. 12:2). There was no earthly glory awaiting Him when He descended from the grand and limitless environs of Heaven to live within the humble confines of a frail human body. Just three years into His ministry, our response to His selfless overtures was to crucify Him. It wasn't exactly a cake walk, to put it way too lightly. But because of His love for us and because His Father asked Him, He took on this lowly position, which opened up the possibility for every human to become His beloved Bride.

His obedience was learned through suffering, and the character He acquired inspired Jesus to do only what He saw His Father do and obey all that He heard His Father say. This same heart posture and mooring-post for godly character enables men and women to do things that are not gratifying or pleasurable in the short term. The people who possess these qualities are borne up by nobler motivations, which will pay higher dividends in the long run—here on earth and in the life to come. Self-discipline is a key component to that man or woman's character. Every thought or action of that person passes through a process of evaluation to see whether that thought or action will produce good fruit in the end. If it will, then the potential of sustaining a temporary affliction when *walking it out* will not be a significantly troubling issue. But if there is no promise of good fruit, then even a short-term gratifying experience may not yield enough motivation to continue any further.

You see, self-discipline (or self-control) based upon righteous and eternal values, must be one of the anchor points of every godly man or woman's character. There is no promise of a good future without it. We're not just talking about some kind of self-willed, forced determination. The virtue we're talking about is only discovered and developed as we're overcome with desire to please Someone who has captured our hearts with His love and kindness. We *have* to interact with God in order to obtain this virtue. In fact, the apostle Paul says that self-control *is* one of the nine fruits of the

Spirit. So yielding to Holy Spirit's influence is how self-control is produced. It's the natural outworking of Holy Spirit's activity in our lives.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).*

Godly and righteous self-control will safeguard one's journey through life. It will protect our heart and the hearts of others from undue pain. It imposes a governor over every impassioned thought or idea that ventures through our heads. It stops a rogue idea dead in its tracks before it can produce bad fruit. Self-control inspires us through adversity, and even pain, in order to effect a better end. Self-control is one of the virtues for which others venerate us. In fact, Proverbs goes so far as to say that even a fool looks good if he can practice self-control.

*Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace (Proverbs 17:28).*

So how do we get self-control? That is probably the age-old objective of every wise and caring parent—how can I instill noble virtues, such as self-control in the heart of my child? Well, let's look at Jesus. When He was born, He was 100 percent human. According to the Bible, He had all the proneness to sin and fallenness that you and I have. He wasn't born with some kind of silver spoon in His mouth that would give Him the edge on this process of character development. He had to learn it the hard way just like you and me. You say that you're not sure about that? Then listen to this:

*Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered (Hebrews 5:8).*

You see, He needed the character-building process just as you and I do. And He complied. He yielded. He wasn't "work brittle." He didn't shun work or a hardship if He could see the righteous outcome of those actions. Inarguably, this is what afforded Him depth of character which strengthened His resolve to carry all the sins of the whole world to the cross, all for a greater purpose, all for love!

The mentoring aspects of work are also designed to prepare and qualify us for *graduation* and commission into our Father's business, clearly stated

in this passage:

*Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father (Galatians 4:1-2).*

Of course, we're the heirs Paul is speaking about, and in God's design, while we're in our forming stages, we may find ourselves in a slave position, but He uses our *masters* as stewards to facilitate the development of our character and skills. Hopefully, we have Heaven's perspective on this time period of our lives. Hopefully, we're embracing Heaven's design. But here's the good part: God's intentions are for us to *graduate* at His appointed time.

Now consider this road map to perfection. Perfection is what we want in the end, isn't it? Listen as James gives us a profoundly simple recipe, even if it is somewhat painful at times.

*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing (James 1:2-4).*

James's recipe is something like this:

## **Recipe for Perfection**

Ingredients:

- 1) Start with lots of **Joy** to cover this whole process.
- 2) Expect **Trials**—they'll find you.
- 3) Add **Confidence** to the testing of your faith.

The testing *will* yield good results.

- 4) Don't forget **Perseverance** and **Patience**.

Allow plenty of time for this *cake to bake*.

Yield: **Perfection!**

You will be complete and lacking in nothing.

Are you ready and committed to let your *cake bake* to completion? Don't take it out of the oven before it's time. I know it seems like the oven fires get awfully hot sometimes, but surely we can wait for the full process to be accomplished in us. That's just the way it must be in order to obtain the desired yield.

Apostle Paul says it this way:

*And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:3-5).*

## יהוה יראה

My father had a filtering process that he used when it came to making a decision. This filtering process gave him the tools and standards from which he could exercise his self-control, which we talked about earlier. He would ask himself whether there was “time, money, and purpose” sufficient enough to accomplish the opportunity. The first two are resources of which he only had a limited supply. The third one is derived from a deep awareness of Heaven's hand upon him. These three resources were his litmus test when making a decision.

- 1) Do I have enough Time to give to this?
- 2) Do I have enough Money to accomplish this?
- 3) Is there a righteous Purpose to motivate me?

It was the filters of time, money, and purpose that determined the outcome of his decision making. The issue of time and money are easy to understand and apply, but maybe we should explain “purpose” a little more fully. Obviously, the filter of purpose included evaluating his own heart, and others' hearts, to see whether this decision would yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness as the end result. And integral to the evaluation process was the question of whether he felt that it was God who was asking him to do that which was before him. As a result, I think most people would have

described my father as a very principled man, which meant that he made decisions based not on whether he was going to be gratified or not, but whether it was the right thing to do. On occasion, he would do the right thing even to his own hurt, because it was right (see Ps. 15:4). And conversely, even if offered some reward, he wouldn't do the wrong thing because it was wrong. This ability to live by principles doesn't come easy. In fact, it won't be possible unless the root of character has been fashioned and formed in our inner person. It's the virtue of self-discipline, or self-control as Galatians calls it in the listing of the nine fruits of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:21-22).

Self-discipline will keep a person on the straight and narrow path, and in the long run will yield many treasures, both in Heaven and here on earth. It would be easy to say that self-discipline is one of the many fruits of wisdom which Proverbs says is to be highly sought after.

*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding (Proverbs 4:7).*

Without godly wisdom, we are like a ship without a rudder. We're a shipwreck waiting for a place to happen. But with wisdom and self-control, we're a life-giving well-spring for many precious hearts.

So I'd like to be able to say, *Let's all go buy some godly wisdom and self-discipline right now.* It's on sale down at the local church. But unfortunately, the primary way they are acquired is through the furnace of affliction and on the anvil of hardship. That is why parents are hard-pressed in their hearts to try to impart these profoundly necessary components into the hearts of their children. Most children don't enjoy the correction and hardships that parents exact upon them, but there is really no escape from this God-established way of building character. We must embrace the character building process in our lives, just like Jesus who "learned obedience through the things He suffered" (see Heb. 5:8). We must allow ourselves to be disciplined, be willing to discipline ourselves, and yes, work or labor when the need arises. This is especially necessary in youth.

*It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth (Lamentations 3:27).*

So in our focus on personal development, we find that whether or not to engage in manual labor is not the focus of this book at all. Rather, manual labor is determined by whether eternal and righteous factors present themselves in any given opportunity. When we've processed the larger picture about a specific opportunity, then any hardship or resistance which may present itself becomes only a small factor in the decision-making process, because godly wisdom becomes our guiding light, and self-discipline becomes our stabilizer.

At this point, we can enter into any labor with a motivation that is from a higher realm, an eternal realm. This gives us the ability to feel the pleasure of Heaven as we engage with any activity before us. What would it be like to be so gripped with this higher purpose and so confident in its authenticity that we are left completely worry-free from striving for provision? Just think of this exciting prospect! If we were to follow these principles in our lives, in our families, and in our society, it would create a transformation of biblical proportions! It would truly set our hearts free from the tyranny of financial anxiety.

To sum it up, manual labor can be a vital part of personal development, especially for a young person. Hard work is a good tutor to help us if we haven't developed sufficiently, even as an adult. I'd go so far as to say that *some* people need jobs because they haven't learned how to embrace their Father's business. They haven't learned how to be self-disciplined. Bosses can give us the required motivation to get disciplined, such as getting up on time so that we get to work on time; doing a conscientious and good job so that we get paid at the end of the week; caring for ourselves in off hours so that we can function on the job.

You see, self-discipline can be effected in our lives through a boss. As these virtues are developed and implemented in our lives, we need less and less outside motivation to embrace and live them—like a well-trained horse, which needs less and less force on the bridle to turn his ton of flesh. Just the slightest body movements of the rider are picked up and responded to easily by this powerful creature. Our mind, heart, and will must be just as sensitive and responsive to God's Spirit.

You might say that there are two parts to self-discipline. One is the vital necessity for 1) a transformation of the inner person. Something deep inside of a person must be gripped with God's love and awareness of God's will for that person's life. That person must find a compelling desire to bring pleasure to God. The other is 2) the *discipline* of the outer person. Our outer person must be disciplined into obedience. This comes down to making sure that our best intentions produce the appropriate actions, in other words, putting the *horsepower to the pavement*. When the inner person is ignited and alive, the outer person embraces the process more quickly.

## **Not Ready Yet!**

I was asked by someone to share this concept of supernatural provision with a young friend of his. I sat down briefly with this young man, and before ten minutes had passed, I could tell this young person needed more discipline and backbone in his life. He had high ideals and aspirations, just far too little substance in his life to show for it. I didn't even broach the supernatural provision subject with him, but rather I emailed him a follow-up response, a part of which follows:

“I believe that you should find a job that will keep you occupied and out of trouble (and create some gainful employment for you). You see, ultimately God wants to provide for His own. But that is *if* we have discipline to remain engaged with our Father's business. If we don't have discipline, then a job becomes a great tutor which helps us develop discipline and internal 'backbone.'

So, although I am impressed with your activities in the few times during the week that you are 'about your Father's business'...you obviously still have way too much free time on your hands. I'd like to see you whittle your free time down to a few hours per week. If you were more consistently engaged with your Father's business, you would find yourself staying in victory more consistently.”

You see, free time for this young man was a snare. Free time was taking him prisoner to vices and failures that he regretted, all because he didn't have enough inner root of character to conquer these giants who came to

war against him. He was an un-walled city. He was a country without a military. He had no way to protect himself from the ravages of his oppressors. All this was because he had not allowed himself to be adequately trained by hardship and simple hard work.

At the beginning of this chapter we listed ten benefits of manual labor. We've highlighted self-discipline as just one of those benefits, and we've discovered that work can be a great tutor for the personal development of the character of a person. I think we get the idea; so let's move ahead to Kingdom benefits of work.

## **2) Kingdom Opportunity**

Let's explore how work builds and promotes the Kingdom of God.

In many ways, Jesus said and implied that He wasn't living for this temporary and temporal world, but rather He was living for the unseen world, the Kingdom of Heaven. This premise must become our primary motivation in life. When living for the Kingdom of God sufficiently grips us, it will determine and affect everything we do. This conviction and inspiration will trump all earthly frames of mind. At that point, we can begin to escape this world's *gravitational pull*, which wants to suck us back into old ways of thinking.

Work should only occur as an act of obedience and devoted service to God and others (it's important to remember that obedience has eternal purpose and reward). Work is no longer *just* an income-producing activity. It should be *primarily* an act of obedience and our desire to bring pleasure to God. It is our unique way of being about our Father's business. If you feel a tangible sense of the pleasure of God on your labors, then enjoy the commission. Jesus did. Do it heartily as unto the Lord. Find and receive the joy of the Lord. Thank God for allowing you to tap into your destiny and His grace for living.

When we work without God's presence, that's when we begin to diminish in the heart and soul. We must have His presence to sustain us.

Paul further explains to Timothy that if you find yourself in a position of forced servitude, don't think of it as work. Rather, find a perspective of eternal value to bear you up and give you inspiration in the serving.

*And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things (1 Timothy 6:2).*

First, did you notice there wasn't a mention of financial gain in this passage? There wasn't a thought like, *Just endure your lot in life and be thankful that you get paid at the end of the week.* No! The essence of this passage was all about eternal values.

Let's consider Jesus, who took on flesh and endured in His earthly *tent* for 33 years. He was fulfilling a divine mandate that had everything to do with love and eternal purpose. It had nothing to do with trying to gain something for Himself. He laid down His own personal well-being by taking on the position of a humble servant. How low did He go to serve a higher purpose? He descended to the earth and even into hell (see Eph. 4:8-10; 1 Pet. 3:19) in order to secure a way for fallen people to reconcile with God. Love *from* His Father, His love *for* His Father, and His love *for* us, motivated Him to become a servant on His earthly mission. He is our supreme example of *working* for an eternal purpose—an example He asks us to follow. And rest assured that if He asks us to follow Him, then He will *certainly* provide the grace and means to perform the task at hand.

To be sure, it was work; for even the Bible calls it “work.”

*Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34).*

*I have glorified you on the earth. I have finished the work which you have given me to do (John 17:4).*

*For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth (Romans 9:28).*

So again, our point is reinforced that God is *not* nullifying the benefits of work or the need to work. But rather, He is establishing that when we work

we must do it for the sake of obedience and to bring pleasure to our Father's heart. This is paramount.

## יהוה יראה

Of course, there are some people who are called and graced by God to make money in the marketplace, even lots of money. Consider Abraham and Lot, both very wealthy in their day. This is a unique and special calling and carries with it a spiritual anointing.

Now, what I'm about to say is going to require a fine-toothed comb of discernment. We must be able to distinguish between the love of money which is motivated by greed or fear, and the making of money, that comes from a grace inspired by God and a love for promoting the Kingdom of God. These may look similar from an outside perspective, but have completely different motivations on the heart level.

I have friends who are very successful businesspeople. They are happily engaged in entrepreneurial ventures creating a financial base from which they generously support the Kingdom of God. These people sometimes seem to have "the Midas touch," you know, whatever they touch turns into a gold-yielding opportunity. That ability is a God-given grace which empowers them to fulfill a call of God upon their lives. This wonderful grace is given credence by these and other verses:

*And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day (Deuteronomy 8:18).*

*Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way you should go" (Isaiah 48:17).*

Along with the validating evidence of successful business ventures, when this grace is working properly, these people will operate with a freedom from fear and anxiety in their lives and businesses. Once again, there will be a genuine absence of fear and greed when it comes to finances. After all, didn't Jesus say, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:30)? Most of the time, we can expect that if we are truly operating under a God-

given grace to get wealth, our activities will be rewarded with success that supersedes human efforts. In other words, the usual human effort alone could not account for the blessing and prosperity found in their lives.

Biblical figures like Abraham, Job, and Solomon are great examples of wealthy saints of God. The blessing of the Lord was obvious in their lives. Their prosperity was given by God. In fact, the writer of Job says, “*And the Lord restored Job’s losses...[and] gave Job twice as much as he had before*” (Job 42:10). Much more could be said about the favor of God in the gaining of wealth, but suffice it to say, it is truly impressive to watch a person walk in the favor of God regarding great finances. When it’s truly a gift from God, their hearts are usually humble and tender; their lives are free from the stress of anxiety, fear, and greed; their confession is centered around their love for Jesus; and their objective with finances is usually to enhance the Kingdom of God and His people.

Thank God for this great grace which enables the getting of wealth. And thank God for these graced persons who love to build the Kingdom of God. May grace continue to increase in their lives and businesses. Amen and Amen!

## יהוה יראה

I have a good and long-time friend, Walt. He and I frequently compare thoughts about supernatural provision. I’m inspired by a phrase that he coined and that helps to put work and provision in the right context. He says, “We are no longer working only for an income, but we are living for an outcome.” I like that quote, because it brings the aspect of eternal value into everything we do each day. It’s not about acquiring mammon; it’s about affecting eternity.

## יהוה יראה

So we find that work has many benefits, certainly many more than I have mentioned here. Yet, in identifying these benefits, we haven’t listed provision-gathering. Work must be primarily a matter of obedience. So

again, we're not denying the value or necessity of work. We're only raising its importance up to the level of obedience and eternal purpose. To work for a living or for our provision would be to spurn the great offer God has made to us. He wants to be our Jireh Provider.

## **Personal Testimony—Work, a Desire to Please God (Let God lead)**

In the last decade, I've conscientiously resisted giving myself to employment that exacted a contractual wage. I have felt that, as a matter of conviction, I must make sure that I let God be my Provider.

As I've said earlier, my vocational skills are in most of the building and construction trades. And even though I have been asked to be active in the trades, I've opted out because I didn't want to labor for my provision. In my history of growing in this grace, I have found that God is a much better provider than I ever was for myself. The income produced by the strength of my arm is not even close to the level of His provision.

But about 2004, our finances started dropping off. At the time, I was very involved with the International House of Prayer – Kansas City, a well-known worship and prayer ministry. In fact, our whole family had been involved on a nearly daily basis since its inception in 1999. For several years, there was sufficient financial provision. As it began to taper off, I asked the Lord what He wanted to say to me. Of course, anxiety and worry tried to dominate my mind and what I know to be the truth about God's goodness. I would be remiss if I didn't say that I had to wage a valiant battle in my heart and mind to stay out of fear. I knew that I had to find the foundational and immovable love of God to get my bearings. Reminding myself of the Word of God and my history in God kept me in security about the future. Like David, I had to strengthen myself in the Lord.

This was David's response when his men threatened to stone him at Ziklag:

*Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons*

*and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God*  
(1 Samuel 30:6).

Well, I told the Lord I wouldn't go out looking for a job, but I would work if it was offered. This was my personal way of putting myself completely in the hands of God. You see, I knew my heart was prone to anxiety and grasping for security. I don't like that about myself, so to ensure that I was taking the right course in this matter, I had to let God lead. (Novel thought, right?)

Well, my friend Walt was just about to start the construction of his new home, and he had asked me several times in the past to consider working with him. When the opportunity presented itself again, I agreed.

So now I was going to be completely preoccupied with a full work schedule that would prohibit my further daily involvement with the House of Prayer. This required adjustments on several levels, but as I'll explain later, it was all for good.

The next three to five months were more beneficial than I had anticipated. I knew enough about God at the outset to know that He would make everything work together for good. I just didn't know how good it was going to be. Then after that season was over, our financial provision just seemed to strangely kick in again. In the beginning, as I viewed the external circumstances, there didn't seem to be any reason for the diminishing of finances. But as the season ended and supernatural provision *restarted*, I began to see the strategy and wisdom of the Lord that in so many ways truly eclipsed the issues of any financial income gained during that season.

I'll list a few ways:

### **Segue from IHOP-KC:**

As I said, our family had been an integral part of the International House of Prayer from its beginning, but I had been feeling a need for a change. I am a pioneer, not a settler. The more intense part of IHOP's pioneering phase was over, and thus my grace was not the best match now. My wife Debbie and I had loved being a part of pioneering this ministry. To make

something out of nothing is what we like to do. At the same time, when the job can be accomplished by someone else nearby, then it's time for us to move on. And in retrospect I probably stayed longer than I had grace for. Maybe if I had heeded the signs earlier, I might not have had to go through this little *exercise*, only God knows for sure. But working for Walt created a segue out of the IHOP daily schedule. The months of working alongside him were actually quite emotionally and spiritually therapeutic. I didn't know how much I needed the therapy until I began to sense the positive changes in my heart. I felt like I was coming alive again.

We continue to love and maintain friendships and some involvements with IHOP, but now it's more appropriately within our God-given grace levels.

### **Reward of my labors:**

Much of our life activities are with people and ministries which can require much investment of time and heart, and many times the reward of our labors are not seen immediately. Some investments are slow growing, and you never get to see some of them bear fruit. But in construction work, when you put two boards together, there is an immediate reward of labor. You can step back and view the fruit of your labor in short order. This reward was very therapeutic, something my heart truly needed at the time.

### **Personal Encouragement:**

During those months that Walt and I worked together, our relationship deepened. We talked Kingdom-talk everyday. We talked man-to-man about the issues in our lives. We shared our personal life dreams and prodded one another to press into them. We prayed for one another and bore one another's burdens. A prayer-walk project even grew out of that time together which yielded some impressive answers to prayer.

### **Discipleship/Mentoring:**

In addition to these benefits, we probably had a dozen young guys on the job with us at different times whom we trained in construction skills and *disciplined* in areas of character and spirit.

### **Fathers and Sons:**

Occasionally, we had our own sons alongside us on the job, which was an awesome blessing.

### **A Great Job Well Done:**

In the end, we built an amazing house with outstanding features which we can be truly proud of. Walt and I still poke one another with appreciation when I visit his house.

So it was a wonderful blessing in many unexpected ways to work alongside Walt for those months. Much greater than any financial income were the emotional and spiritual benefits that we experienced and still rally around to this day.

When I look back at this time, I am very convinced that God didn't run out of provision for me. That season wasn't so much about provision; He just loved me so much that He helped me out of my "stuck" position and threw in some cool bonuses along the way—like He always does.

### **יהוה יראה**

This chapter has focused on the values of manual labor. And as we can see, God loves to use manual labor as a tool to accomplish valuable personal development and eternal Kingdom purposes.

### **Let's pray:**

*Heavenly Father, I know that you are a great benevolent Father and that You have only good thoughts in your heart for me. But my tendency is to forget that and grasp for natural security from things*

*around my life. Those things have always left me empty, bruised, and wanting. How I desperately want to find my total security in You! I don't want to grasp at the false promises of security that are offered around me. I find myself famished and eager to hear more of Your kind thoughts. I want to believe You more, and I want to fully trust in Your unfailing love and rich provision for my life. I'm asking for You to help me, please. Thank You for washing my mind and heart with the truth of Your goodness. Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is my response or heart posture when trials and tribulations come in my life?
2. Does my heart perspective of God change when trials come?
3. Let's say I'm making a lot of money. How do I know if I'm being driven by the love of money or under a God-given grace? (Hint: heart motivation)
4. Do I really believe that Father has an awesome vocation (not just an occupation) for me?
5. What is my motivation for self-discipline? Am I driven by fear of everything falling apart, the fear of rejection, the fear of the law, or am I motivated by a transformed inner person?
6. Do I need help with self-discipline and diligence in practical areas of my life?

(Suggestion: Ask three people/leaders to give you their totally honest assessment.)

7. Am I willing to work when the opportunity presents itself (for character, for obedience, or for Kingdom purposes)?
8. My job/position has just been eliminated. What should I do now?

# CHAPTER 8



## *Our Fascinating God*

Now just let your heart and mind ponder for a moment the awe-inspiring God you have. If you've been around any of the many houses of prayer, which are phenomenally springing up around the globe, you'll find that this theme (our Fascinating God) is one of our central values when we worship and pray. Not only is our God fascinating, but, if we can believe it, He wants to fascinate us.

When I was a young boy, the thought of eternity frightened me. I just couldn't imagine sitting on a cloud singing all day long. When I looked at pictures of Heaven, my little boy mind didn't have an appreciation or understanding for the concept of being awed by an amazing God. My perspective of Heaven has radically changed since my early years.

One of my all-time favorite sermons was preached several years ago by Joseph Garlington. His main point was how our hearts will be forever gripped with newly revealed, stunning, and breathtaking facets of God throughout eternity. Unprecedented fascinations from one eon after another will involuntarily evoke whole-hearted and abandoned praise to this One whose countenance shines greater than the sun in all of its strength.

Just take a look at what happened to John the Revelator when He saw Jesus in His glorified state. And don't forget that John was the same person also known as John the Beloved, the one who knew Jesus best and was Jesus' closest friend among the disciples. Even so, when John saw his best Friend in His glorified state, he fell as a dead man. What a breathtaking sight John must have beheld! In this next passage, we have his valiant

attempt to put into human words a description of this majestic Uncreated God:

*And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead (Revelation 1:13-17a).*

Recently, I was watching the couples' figure skating events of the Winter Olympics. There were times when the fluid symmetry and flawless movements of the skaters caused a spontaneous melting of my heart. As a sign that my heart was applauding, my eyes involuntarily squeezed out tears of appreciation. I was reminded once again of how our hearts have been fashioned to respond with approval to loveliness and beauty.

There are many beautiful things in this world, but the One who is altogether lovely is none other than our Lord Himself (see Song of Sol. 5:16).

You and I are sons and daughters of this fascinating God. Just as a young boy loves for his daddy to flex his muscles or throw him in the air, and as a young girl loves to watch her mommy color beautifully in her coloring book, we're created with an innate need for, and appreciation of, our Father's incomparable excellencies. In great awe, we sing songs like Chris Tomlin's "Amazing God," which uses, "Uncontainable, Indescribable, All-powerful, and Untamable" to try to describe God (all of our best-but-still-lacking attempts at communicating God's grandeur).

Let's see how God's mind-stretching excellencies apply to us.

*As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature,*

*having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Peter 1:3-4).*

Can you believe this? This is stupendous! We have been given the right and privilege to partake in all of God's nature. We're being offered and asked to receive this incredible gift. In so doing, we'll escape this world's lower laws.

Wow! We could just camp out right here for a while.

So if we're partakers of His divine nature, then shouldn't we also be filled and overflow with that same fascination and awe? Shouldn't we shine like the stars (see Dan. 12:3)? Shouldn't we arise and shine for the glory of the Lord has arisen upon us (see Isa. 60:1) and then be able to watch as the heathen kings come to the brightness of our arising (see Isa. 60:3)? Come on, now! Isn't that what the Bible says?

Let's agree together that we want to experience more of that divine nature. And we're not just talking about some fuzzy, philosophical, spiritual stuff here. We have plenty of astounding promises of God's divine blessing that pertain to this world, in this age, and to **all** of my needs.

I'd love to be able to drop a stick of dynamite on all the erroneous concepts regarding God's goodness that have attempted to rob us of radical faith to experience God's abundant Kingdom life. What He's offering us is "*So Believable*"! (Remember, we're trading the phrase that's unbelievable, for that's "so believable." We're mixing faith with the hearing of God's Word.)

Ponder this quote from a good friend of mine Paul, who says, "God only gives the very best, and He's so much better than what He gives!" In light of this, you can bet that our minds won't ever be able to fully comprehend the magnitude and scope of God's goodness available to us. Consider this passage in Ephesians 3:

*That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly*

*abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us...* (Ephesians 3:17-20).

Did you catch that? God wants to fill you and me up with *all the fullness of God!* He can't really mean that, can He? I mean, we're talking about the God who spoke the universe into existence and who holds all things together by the word of His power. It's the same God who will fascinate us through the eons. And He wants to fill you and me up with *all* of that! Doesn't the impact of that just make you stagger? Doesn't that make you do a double-take on our concepts of a distant, detached, and uncaring God? I'm telling you, it makes me want to jump up, spin around, and shout out loud, "I want that for *me!* That's God's heart for me! This promise is mine! I want to live in the fullness of God! It fuels my resolve to declare war on anything that attempts to rob me from experiencing these powerful realities of God's goodness to me: war on concepts, and religious orthodoxy that attempt to throttle this reality, and war on my own lifestyle that would short-change me. I want that *fullness of God!*"

And as if that weren't enough, how about the next verse, Ephesians 3:19? God wants us "to *know* the love of Christ which *surpasses knowledge*?" Now tell me how that's possible. I'm supposed to know God's love that is too great to be known? Was that a typo when Paul had someone pen this epistle? Maybe Paul just misspoke. But then again, this *is* the inerrant Word of God, isn't it? Every word is true. So evidently we're talking about a knowing of love that is more than my mental faculties alone can process. Then it looks like we're going to have to put our minds on hold and believe that God is good, better than we can comprehend. I like Bill Johnson's quote regarding this passage: "The limitations of my mind make my mind incapable of being my tour guide into the love of God."

Maybe I need to just talk sternly to my mind, something like this: "You take a back seat, mister. God wants to do some things in me and to me, and I can't let you be my tour guide this time. God's Word says that you won't be able to comprehend what He wants to do, so you go take a hike. I'm going to let God love me without you being my *filter*. I *might* let you have a voice later; I'm not sure. It just depends on how respectful you are of God's Word and of what He wants to do in my life."

How's that for taking every thought captive?

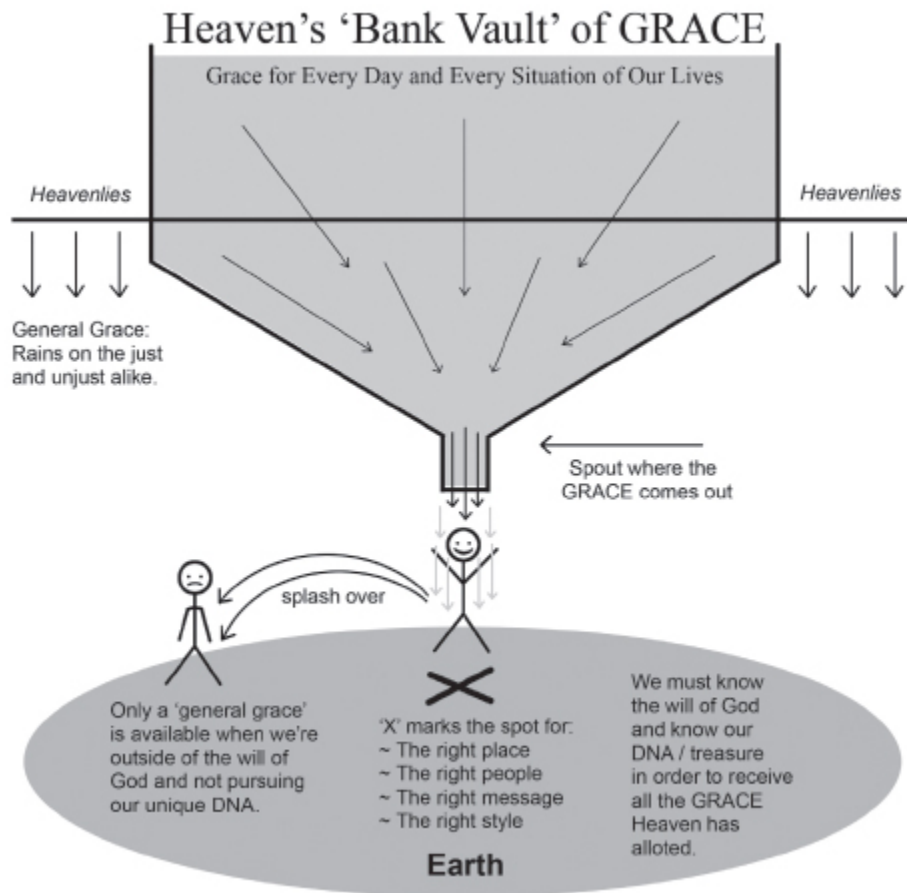
And how about the next verse, Ephesians 3:20, which states that God “*is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think*”? The NIV Bible says it even more dramatically: that God “*is able to do **immeasurably more than all we ask or **imagine*****.” Did you catch the word *imagine*? I'll bet that you and I have imagined some really cool God-things, right? I know I have. But God is saying that He wants to do exceedingly abundantly above that, *immeasurably* more than that. Ok, try to define that, would you? Let's go ahead and try to put our little pea-brained concepts around that. Get this *exceedingly abundant* God all bunched up and packaged nice and tidy in some thought that originated in our cranial region. How ludicrous! And yet, we try, don't we? If it wasn't so sad, it would be laughable.

And then the last phrase of verse 20 says that it's all “*according to his power that works in us*” (NIV). Now what does that mean? Well I'm pretty sure that if there is a limiting factor, it won't be on God's end. I think that it has more to do with how much power we *let* work in us. Has my tour-guide mind gotten in the way of God's power? With just even a casual glance around our lives, I'd have to say it's true. We've been robbed of the “*exceedingly above*” dimensions of God's love and power in and through us.

If you and I could get all the roadblocks out of the way so that God's power could work in us without resistance, what would that look like? My imagination is running wild right now! Why not right now just list a few of the wildest things that you can see God doing through you? Ok, you got it? Now just think, God wants to do more than your stimulated imagination! Now that's sounding like a pretty good God to me. I could get really excited about living this life with a God who is that good, couldn't you?

Now since we've pushed the boundaries of God's goodness way out into the stratosphere, it's not that big of a stretch to believe that the *more-than-I-can-imagine* goodness could be expressed to us in the form of divine provision. Doesn't it just make you want to get under the spout where the *goodness* comes out? It surely makes me want to find out how to walk in

sync with God so well that there is nothing in me that resists receiving His “so believable” goodness.



*God has all the grace we'll ever need to fulfill all His plans for us here on earth. As we walk with the right people in that special place, style, and message, the grace from Heaven is perfectly suited to empower us to full potential in God. Outside of that perfect **place**, we only receive the general grace of God, which rains on the just and unjust alike. We must get familiar with God's will and our DNA, or "treasure," so that we can be where He wants us.*

These last few points are essential mental and heart practices that we must become very skilled at in order to escape the lower laws. Learn how to tell your mind what to do. Make sure that you are the master of your mind. It cannot rule you. The Word of God and your awakened heart must dictate your life direction and actions.

Let's revisit a passage and focus on the way-out Goodness of God.

*For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him (2 Chronicles 16:9).*

It looks to me like God is on *the hunt*. He's filled with desire to be *good* to someone, anyone who is loyal to Him. You see, He's searching the earth for this kind of person. He's actively hunting. He's not waiting for us to come banging on Heaven's door to get His attention and then stingily throw out a few measly morsels. No! We're the pinnacle of His creation—the ones in whom His delight rests. He's out looking for us.

And then just take a look at what He wants to do with the person who is loyal to Him! He wants to show Himself *strong* to that person. Now, what would it look like if Heaven were to unleash its power in and through a human with a loyal heart?

This verse and others like it have inspired my heart for many years. I imagine, I envision, and I'm reaching for this promise to be fulfilled in my life and the lives of those around me. I'm telling you, something has to happen when Heaven is on the hunt, reaching toward earth **and** when earth is hungry, reaching toward Heaven. Something *will* happen! And the best part is that God wants it to happen.

Let's take just a moment to address the commonly misunderstood Luke 18 parable of the widow and the unjust judge. Contrary to how I used to view verses 1 through 6, I'm now certain that God is not comparing Himself to the unjust judge and us to the desperate widow. He is not creating a model of how we're supposed to beg Heaven to relent from being so uncaring toward us. Rather, Jesus is creating a stark contrast to verses 7 and 8 where His elect (that's you and me) are highly favored and speedily answered. In the Jewish culture of that day, widows had no rights, but now Jesus is saying that His beloved will be quickly avenged. He is eager to see if our faith will put us squarely in the middle of the outpouring of His favor. With that posture, anything is possible and, nothing stands in the way between Heaven and earth.

Oh, for the synergism that happens when the hearts of God and people begin to beat as one! I declare it over my life and over yours!

And how about just one last Scripture? Oh, it's so hard to stop here.

*But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).*

If you've heard or seen or imagined some things that God may want to do in and through you, it's likely that it actually falls far short of what He really wants to do. God says that in the natural person, there isn't the capacity to know the extent of goodness that God wants to pour out upon His people. It's only by the Spirit's revelation that we can even begin to glimpse what He wants to do in us.

And did you catch verse ten? It's like even the Spirit of God has to search through the deep things of God to stay abreast of the new things God is thinking of doing on our behalf. If the Spirit of God has to search to keep up with God, those things must be amazingly good! Oh, the richness and unfathomable Goodness of God!

יהוה יראה

These are just a few passages out of God's best-selling Love Letter, which express His deepest desire to be more good to us than any earthly models of goodness could display. He's a truly fascinating God and wants to fascinate us with His over-the-top generous heart. Let's give Him a chance—just try Him. In the meantime, we'll declare war on God-diminishing thoughts and concepts. He has no such *ceiling* for us. He says, "The sky's the limit!"

**Personal Testimony—Auto Accident  
(Cloud has silver lining)**

I had a traffic accident with our very nice minivan, damaging the hood and fender. The van didn't look all that bad, but for a technical reason, the insurance company *totaled* it. I felt strangely at peace about the whole thing. A subtle thought frequently came into my mind: I think that somehow this is going to bless a friend who just told me that they desperately needed a family vehicle. I didn't know if I would collect the insurance and then fix it myself or just give the car to them "as is." Several possibilities ran through my mind, but it was going to be an adventure to see how God worked it out.

The insurance company settled, and I bought the wrecked van back at salvage price. I found another minivan that was four years newer and shockingly identical to the old one, even in color, but with nicer features. Because of my accident, the insurance rate went up, so I switched companies and ended up paying less than the original rate.

Then, I sold the wrecked minivan to my friends at less than the salvage price. They found a replacement hood and fender at a salvage yard for a ridiculously low price of \$150 total. And the surprising thing was that the two parts came from different vehicles, yet were exactly the right color.

*"He has made everything beautiful in its time"* (Eccles. 3:11). You see, even auto accidents fall into the category of *everything*. And He made it beautiful to all of us. His miraculous ways are fascinating. It's so satisfying to know that God makes *"all things to work together for good to those who love [Him]..."* (Rom. 8:28).

### **Let's pray:**

*Oh Jesus, my heart is racing with eager desire to see **all** Your thoughts for me become a reality in my life. I can feel your love for me, and Your passion is so infectious. I want You more than ever. Oh, how I long to be free of God-diminishing thoughts. My mind has stood in my way far too long. I want to be washed with the water of Your Word until I believe everything Your fascinating heart wants for me. I can almost taste those things right now. Don't let this heightened passion for You slip from me. I can't wait to live with You forever in eternity, but I am*

*beginning to believe that You don't want me to wait until then to experience You so powerfully. You want it now! So I agree with You, Jesus, "Let Your kingdom come and let Your will be done in my life, just as it is in Heaven." Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. Have I ever been moved to tears at something of extreme beauty? Why did my heart respond this way? Could it be because my heart longs to see the loveliness of my Creator?
2. Do I have preconceptions which make it difficult to receive God's fascination of me?
3. In what ways does my mind restrict me from knowing the love of God? (This may be difficult to answer, except as I compare my experience to the Word of God.)
4. Name a few wild imaginations of what God could do in me. Remember: According to Ephesians 3:20, God wants to do more than that.
5. Do I think that it is really possible for a saint to cut the tether to our worldly paradigms when it comes to walking in what God wants to do in us? What would God say?

# CHAPTER 9



## *If a Man Doesn't Work, He Doesn't Eat*

I know you've been dying to ask this question, *If you aren't supposed to work for your living then why did Paul say, "If a man doesn't work he doesn't eat"?* (See 2 Thess. 3:10.) This is an important question since this passage is *in* the New Testament and *after* Jesus has invited us into the higher Law of Blessing.

So let's take a look at the context into which Paul spoke. We'll read the larger account so that we can get a better picture of how to apply this passage. What we want to know is, does this verse generally apply to everyone, or does it have a specific application?

*For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).*

Notice that Paul seems to be addressing more than one or two people with this problem. And their issues are as follows:

- 1) They were disorderly.
- 2) They were not working at all.
- 3) They were busybodies.

To begin with, if people are disorderly, it goes without saying that they lack character and the fruits of the Spirit. So the people we're talking about in this passage are immature. Next, we notice that they weren't just *not working*, they were not working **at all**. It seems to me that they were "work brittle." They probably had an overt and maybe even an outspoken negative attitude about work. In Biblical language, they could be called sluggards. Next, they were busybodies. Sounds like they made everybody's business their business, and yet, their own lives were in shambles.

Notice in verse 12 that since these people were of this disposition, that Paul commanded them, in the name of Jesus, to work quietly and only eat whatever they earned. I imagine this sentence hit them pretty hard, and rightly so. These people had issues and needed some serious adjustments.

Now we have a clearer picture about the context. These people needed restraints to keep them out of trouble and some motivation to help them grow up. Well, what better motivator than to require them to work. A good day of labor will bring them home tired in the evening and they'll feel less likely to be disorderly busybodies. They'll probably want to just drop into bed at a respectable time of night because they've exhausted themselves during the day. Next, let's give them a good strong authoritative boss to make sure that they don't goof off at work, and now we have an excellent *discipleship* program at work in their lives. They should be much more mature in a few years if they approach this season of their lives conscientiously. At the end of this disciplinary season, they'll probably have more self-control and maybe even know something about the unique "Father's business" for their lives.

It appears to me that there were some idleness issues in the society that surfaced in these extreme examples. So Paul had to give some general teaching on the subject and a disciplinary mandate to the violators. These guys were not only disciplined for the personal wrongdoing, but probably also as an example to the rest of society.

So once again, who was this verse addressed to? It was to those who 1) were disorderly, 2) didn't work *at all*, and 3) were busybodies.

Here are a few personal questions: Do you fit in these categories? Are you any one or all of these? Does the shoe fit? If so, then this verse applies to you. If not, then don't wear that shoe or make others wear it. It's as simple as that.

Now that we've established the context for this verse and it's relevance to us, let's pull in a few more related Scriptures regarding these matters.

*Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need* (Ephesians 4:28).

The thief may steal for various reasons: Lack of food may motivate him, or bad character and evil strongholds in his life could drive him to steal. There may be other reasons that could drive someone to thievery. In any case, according to Scripture, work is a great solution for breaking the thief of his nefarious ways. It offers answers to all these problem areas in his life. Earlier, we discussed some of the great benefits of work or labor, and one of them is that it can mentor us while we're in discipline or restoration stages of life.

Let's try another passage. At first glance this seems to be a heavy hitter in favor of working for a living. But is it really?

*But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever* (1 Timothy 5:8).

We discussed earlier how this verse gives us valuable insight into God's commitment to provide for us (see Chapter 6). But now let's tackle its application to us.

It would be safe to say that if we only have a "lower law" mentality and had never seen other ways to "provide for" our family other than vocational labor, we would be tempted to say that this verse validates "working for a living." But before we recklessly start throwing conventional world concepts around *carte blanche*, let's discuss whether "provide for his own" could have broader latitude than just the grind of normal provision-gathering. What if a person, because of the grace of God, has all his or her needs met *and* doesn't have a vocational income-producing job? Does that

individual fulfill the mandate to provide for his or her own? Do we consider that person remiss and negligent? Should we still impose a “job” ethic upon him or her? And if we do impose this ethic upon that individual, why are we so energized to do so? Is it possible that it’s because of our own insecurities? Could our own lack of security in God’s love and provision make us feel jealous or indicted by another’s faith?

And here’s another thing to consider related to this subject: Who establishes how much provision is sufficient? Does God? Does the *worker*? Do the kids or family? Does society? To all these questions, I’m sure that you can already guess where we’re headed. The definition of *sufficient* needs to come from our Lord. So what does He say?

“*And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content*” (1 Timothy 6:8).

Back in the day when this passage was written, life was much simpler; so food and clothing were all one needed. But I’ve heard it said that in today’s standards, we should interpret it to also include house, car, and phone.

Even though I tend to agree, I’m not sure we can tweak God’s Word so freely. Do you think that the new believer and his family in Bosnia, Sudan or Somalia should also have food, clothing, house, car, and a phone in order to qualify with our interpretation of this verse? You see, we may have to take several steps back regarding our concepts of a standard of living and how the Bible defines it.

So, what if society or a person’s family wants more *luxuries* in life, things beyond “food and clothing”? Should we make that person go get a job to provide these things? If he doesn’t get a job to provide these luxuries, is he providing for his own? Who establishes the standard of living that is right for each of our lives? When does God get to establish what He sees as appropriate? These are tough questions. And no doubt, many of the people reading these pages are from the Western hemisphere living in a first world nation, which makes us richer than 95 percent of the people on earth. I wonder if that affects our interpretation of this passage. Just a thought!

Lest we casually leave this point, let’s consider Uriah the Hittite (Bathsheba’s husband). He inspires me with his nobility. When he was

asked by King David to go home and lay with his wife, he refused in deep respect for his fellow warriors out on the battlefield. His one-ness with his comrades wouldn't allow him to take his ease while they were under fire. He was motivated by higher principles which ruled over his natural appetites. I dare say not many of us walk in this level of nobility.

But please understand, I am in no way trying to advocate a poverty mentality or that we should become paupers. Actually, it's just the opposite. Our God's good heart is full of extravagant blessing beyond our imaginations. He's eagerly waiting for times and ways to shower them upon us. He wants us to have not only enough for ourselves but ample to give generously.

*Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:10-11 NIV).*

I think that our difficulty comes when we attempt to put a template of quantitative and qualitative value derived from this world's standards over what we have or don't have. Rather, whenever we look at earthly possessions, positions, and power, we must see them through the lens of what is God's pleasure, and what is He affording us? It gets down to letting God be the *decider* of what we need or don't need. He's so wise. He knows what we need and what we don't need. I've had little, and I've had much, and of course I like having much better—especially when God is the One who provides the *much*.

Look how the psalmist acknowledges God's supremacy in his life. God is the *decider* and maintainer of His allotments in life.

*O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot (Psalm 16:5).*

So, it goes without saying that we're not trying to water down providing for our household. But neither are we espousing the trends and standards of an unbridled and greed-motivated society. We must determine that the Word of God will be our standard.

## יהוה יראה

Let's look at Jesus for a moment. He is our Supreme example and our model from which we are to pattern our lives, right? We believe that He served His father Joseph, and must have served him well, because in Luke 2:52, "... *Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*" And in Hebrews 5:8, "*He learned obedience by the things which He suffered,*" which indicates that He sustained hardships which ultimately "perfected" Him as stated in Hebrews 5:9. We're pretty sure that he served his father Joseph during his early years and must have learned some building skills. But later, Jesus said, "*The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head*" (Matt. 8:20). This verse has several levels of meaning, but the most obvious surface meaning indicates that he didn't own a home in which to retire each evening. I believe it is safe to assume that He didn't have a vocational job through His three years of ministry. But was He busy? Was He engaged with life? For sure! In fact, in John 4:34, John 5:36, and John 17:4, Jesus says that He was "working" the whole time. His mission on earth was to finish the Father's "work." It would be an understatement to say that Jesus was no slacker, and yet, as far as we know, He had no conventional, income-producing job.

Let's take a look now at apostle Paul, who referred to himself as a tentmaker by trade.

*And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks (Acts 18:2-4).*

As mentioned before, I have been a construction worker by trade. Even though I've (almost consistently) not *worked for my living* for over twelve years, yet in those years I have *worked in* the construction trades many times. There have been many reasons for my work activities: acts of kindness to friends and acquaintances, a pressing need that had to be

remedied, for fellowship alongside fellow workers, for mentoring of those around me, and for personal therapy, etc.

So why did Paul work? I don't think that this passage gives us the reason. It just states that he worked. As we know, we can be motivated by many wholesome and righteous reasons to work, and work has many great benefits. We could ask the questions:

- Did he work to develop relationship with Aquila and Priscilla?
- Did he do it to offset their hospitality to him so that he carried his share of the household responsibility?
- Was the society so lazy that Paul felt the need to set an example for them?

Obviously, in Second Thessalonians 3:10-12 there were some in the society who were moochers. Paul's personal example would give him authority when he spoke into their lives.

Consider Paul's servant heart, committed to do whatever was necessary. *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. **I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.** Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).*

I believe Paul's motivation to work had nothing to do with being fear-driven, or insecure, or leaning to the arm of flesh for provision. His motivation had an eternal and Kingdom perspective.

It's clear that in Second Corinthians 12:14, First Thessalonians 2:9-10, and Second Thessalonians 3:7-9, Paul's stated purpose was "*that we might not be a burden to any of you.*" I understand this value very well. In fact, that is why we don't solicit contributions with fundraising letters. We don't want to be a burden to the people with whom God has connected our hearts.

I would rather work through my own faith issues with God regarding my provision rather than impose my needs upon others. Some may call this pride to not let your needs be known, but I don't see it that way. For those who may want to contribute, I feel so much more at ease when I entrust them into the sovereign stirrings of God—in other words, when I let Him do the prompting and motivating.

And just a brief look at an even deeper value for not soliciting funds. If I've been given influence in someone's heart, then I must steward that influence well. If my request for funds makes that heart feel less safe or 'used', then I have compromised God's gift of access to that person. This motivates me to not lean on man, but rather on God.

We're admonished to do whatever we do as unto the Lord. Colossians 3:23 says, "*And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.*" (See also 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17.) This activity implies nothing regarding acquiring provision. It rather focuses our activity as our reasonable service of worship unto our Benevolent God.

## יהוה יראה

Let's wrap up this chapter by reaffirming the values of work. We have stated several godly reasons to work which have personal character, emotional, or physical benefits. And we have stated several godly reasons which have Kingdom and eternal motivations. In any case we have not devalued work in any way.

To the immature person, work will likely be forced upon him through the basic facts and forces of life. Perhaps from the sheer lack of diligence on the part of the slacker, he will hit the wall of hunger, lack, or ill will from his friends, which will press him into working. This is only right, since work has the power to be a classroom leading to maturity. To the mature, work should be embraced only as an act of obedience, a selfless desire to please our heavenly Father and advance His Kingdom.

**Personal Testimony—Reward for Our Labors  
(Delayed, but perfect, timing)**

Many times over a period of several years, our family served another church about an hour away from where we lived. We loved the church and had lots of friends there. But I can't remember ever receiving a financial honorarium for any of our times of serving. We weren't concerned, since we loved the people and serving alongside them.

Years later, that church disbanded. In the liquidation proceedings the assets had to be dispersed among several ministries of their choosing. We had no idea that this was happening, but to our great surprise, we were selected as one of the beneficiaries. Scheduled bimonthly payments to be paid to us for seven years far surpassed any labors we ever invested in that church. Yes, part of this unexpected blessing can be attributed to the principle of sowing and reaping, but the *cleanest* part about it is that we weren't concerned about the payback. It was unto our Lord.

Our Great Banker saw our labors of love in that church many years before. He saw and never forgot. His timing is perfect. His care and over-the-top blessing system is the very best.

### **Let's pray:**

*Jesus, what is it in me that constrains me to grasp for my provision? Is it fear of lack? Is it that I'm greedy? Is it that I simply don't comprehend Your great love and intentions for me? O Jesus, any of these reasons make my heart feel pain, because I don't want to be motivated by anything less than Your love for me. I want to find my way into being safe and secure in Love until my grasping ceases, my mind relaxes, and my spirit man finds freedom to embrace Your provision for me. Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. Name a few redemptive effects that work offers to the immature.
2. Name a few personal benefits of work. Name a few Kingdom benefits of work.
3. Do I still need *work* as a character development in my life?

4. Can I determine my motivation for *making money*? Is it fear of not having enough provision to live on? Is it fear of not looking acceptable in our society? Is it the standard of living that our society imposes upon me? Is it greed for more than I currently have? Is it desire to accomplish higher Kingdom values?
5. What motivates me to *work*?
6. In my current occupation, is my arm of flesh providing for me, or can I see clear evidence of Jehovah Jireh's over-the-top goodness coming my way?

# CHAPTER 10



## *Enter Into Rest*

To start this chapter, let's ask, Is there anybody who is tired of the rat race of life? Is there anyone who would like some rest from the burden of having to work their fingers to the bone and their nerves to a frazzle? Is there anybody who would like to just shout at life and say, "Stop this train; I want off"?

Ok, now that I know that I'm addressing the right crowd, what does Jesus have to say about it? Well, He has a lot to say, and it's good news.

*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).*

And now let's read the same passage from The Message Bible.

*Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly. (Matthew 11:28-30 MSG)*

Oh, man! Is that ever good news! Like an oasis of cool, fresh water to a weary desert traveler.

Imagine that you were an asthmatic. What would it be like to have to struggle to get your next breath, always at the ragged edge of panic as you gasp to get enough oxygen? It would be torture, right? Then imagine how

you would feel to suddenly be able to breathe freely and not be consumed with just surviving until the next breath. What glorious freedom!

The truth is that I think this gives us an idea of the polarized and starkly contrasting difference between our societal norms versus God's ways. Societal norms keep us gasping and grasping for just enough to survive. I believe our society (secular *and* church) has developed norms for us which, in effect, keep us in an *asthmatic* state. We just exist from one day to the next, one Sunday to the next, one paycheck to the next. Much of that existence is quite strained and even in panic as one crisis after another keeps us in a dither.

But how blessed to find the experiential reality of living in God's provision. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Even talking about it begins to take off some of the emotional burdens of life. Can you just hear God cheering us on into His *so-believable* goodness, "Come on in, weary pilgrim, I have rest for you. Here you will find rest for your souls." Man! This sounds like a no-brainer! God's ways are far superior.

But as good as this concept sounds, it will require some serious *pressing in* to get into that rest. Let me explain. Hebrews talks a lot about rest, and how difficult it is to enter into that rest. The Amplified Bible says,

*Let us therefore be zealous and exert ourselves and strive diligently to enter that rest* (Hebrews 4:11 AMP).

Strange language: "strive to enter rest;" that's oxymoronic, isn't it? But bottom line, it sounds like it's going to be a battle for each of us to find and enter this rest.

You see, we've been thoroughly trained all through life to watch out for ourselves, to look after number one, the squeaky wheel gets the oil, the one who eats the fastest gets the most(est), and our training goes on and on. We've been told that God helps those who help themselves.

But God says that we're not to lean on the strength of our own arm. And exactly there, my friend, is the battlefield for many of us. Our mission is to unlearn many of our societally induced mindsets and behaviors. And in the unlearning process, we can expect that most everything in this world will war against us as we try to enter into our much-needed rest.

God reminds us that our own arm cannot save us, but that He will make sure that we receive our inheritance, if we let Him get it for us.

*For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them; but it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favored them (Psalm 44:3).*

God doesn't speak lightly about this issue of trusting in ourselves or putting our confidence in the world's mindsets. Take note how He doesn't mince words here.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5).*

*Look now, you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces a man's hand and wounds him if he leans on it! (Isaiah 36:6 NIV)*

In the Proverbs passage, this is a directive—this is a *command*. I don't hear it as a nicely presented suggestion. This comes across strong and in our face, “[You] *trust in the Lord*” and “[you] *lean not on your own understanding!*”

In the Isaiah passage, we find that if we violate this command—if we lean on the props of this world—that we will ultimately be disappointed and wounded by the very things that we've grasped for.

We could cite how easy it is to fall into self-preservation or self-promotion. Just look at the Israelites—not more than a few days out of Egypt and they begin to worry about their well-being. They complained and created for themselves a crazy golden calf (as if that would save them)! Fear makes us do some of the dumbest things! You ever find that to be true?

But God is merciful and longsuffering. So He personally led them out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and into their Promised Land. All along the way, God supplied for them. His intent was to build their faith and confidence that He would be their Provider. He sincerely wanted them to find their way into rest, if only they could learn to rest in His leading.

You see, in Egypt, they had little choice but to accept slavery under their hard taskmasters. But things changed in the wilderness. They were invited to learn to trust God's goodness by seeing His acts of kindness in water and

manna, guidance and protection. They saw His manifest presence among them. He never let them down, even though they failed Him miserably at times. Instead of needing an external *force* to elicit obedience, God's desire was that His winsome goodness would draw them into voluntary obedience. His hope was that their hearts would become accustomed to this higher way and they would willingly follow Him. Of course, that had mixed results. The older generation died off, and by the time they reached the Promised Land, the newer generation was finally learning to depend upon God's voice and trust Him for direction. In the Promised Land, one city would be conquered by one tactic, but the next city would have to be conquered with a completely different strategy. They were now dependent upon hearing God's voice. Unfortunately, the succeeding generations didn't do so well and had to be *forced* back into obedience by the external pressure of oppression from their enemies. How very sad.

One of the applications of entering into rest means that we don't assume or do anything beyond what God says. Jesus is our best example of that. He says of Himself, "...*the Son can do nothing of Himself*" (John 5:19).

John the Baptist continues to drive the point that regardless of what it may temporarily look like, we can't receive anything unless Heaven has given it to us.

*A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven*  
(John 3:27).

And finally, Jesus hammers the point home to us.

*...for without Me you can do nothing* (John 15:5).

The sooner we come to terms with this profound truth, the sooner we can enter into rest. Up to that point, all primal and base instincts militate toward grasping for our own preservation or betterment. Yet, the fact that we can do nothing *without* Him is eclipsed by the empowerment that's present in our lives when we live *with* Him.

*In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him* (1 John 4:9).

What it really boils down to is,

- 1) receiving a revelation of what God's thoughts are toward us, *and*
- 2) our loving desire and response to follow Him into that revelation.

Well, we're working on the revelation part now, so that just leaves the obedience part. But that is the sticky part, isn't it? As was pointed out earlier, "obedience is much better than sacrifice" (see 1 Sam. 15:22). The issue of obedience has always been the point at which we either stand or fall.



A long time great friend and mentor in the Lord, Bob Jones, says it very succinctly and in plain English, "Whether you raise the dead or take a nap, the pay is the same, if we're being obedient." You see, God doesn't actually *need* our help. He could do the job very well without us. Rather, He *wants* our help in the context of friendship and oneness with Him. His heart is bursting with desire to equip us for, and carry us through, any obstacle that stands between us and the fulfillment of His will.

I can just hear Him say with arms outstretched, palms up, and eyes pleading, "If you only knew how much I want to empower you. If you only knew how much I want to clothe you with my own glory and shine through you. I want to make you look, walk, and talk just like me. Just give me a try! Come on, you can do it! I'll even help you! In fact, there will be times that all you have to do is stand still and see the salvation of the Lord."

Can you feel the passion and the longing love in His voice? Can you hear His loving entreaty? Oh, we can't leave Him standing outside the door knocking as in Revelation 3:20. He so longs to be our God and source for everything.

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me (Revelation 3:20).*

## יהוה יראה

Now back to the subject of rest.

Even God entered into rest on the seventh day of creation, and He advocates that we do the same. Jesus escaped the press of the crowd at times. He retreated to an alone place to be with His Father. And if the Son of God had to enter into rest, then surely you and I will want to rest also. It's essential. If we don't, we'll miss the blessing of intimate communion with Him and the refueling that is a natural result of spending time with Him.

So, what do you say we find out when God is resting and then take a nap along with God? After all, don't we want to be where He is and do what He is doing? Here's a short but profound verse that provides a plumb line to find our status with God.

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God*  
(Romans 8:14).

You mean that my credentials and validation for being a child of God are derived from whether I practice being led by the Spirit of God? Wow, that's heavy! That brings it right down to where the rubber meets the road.

But then of course, it also follows that in as much as we're led by the Spirit, then we'll be where the Spirit is. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (see 2 Cor. 3:17)—liberty from bondages, fears, burdens, and a host of undesirable tricks the enemy has placed upon us.

You see, it all comes back to Matthew 6:33, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (KJV).

Gosh, how profoundly simple can it get?

It's really all about becoming one with God, becoming friends with God. And if we could mix that with contentment (freedom from anxiety) Paul says we would be winners!

*Now godliness with contentment is great gain* (1 Timothy 6:6).

In other words, hearing and obeying His voice, becoming a friend of God, and being satisfied with what our Heavenly Father provides is our goal. But

now take a look at the next few verses in this context.

*For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness (1 Timothy 6:7-11).*

Paul tells us that to be consumed with the love of money will surely be a snare. We have many examples in our world to prove that this is true. Let's take a look at the same verses (6-10) from The Message Bible.

*A devout life does bring wealth, but it's the rich simplicity of being yourself before God. Since we entered the world penniless and will leave it penniless, if we have bread on the table and shoes on our feet, that's enough. But if it's only money these leaders are after, they'll self-destruct in no time. Lust for money brings trouble and nothing but trouble. Going down that path, some lose their footing in the faith completely and live to regret it bitterly ever after.*

We're just getting down to the bottom line here. We must learn how to be content with God's allotment for our lives.

In most decisions, I think it's important to ask if an item is truly necessary before we make a decision to acquire it. But for me personally, I ask if it's what God wants for me right now. I really do! It boils down to day-to-day and issue-by-issue listening to His Spirit. An example of this can be found in the Old Testament policy for the priests was to thrust a three-pronged flesh hook into the boiling water and whatever portions of meat that came out were their God-appointed allotments. This was one of the many ways that they lived within the grace of God.

There is a great deal of security that comes when we learn to live within the means and grace God gives us. As we conquer our striving for self-preservation and self-exaltation, **and** when we have found that God is really

a better-than-we-thought God, that is when we begin to experience real freedom—freedom from the inner struggle for positions and possessions.

It all comes back to our better-than-we-expected and better-than-my-mind-can-comprehend God. He wants to do a little *show and tell*. He wants to show and tell us how lavish His love can be. And just as a reminder, don't forget: **God's will is God's bill**. Whatever God calls you to, He'll provide for. That's the natural outworking of His name and nature.

## יהוה יראה

How good could God be?

Remember my conversation with my son, Luke, at the beginning of the book? I loved his sincere questions; one of which was, “But Dad, somebody has to work, don't they? What would happen if no one were to work? Where would the money come from that keeps the world turning?”

That question inspired this humorous thought: What if God never took this possibility into consideration? Even though God's intention is to be our Jehovah Jireh, maybe He forgot about the possibility that *everyone* might *buy into* this plan. He always assumed that most just wouldn't get it. But now, hypothetically, we have everyone accepting His invitation, expecting that He must now provide for them. Do you see him wringing His hands and saying something like, “Oops, I didn't think of this! What am I going to do now? I don't have enough resources to go around. This may be the first time that I'll have to renege on my promise. Oh dear! What am I going to do?”

Obviously, God won't be surprised or feel concerned if His people begin to take Him at His Word *en masse*. There would doubtless be plenty of resources for His people. Remember the manna (supernatural provision) and remember the feeding of the 5,000 (supernatural multiplication)? It goes without saying that Creator God will *not* be at a loss for ways to provide for His people. Of this, we can be sure! No need to fear; God's storehouse is more than ample.

Then remember what happened in the Early Church. Maybe this is a model to aspire to. You see, the fresh and powerful presence of God among

them caused everyone to hold their possessions loosely. In other words, if someone needed something, it was shared by those who had it.

*Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need (Acts 2:44-45).*

*Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common (Acts 4:32).*

There must have been electricity in the air as they experienced the power of God and recounted the stories of transformation of people's lives. I believe that this supercharged atmosphere made everyone hold their possessions loosely. They knew God was powerfully present among them.

*Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power (Psalm 110:3 NASB).*

This atmosphere breeds generosity and mutual love for all, because *God is in the house*. As we read, no one had any need in this environment. They were all *alive* with something bigger and higher than possession of *things*. As a result, their hearts felt no need for hoarding or self-preservation. There was an absence of greed and fear. Those Early Church saints are our model for many areas, including the area of generosity based on the principle of freely giving because we've freely received.

Sadly, I think the truth is that most people won't discover or believe this awesome offer from God. They'll continue in servitude and work to earn their mammon to try to keep their world turning. Remember, Jesus said in Matthew 7:14, "*Narrow is the gate...and there are few who find it.*" So that is the reality of the matter; most won't accept and enter into the promises of God.

I wonder if in our specific application, the "narrow gate" that Jesus referred to is at the point of our inability to believe. Our unbelief squeezes us so desperately that we find it difficult to enter through the gate and into faith.

If you're like me, we're determined to *not* be those stuck outside the gate because of our unbelief, as Jesus further elaborated.

*Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able (Luke 13:24).*

This verse strongly signals that there is going to be resistance to believe, receive, and enter into the promises of God. Just seeing the gate wasn't good enough. Even making sincere efforts to enter wasn't good enough. Heads up folks. We're in for a struggle, a battle of huge proportions to enter this gate, but enter we must, and enter we will.

## יהוה יראה

Since the focus of this chapter is on entering into rest, here's a good question: How much unrest do we experience as a result of our entanglements with the world's fear- and greed-fueled economy? Depending upon how much we trust in it, we become vulnerable to the world's volatility so that if the world rattles and rolls, by virtue of our ties to it, we experience the same. How much duress does this cost us each day, week, and year of our lives? With all the biblical foundation we've established thus far, it seems that we will want to begin to extricate ourselves from reliance on the economics of our society.

Outside of God's protection, any debt, income from the world, or investments in the world system, are opportunities for the world's systems to affect us, for good and bad. We must know that if any of our dependencies are in the world system, then we are susceptible to, and will be influenced by, the world's instability. I believe this is one of the reasons why Jesus said, *"Lay not up treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and thieves break through and steal"* (Matt. 6:19 KJV). Jesus knew that not only does it tax our emotions and hearts when we pursue this system of living, but it makes us, His beloved, susceptible to "lovers" who don't really love us.

Try thinking of it this way. Let's say that you love your wife with all your heart, but she is emotionally brow-beaten by another man at her job. This treatment hurts her, which makes her come home emotionally bruised and drained in soul and spirit. You wish that she could live in an environment that would only encourage her and build her up. Every day, you must live in

her pain as she *unloads* when she arrives back home. You know there is a better way, but she can't see her way out of the fray as yet.

Can you see the parallel as it applies to our entanglements with the world's system? God loves us and wants to be the very best Father and provider to us, one who would never hurt us or ultimately diminish us. He's saddened when we're bruised by the unscrupulous influence of the fear and greed-driven society around us. He's calling us away to a better economy, the economy of Heaven. Heaven's economy is unshakeable, and Heaven has a much better payment system! Heaven is never in the red, never needs a bailout. Heaven never forgets a dividend payment. Heaven even pays abundantly above all we could ask or imagine. And Heaven doesn't pay just when we've invested. Our Father is motivated by true and deep compassion and care for His children.

Consider this:

*Then you will lay your gold in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks. Yes, the Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver; for then you will have your delight in the Almighty, and lift up your face to God (Job 22:24-26).*

Obviously, money has the capacity to rob us of our oneness with God. It can steal our rest and encumber our hearts to the point that we could lose our delight in God. Especially in light of our current national economics, our fiat-based currency is in jeopardy of becoming worthless, just as described in Job 22:24. But God offers to be our gold and silver. In other words, He wants to become our provision and resource. And when that is true, then verse 26 promises that God will become our delight—and we'll see God.

We understand that we're "in this world, but not of it" (see John 15:19). We're "strangers and aliens" passing through. Inasmuch as we're integrated into this world's system, we must rely upon the grace of God to trump the volatility of the economics around us. In the midst of that unsettledness, why not expect that we, the highly favored saints of God, will live in the same kind of blessing that the children of Israel experienced when they

lived in Goshen of Egypt? Egypt experienced plagues of epic proportions, but God's people were miraculously protected from most of them.

In a blog, shortly before his untimely death, Derek Loux lightheartedly penned, "Today, settle your busy heart down and rest in the benefits of redemption. Enjoy the fruits of His goodness, and stop trying to 'pay Him back.' You'll never get close, you goofy little kid."

Could we believe for this kind of favor, and could we live in this level of peace? Could our insecurities be won over by God's Goodness to the point that we're able to enter into His rest?

So here's some "homework." Practice speaking this over your mind and heart: "The Kingdom is a 'no toil' zone. It was a 'no-toil' zone before the curse (Eden) and is a 'no-toil' zone after the finished work of the cross."

The Kingdom was a "no-toil" zone before the curse (Eden)  
and is a "no-toil" zone after the finished work of the cross.

## One Last Thought

We're going to have to enter into rest someday. Ultimately, we'll have to simply trust God. When will it be? When we get too old to provide for ourselves? Lose our health and can't work? The economy goes bad? When we're at death's door?

Or will it be when we make a courageous step of faith into God's incomparable good care? It's inevitable that we'll have to trust Him. We'll either do it by design or by default, voluntarily or involuntarily.

Let's yield our will, add our faith to the process, and commit to enjoy the journey into rest.

## Personal Testimony—Milk Money (A little girl finds pennies)

My wife Debbie tells of a childhood experience when she was in Kindergarten. Occasionally, her parents didn't have enough money to send two cents to buy milk at school. On one such day, Debbie opened the front door and found two pennies on the step. This made an incredible and indelible impression on her. She knew that God knew and that God cared for her, even if it was only two cents. She has never forgotten that revelation moment. This and many other simple yet profound faith-building gestures of God's goodness have helped her enter into rest and trust in God's unfailing goodness, even for the smallest details.

### **Let's pray:**

*Jesus, I get so tired sometimes. It seems like I'm just spinning my wheels without much to show for it. I can hear You knocking on my heart's door to come in. And I know You'll only do me good. Oh, how I want to find Your rest, Your easy yoke, and Your light burden. That really speaks to where I am right now, Jesus. Would You train me to only walk in Your yoke. I give You permission to adjust my way of thinking and living until I find joy walking in step with You. Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. When I get alone and quiet, how tired and frazzled am I really?
2. Am I like the wife in this chapter who was weighed down by cares of the job?
3. What are some of the troubles and issues that weigh me down?
4. Am I experiencing *oneness* with Jesus, knowing that without Him I can do nothing?
5. When Jesus said He would give rest to all those who labor and are heavy laden, what was He referring to? Was He just referring to spiritual and emotional issues, or was He including physical toil also?
6. What are some of the evidences that a person's heart is at rest?

7. What does *strive* mean when we're admonished to "strive to enter into rest"? In what areas will I have to "strive" to enter into rest?
8. In what ways am I leaning on the world's systems? And as a result, how am I vulnerable to the world's volatility?
9. Could I say that godliness with contentment describes my life?
10. Am I going to enter into rest by design or by default; by letting the world's system take its toll on me until I have no other option...or by my eagerness and commitment to embrace God's higher way?

# CHAPTER 11



## *Coup d'État*

*Webster's Dictionary*, defines *coup d'état* (pronounced: koo da ta) as,

A sudden decisive exercise of force in politics; *especially*: the violent overthrow or alteration of an existing government by a small group

I'd like to apply that definition like this: There has been a ruling force in our world dictating the affairs and mindsets of the people. He is called "the prince of the power of the air."

*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:1-2).*

That spiritual power wants us to think that we are inextricably trapped in the mind-molds and consequences of the curse of the law of sin and death. Well, we have partially believed our way out from under the curse, at least we believe we're saved and on our way to Heaven. But there are still remnants of the curse hanging around.

That old ruling power is now being overthrown by an increasing number of God's people who are daring to believe that there is a better way. We believe this spiritual force has usurped our rightful place and has attempted to dominate the earth for far too long. It's *our* rightful place and territory...

**AND WE AIM TO TAKE IT BACK!**

Hence, the *coup d'état*. With new revelation and the grace of God, we'll overthrow a long-standing evil government rule and replace it with the original *and* final mandate for humankind—that is, to co-rule with Jesus

over all the kingdoms of the earth (see Dan. 7:27, Matt. 5:5). In fact, creation has been eagerly anticipating the emergence of the children of God who know how to wisely rule the affairs and kingdoms of this earth (see Rom. 8:19). As God reveals more of His Kingdom revelation these days, hungry and prepared hearts are embracing this new empowerment to walk upon the earth as kings and priests unto our God. Amen!

## יהוה יראה

Before we proceed to the crux of this chapter, I want to offer a quote absolutely filled with power for the overcoming life.

When I was a young man, I had the privilege of hearing Ern Baxter, a great man of God and a masterful statesman. His oratory skills and spiritual revelation held me spellbound in wonderment. The following quote from him pierced me so deeply that I keep it near the top of all quotes I've ever heard.

Too long have we Christians thought that we were supposed to be self effacing, withdrawn milktoasts; we were not supposed to assert the glory of God; we were not supposed to walk with our heads high; we were not supposed to be what we were supposed to be...kings, reigning with Him even now, in life; masters of our passions and our appetites, masters of sin, masters of satanic insidious attempts to invade our territory, beating them off with royal flourishes, not condescending to scuffle with him in the dust, but bidding him to be gone in the Name of Jesus, rising to walk with dignity as those who are kings and reign in life by the One, Christ Jesus.

– Ern Baxter

Wow! This quote stirs the deep places in my being. It calls me to life. It calls me into awareness of my highly favored and kingly status in God. It calls me into my rightful position of ruling and reigning with God and empowers me to a *coup d'état*, throwing off the enemy's unlawful squatting on *my* territory.

## יהוה יראה

So you might have guessed that this chapter is very exciting for me. Over the 20 plus years I have been pondering these supernatural provision matters, I have discovered many foundational gold nuggets of smaller truths which undergird the much larger revelation that Jehovah wants to be my Jireh.

But none of these nuggets have been so strikingly powerful to me as the passage Romans 4:4-5. At first these verses seemed almost heretical, like they couldn't really mean what they say. The truth I heard from these verses was so foreign, and I was so uncomfortable with it, that I was inclined to violate the rules of hermeneutics and attempt to make it say something it didn't say.

After much deliberation over these verses and after encouragement from some of my mentors, I am quite confident that God has given me a powerful *rhema* (revelation). This *rhema* empowers me to reach for more than I ever thought possible in the area of trusting God for provision.

Let's start with the first verse.

*If a man works, the wages paid to him are a debt, not a gift (Romans 4:4).*

I'm pretty certain that everyone believes that the origin, context, and application of this verse is related to the vocational work world. So let's paraphrase this verse:

*If you make an agreement with your boss and you work a day's worth of labor for him, then the wages he pays you at the end of the day are not a gift to you. Rather they are a debt that he now owes you. You've fulfilled your contractual duty, and now he is contractually bound, and is actually in arrears, until he has fulfilled his part of the agreement.*

There is no secret in this verse. It is very straightforward and easy to understand. It's one of those verses that Jesus referred to when He said, "If I tell you earthly things." This is an earthly thing. Paul is establishing a context in which to present the follow-up thought.

And notice that we're talking about working for wages. We're not talking about general physical work or labor to get something accomplished. The context is vocational, provision-gathering activity.

Ok, let's move to the next verse.

*But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness (Romans 4:5).*

Now what is the first word in the sentence? It's the word *but*, which is a conjunction, and a conjunction is a word that connects two sentences or thoughts. So in terms of context, we know that these two sentences are thus meant to be read from the same perspective.

At first, as we try to interpret the verse, our tendency is to make it apply to some kind of "good works" ideal, some spiritual connotation. It has the words *justifies*, *ungodly*, and *righteousness* in it, which makes us want to spiritualize the verse. But we still have to deal with the *but* at the beginning of the verse. In verse 4 we were in the natural realm of vocational provision-gathering, and so I feel that we must stay in that same context if we're going to follow basic hermeneutics.

So to explain how this verse has come alive to me, let me unpack it further by paraphrasing it like this:

*In stark contrast to the old way of gathering income, if a man determines to not be his own "jireh" and simply believes that his better-than-he-deserves God wants to provide for him beyond and above the mandates of the "curse," then God will call that man's faith righteous.*

Or let's try it another way.

*But, if a man acknowledges that he is not worthy of such "so believable" favor from Heaven, but yet simply believes that Jehovah wants to be his Jireh, then when in child-like trust, he does not set his hand to provision-gathering activities, God says, "I call that man's faith righteousness."*

Noel Alexander, a long-time good friend of mine, first showed me this verse in the early 2000s and it absolutely rocked my world. It has been revolutionary to my understanding and has given me faith for walking in the Law of Blessing, but then, I guess that's what revelations are supposed to do, right? Revelations not only enlighten us, but they empower us into

the truth. You see, life is sterile and lifeless unless and until we hear from God.

Now let me take a little detour in order to ramp up these verses into a full-blown revelation. Let's talk about the power of a revelation. We'll return to our main subject in just a moment.

In our English Bibles, we find the word *word* mentioned many times in the New Testament. But in the Greek there are two completely different root words from which we derive *word*. One of those Greek root words is *logos*<sup>1</sup> which is generally accepted to mean the printed Word of God. The other Greek root word is *rhema*<sup>2</sup> which generally means the “now-breathed” Word of God or the “voice of God.” Both of them are expressed as the *Word of God*. One implies the printed page, and the other implies the spoken voice of God in person. With this in mind, consider this verse.

*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God* (Matthew 4:4).

Now let's unpack this verse. We call the Bible “the bread of life.” It's like manna. Reading it is vital to help us define the guardrails and center line of God's highway which leads to Life. But the printed page by itself is not life-giving. It is not sufficient in and of itself. In the above verse, *word* is translated from the Greek word *rhema*, which means “the utterance or current spoken word of God.” In other words, it's imperative that we hear and receive the spoken Word of God. We *must* have the now-breathed communication from God. This is called revelation. Hearing God's voice is what imparts faith and empowerment to live.

*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17).

Faith comes when we hear God's current utterance over us. Once again, we see that we must hear the *rhema* Word of God in order to even have faith. God's Word is Life and imparts the *life* necessary to walk in what we've heard. Remember Hebrews 1:3, that all things are held together “by the word of His power.” Hearing the voice of God is how we obtain faith to live in these higher law realities. At least four times in Scripture, God says

that faith is vital for God's people to truly live. "*Now the just shall live by faith*" (Heb. 10:38).

*Rhema*, or God's voice, comes to us at His choosing, but we can avail ourselves of His voice by spending more time with Him. It's like a relationship between two friends. A relationship which is separated by miles will likely yield a minimal sharing of secrets and affirmations, while spending time together will likely deepen the level of sharing between them. Hopefully, the point is obvious. In order to truly live, we must hear God's voice, and in order to hear God's voice, we must spend more time with Him.

Ok, now back to Romans 4:4-5. I truly hope you've heard the voice of God, the *rhema* in this verse, for from the *rhema* comes the power to live in His provision. We must hear this *rhema* in our spirits in order for it to empower us. It must echo down deep within us, and as it reverberates through our spirits, we're transformed by His voice.

*We love Your voice, Jesus!*

Several times in this book, we've affirmed that Scripture can have many levels of meaning and revelation. This is the mysterious and wonderful greatness of God toward His people. He keeps us in awe as He unveils different dimensions of Himself to us.

Over the years as I've presented my convictions and joys found in this verse, it has not always been met with favor or agreement. Without a doubt, there are *many* such verses in the Bible upon which the Body of Christ can't fully agree. So lest I offend some with this powerful verse, I'd like to give much grace and latitude if you don't see it the way I do. God speaks different ways and at different times to the different members of His body. We're brothers and sisters, and we intend to maintain harmony and peace in God's great family, even if we don't see eye to eye on every jot and tittle.

So now that we've presented this earth-shaking revelation about God's design for supernatural provision, once again we see that He wants us to cease from our labors and walk inside of His lavish favor.

For a moment, let's ponder the love-struck heart of Jesus and His love expressed for us. His expression of love at the cross wasn't a perfunctory

mechanical duty performed in some kind of heartless obeisance to His Father. No! Rather, it was from His deep longing and passion for you and me—yes, He had you and me locked firmly in His gaze. We are the central reason He went through the cross. And now He stands offering you and me freedom—yes, true, real, and relevant liberation into freedom. So how could we do anything but receive it gladly from the One who loves us so deeply?

So how are we doing with Romans 4:4-5 now? Do you sense that a door of possibility has opened for you? Are we beginning to believe that this beyond-our-imagination favor of God could be manifest in our provision? Can we now believe in God’s “so believable” goodness? Has this mortar shell of revelation blasted off at least some of the stronghold of the curse? Is faith arising? Does your heart feel at least a glimmer of hope—a possibility—that this may be true? I hope it is for you just as it has for me.

We’re beginning to tap into this limitless “so believable” heart of God. So how do we start?

I think we need to come to terms with how we’ve lived so far below what God is offering, acknowledging that we are surprisingly tethered to earthbound ideals—ideals that we have placed, or allowed to be placed, upon us. They have become ceilings over us that limit our ability to believe.

Take a look at how limitless the grace of God is toward us.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).*

Where is it that we find and become aware of these higher law blessings? It’s in the heavenly places. So we have to come on up higher. We can’t continue to live and feast on earthly ideals. We must find these heavenly perspectives. Actually, it’s our heritage, and it’s the way Heaven views us. We *are* seated with Christ, *right now*, in heavenly places (see Eph. 2:6).

Try this teaser thought, “Where do Christians go when they die?” most people will say, “To Heaven.” So let me ask, “When do we get to go to Heaven?” The traditional and predictable answer is, “When we die, of

course.” To which, I’ll ask, “Do we have to physically die to go to Heaven?” That’s what our churches have said for the most part, isn’t it?

But Paul said “*you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God*” (see Col. 3:3) and “*if you were buried with Christ shall you not also be raised with Christ*” (see Rom. 6:4) and remember that Jesus is now “*seated at the Father’s right hand in heavenly places*”? (See Ephesians 1:20.) Then, we must be in the heavenlies *right now*! I’m telling you, we have to get used to the reality of the Bible. This is important stuff.

So how is this relevant to us? Well, most of us don’t see ourselves like rulers here on earth. Rather, we see ourselves as barely making it through life. We pretty much have a beggar posture before Heaven. To make my point, listen to the way you pray next time. Do you find that you’re begging for a few crumbs from Heaven when you pray, *or* are you so confident in God’s will for you that you are able to declare the goodness of God over your situation? You see, when we talk to God, our real perspective of ourselves comes out. Just listen to yourself the next time you pray. When we begin to see ourselves as highly favored, hidden with Christ in God, seated in the heavenlies, knowing the mind of Christ and graced with authority to rule, then we are beginning to find the true heritage that Jesus made available to us. We *must* feed ourselves with what Heaven says about us until we pray like we’re sitting alongside Jesus on the Throne of Heaven. I know this sounds grandiose, but it’s true. It’s the Bible.

I have a feeling that the lights are beginning to come on. God is in the process of enlightening our hearts with the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of God until we are filled with all the fullness of God. Right about now, you may be starting to feel the Spirit of God on you. If so, this is *rhema*—God’s voice to your spirit. This is *Life*. This is real food for believers all over the planet. This will lift our heads out of the stifling lifelessness of the world’s societal norms. This will put the super in your natural and make you to “*be as He is, in this world*” (see 1 John 4:17). This is good stuff. We’re talking Kingdom now!

יהוה יראה

Possibly we're still having trouble assimilating this truth. If so, let me ask this:

When we consider how staggering the spiritual transformation is at the moment of salvation, why is it so hard to believe that ceasing from toiling for our provision is also a part of the grace available to us? The Scripture says that our old person is dead and that now all things have become new and that we now have a new spirit in us made alive to God (see 2 Cor. 5:17). We believe this radical stuff, don't we? We should, because it's the foundation of our salvation experience with God. Then why is a little adjustment in the source of our provision such a hurdle? Where is the *giant* in this issue that needs to be toppled?

So if there are any giants left, we have to go after them. Who are these uncircumcised Philistines who dare to stand against the Lord and His anointed? They'll not tyrannize us any longer. They will come down! And speaking of toppling giants, what happened when one little shepherd boy felled the giant of Gath? It caused a surge of fear in the enemy's heart and a tsunami of courage in the hearts of God's people. They quickly and easily vanquished their foes. And why? Because just one young boy knew who he was, and he was unshakably confident in God's desire for His people to triumph over their foes. Awesome!

## **Toppling the *Giants of Resistance* to Salvation and Healing**

Speaking of toppling giants, consider this observation of spiritual changes in recent history. Over the last hundred years or so, we've seen several dynamic changes in our faith for spiritual experiences in the Body of Christ. Let me explain:

For several hundred years it was uncertain as to whether one could know if he or she were truly saved or not. Even one hundred years ago, when someone wanted to "get saved," it was a fairly difficult process. In some of our churches we had a *mourner's bench*. This bench was for those who wanted to try to get saved. The general practice was to spend as much time as needed—certainly hours, and maybe weeks—mourning for their sins and

implored Heaven for salvation. For sure, people got saved in those days. And there is even a merited argument to be made about the depth and permanency of those salvation experiences as compared to some of today's salvations. But my point here is that today we have no doubt that a person can be saved in a relatively simple sinner's prayer—when someone possesses a sincere sorrow for his or her sins, repents, and confesses Jesus as Savior and Lord. This is quite a contrast to our faith and practice of the past.

Dynamic changes have been occurring in regards to supernatural healing. One hundred years ago, healing was a very rare occurrence in the Body of Christ. If it occurred, it was at the hands of a *faith healer* or clergy person. But in the last 20 to 30 years, we've seen a dramatic change. There is a much greater faith in many churches that God heals today, even through the hands of the average person. And these healings are happening ever increasingly.

In current gatherings, it's common now for hundreds of healings to occur with clear evidence to prove it, all through simple *Body ministry*, in other words, from people laying hands on each other in the crowd. In addition to that, healing in the marketplace is getting much more common.

My point is that our faith for dynamic experience in God has changed dramatically. The manifestation of God's saving grace and healing power has increased exponentially in the last 50 to 100 years. We have found that God is more real, more tangible, and more desirous to display Himself in our lives than ever before in human history. He is better than we previously thought.

Now if we extrapolate this phenomenon of experiencing God's favor and grace out into the future, what kinds of goodness of God will we be walking in that our forefathers had no knowledge of or faith for? This book asserts that supernatural provision is another grace that is ours. It is for those who put themselves in the environment of faith and for those who will grow in it. We may have to start out like the father of the demonized son who said in Mark 9:24, "*Lord I believe; help my unbelief!*" But without a doubt, we're

going to move on into greater graces than our spiritual predecessors have ever known.

I believe God is always looking for forerunners who will break open a way, pay the price of finding that way, and thereby establish an easy on-ramp for many who are desperately looking for the Word of God to come alive in their everyday lives. Micah says it very well.

*The one who breaks open will come up before them; they will break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it; their king will pass before them, with the Lord at their head (Micah 2:13).*

Obviously, this verse is primarily a prophetic portent of the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. But on another level, it also gives us permission and invitation to be those who break open a way for others to follow.

Let me paraphrase it this way: *There are those who are so confident in God's grace that they discover new breakthroughs for themselves. And because others are also hungry for a breakthrough, they begin to follow this confident one. God is pleased and gets His glory as He leads the one and the many into the new territory.*

You see, God is looking for *breakers*...people who will open up a way into greater grace. And He invites anyone, everyone, even you and me. He asks if we'll be willing to be a breaker so the people can follow. The King longs for this to happen so that He will have a people who can find their way into the promises that await them beyond the curse.

Remember young David's great confidence in His God? Remember how his triumph over the giant struck fear in the enemy's heart and precipitated a wave of courage in God's people? David, just one person, opened up a way for all of his countrymen to follow.

*Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place (2 Corinthians 2:14).*

One young boy's faith "diffused the fragrance of the knowledge of God." The fragrance was that God was bigger than the boogeyman. Through David, a terrorized and courage-less army found new courage and experienced victory where they had been stalemated.

So the *coup d'état* of Romans 4:4-5 haunts us and inspires us, and if we'll let it, it will empower us. This revelation will impregnate our hearts and give birth to marvelous triumph over the lower-law giants.

I feel like we're on the cusp of opening up a rarely experienced grace for supernatural provision on the earth, in similar manner to the greater graces we now experience in salvation and healing. What will it look like 100 years from now when you and I have *broken open* a way and modeled it before our generations? Will the grace for supernatural provision be as common and as easy as salvation and healings are today? Maybe it's because I have pioneer blood in me, but that possibility really inspires me.

There is a better way. Come on, forerunners, we're going for it!

## **Personal Testimony—Predictable Income (Living by faith)**

Over our 34 plus years of married life, I've only had about seven years of predictable weekly income—at least as the world sees it. In carpentry, I can't remember ever asking for a job. I once advertised in a local paper and got one job from it. After a call-back on that same job, I realized that I just broke even, so I never advertised again. Jobs always came through word-of-mouth references. Even in spiritual matters, I've asked for less than a dozen ministry opportunities in my life.

To be honest, there have been a few financially tight times, but mostly God provided carpentry jobs just when we needed them. And even though our ministry calendar may at times look open and free, somehow it seems just the right amount of activity to keep our hearts exercising and the right amount of rest to keep our hearts refreshed. In addition, it's surprising how this type of ministry suits our giftings.

Strangely, most of our ministry and serving around our home region has very little financial reward. And we're at peace about this because we're very confident that God has our needs well in mind and is working things out perfectly. He always has. So in actual fact, over the years, God has

provided *predictable* provision, even if we didn't know where it was coming from.

### **Let's pray:**

*Holy Spirit, my spirit is stirred and wants to jump and shout and break free. I want to be a forerunner in these available graces of God. I want to be a breaker for others to follow. Today, I feel Heaven's rhema feeding my spirit. It's calling me into Life. O, I long to run with those who are gripped with revelation and passion into these amazing promises. Holy Spirit, I ask you to empower me with more rhema to feed my spirit and help me find sincere comrades who I can run alongside on this great adventure into the wonderful favor of God. I intend to believe the Word of God in Romans 4:5 and let You provide for me, an undeserving but greatly favored child of God. Thank You. Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. Has Romans 4:5 become my personal *rhema* (revelation) which will empower me to walk on the water of supernatural provision?
2. How often have I heard God's *rhema*, His voice into my spirit?
3. Could I be a *breaker*—one who opens a way for others to follow?
4. As a forerunner, do I have the faith to *see* a radical, global change and grace for supernatural provision in the next generations?
5. If I don't seem to have the necessary faith, what can I do to increase my faith?

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### **Endnotes:**

1. James Strong, *Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*, (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, Inc. 1994, 2003, 2006). G3056.
2. Ibid. G4487.

# CHAPTER 12



## *So Where Does Provision Come From?*

Let's subdivide this chapter into two parts 1) the spiritual side of provision and 2) the possible sources of natural provision.

### **1) The Spiritual Side of Supernatural Provision**

Let's briefly discuss a potpourri of related principles that will help put us in the right position to receive supernatural provision.

#### **Power to Get Wealth Comes From God**

Where we get the ability and power to attain wealth. Is it derived from our own strength? Our societal norms seem to indicate that is the case. Let's revisit a couple verses to see what God says.

*And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day (Deuteronomy 8:18).*

Then further:

*Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way you should go" (Isaiah 48:17).*

And how does He intend to lead us into wealth?

*And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice (Deuteronomy 4:12).*

God didn't use a form to communicate to the Israelites lest they make a *form* and begin to worship that form. Actually, we may not be that much different from them. We want our *form-ulas* so that we can do it ourselves. But God wisely only communicated with His voice. You see, He knew this would require relationship and encounter with Him on an ongoing basis. Our tendency would be to run with the *form-ulas* and principles without the encounter, like enjoying the benefits of the Kingdom without the King.

Even as I say that last line, my heart feels a little of the pain our Father must feel. Can you feel how much He longs for relationship with us?

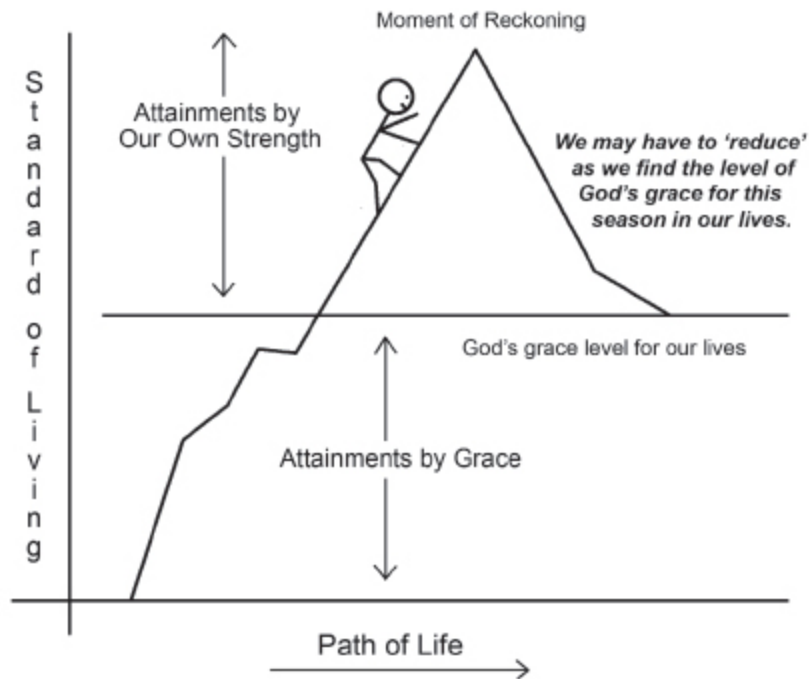
God doesn't want to be *hard-nosed* about this, but He loves us so much that He wants a relevant, nitty-gritty relationship with us to the level that we're dependent upon Him and eager to receive all that He wants to lavish upon us, even our promotions.

*For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another (Psalm 75:6-7).*

*A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven (John 3:27).*

In each of these passages, we clearly see that our ability to obtain wealth and experience promotion comes *only* from the Lord. It is *not* the strength of our arm that will ultimately gain anything for us. Oh, we might seem to have attained something in the short term, but if God didn't give it to us, ultimately it must crumble. So simply put, we must each ask ourselves: Who is the Lord of my life? Is it 1) my arm and intellect or 2) God?

## Living Within God's Grace



*"But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." Eph 4:17*

*Short term attainments secured in our own strength will have to be yielded when we reckon with the allotment of God's grace for our lives.*

### Law of Blessing

Of course we're quite familiar with the law of sowing and reaping. Yet because God is like a great heavenly banker/broker, we may sow in one field and because He sees fit, we may reap from another field we've never sown in. I rather like this arrangement because it teaches us to keep our hands off of the source of provision. We never know for sure where the provision is coming from, which makes us put our dependency on the Lord rather than our service and output. Here's a biblical precedent for reaping from where you didn't sow.

*I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors (John 4:38).*

Earlier, we explored the contrast between the higher law versus sowing and reaping. Though sowing and reaping is a good law and a God-given law, we're now aware that God is inviting us to live in a higher law. It's called The Law of Blessing.

Sowing and reaping are earthly concepts. Since we've been so earthbound, we've needed those parallels to help us comprehend and have faith. But now we're growing into the sons and daughters of God who can simply believe, receive, and obey.

The success of sowing and reaping is based upon our efforts. To a large extent, whatever we've measured out is the measure with which we will reap. In sowing and reaping, everything is governed by the law of cause and effect. We do something to get something. Even the heathen are aware of this.

But God has now revealed His "so believable" goodness to us, such that even though we don't deserve any of it, He delights to lavish His goodness upon us. Look how good He can be.

*It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep (Psalm 127:2 NASB).*

Oh my gosh! Can you believe how good He wants to be to us? We have to learn to feed and live on Truth. Whatever it takes to find Truth, go after it. The more we find our hearts bathed in the truth of His goodness and we begin to believe in His goodness, the more we find unexpected and undeserved favor from Heaven for no reason at all, except that we're sons and daughters and He loves us. As we practice this posture, a new law will begin to rule over our minds. It's the reign of God's powerful Law of Blessing.

## **God Loves Us Just Because He Loves Us**

A couple of questions:

- 1) Do you have to *be* someone special for this whole thing to work in your life? The answer is No! Just be a saint, highly beloved of God,

which includes you.

- 2) Do you have to *do* something special to earn this status and favor? Again the answer is No! It's really rather simple: Just be about our Father's *business*, simply defined as "obedience." This is not to be carried out as an obligatory duty, but rather as a passion of our hearts to bring Him pleasure and see Him get all the glory we can bring to Him. Fall in love with Him. Get to know the secrets of His heart. Get to know the way He feels and responds. Get to know what His passions are and how He sees His Kingdom here on earth.

All that is basically a private heart matter between God and us. There are very few public protocols or requirements. Just get to know this amazing God as your Friend and watch Him shower loving favor on you.

## Find Your Own Garden

Remember that Adam's original mandate (before the fall) was to tend the Garden of Eden.

*Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it* (Genesis 2:15).

The definition of the original mandate to *tend* and *keep* it can be found in *Strong's Concordance* as meaning:

*Tend*: to dress, serve, cultivate, till, work; used for artisans (see Isa. 19:9). *Keep*: to care for, guard.

If we're to get back to our original mandate to take care of the garden, then we must find the uniquely personal *garden* that God has given to each of us and then give ourselves to tending, serving, cultivating, guarding our garden—and doing it as unto the Lord. I believe it is a *given* that God has entrusted each of us with a unique and very personalized *garden*. There is no way that God just plopped us down here on this ball of dirt to muddle through a lifetime without a mission or point to it. No way! Well it's simple then. Whatever our Lord's commission is to us becomes our *garden*. As we find our garden and "dress and keep" our garden, then we are "being about our Father's business."

Doing God's business is not some hard, dry, boring life of servitude. And it's not some nebulous just *being good*. When you find it, don't be surprised if you excitedly lose sleep thinking about it, or cry tears of joy when you see the fruits of your labors, or feel goose bumps when you're acutely engaged with your unique *garden*. This amazing privilege is offered to every son or daughter of God who leans into the pleasures of living life God's way. Tending our garden is not primarily a provision-gathering activity. Rather, it becomes our passion and begins to consume us, just like it consumed Jesus.

So have you found your garden? What is the mission that makes your heart come alive? Are you energized and engaged with doing your Father's business?

## **Prepared to Wear God's Favor**

I understand that in the Jewish tradition at bar mitzvah a boy was declared a man. But somewhere around 30 years old, another ceremony declared that man to be "at full strength" and to have the same authority as his father. In other words, whatever the son spoke was to be taken with the same authority as if the father had spoken it.

And that is why Father God affirmed Jesus when John baptized him in the Jordan River.

*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!*  
(Matthew 17:5)

Jesus' Father was attesting to the fact that whatever Jesus said from now on would be as good as if He (the Father) had said it. Now Jesus' word was as valid as the Father's word.

With eager desire, God is watching our maturity to see when He can entrust all the authority of Himself in us. He's looking to see if we've come to *full strength* and if we're qualified to handle the resources of His heavenly blessing and favor.

*Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:12 NIV).*

## **Pass the Tests**

Abraham passed a huge test in his walk with God when he set himself to obey God to the full extent, even if it meant he had to sacrifice his son, Isaac. It was at the point of obedience that Abraham became aware of God's provision, a replacement ram for the sacrifice. He had passed the test!

There will be tests all along life's path. Many are designed to be the proving grounds from which we're qualified to graduate into the next level of God's grace. Many biblical examples could be cited to validate this important phase through which we must pass. But God in His great wisdom and deep love is waiting with welcome and reward on the other side of the tests.

## **Develop and Give Away the Fruits of the Spirit**

Now in actual practice, as we said earlier, we must be about our Father's business. And whatever our hands find to do (within our Father's business), do it with all our heart as unto the Lord (see 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17,23).

We must yield to His dealings and grow in grace, ask Holy Spirit to fill us and manifest the fruits of the Spirit through us. This will make us attractive and will always open doors into people's hearts.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).*

You see, after the listing of the nine gifts, Paul says "*Against such there is no law.*" There is no "out of season" for any of these virtues. Very few people will resist real love, joy, peace, longsuffering, etc. Most everyone wants more of these in their lives. And if you have it to give, then they will automatically want it, saint and sinner alike. The degree that you and I manifest these virtues in our lives is the measure that we become a desired commodity to those around us.

Can we see it? God really wants to adorn us with His Spirit, so much that we look like Him, talk like Him, and feel like Him. When that is the case,

people begin to want whatever we have. It's such a great deal that God is offering to us. So simple. Just hang out with Him. He clothes us with Himself, and we begin to look good.

## **Selling All to Obtain the Treasure**

Remember: The focus of this chapter is discovering the sources of supernatural provision and how we get into the position to receive it. We've just affirmed God's overwhelming goodness toward us, and now let's discuss how we prepare ourselves to receive and walk in it. I have a premise that I've never heard preached. But I believe it will release and empower you to be the real and unique *you* that God intended for you to be.

The premise is simply,

Inside of us is a God-placed and  
God-designed treasure.

This treasure in its core essence  
is what makes up the unique you.

So let's build our case.

Someone may ask, "So how does God supply the needs of every individual? Do you have to have a formal profession or paid position in order to receive wages from services rendered?"

For many people, their provision may come from a paid position. But I believe that for many others, we could live our lives free of this wage system if we learned how to tap into the treasure that is actually resident within us. That unique treasure inside each of us is so valuable, so powerful, and has such latent potential that if we develop it, we will find ourselves *in demand* by the rest of our society around us. Let's unpack this further.

Everything God does is *good!* At Creation, when He completed a day's work, He said, "It is good." Nothing He does is less than perfect. The core *you*, or the treasure in you, is perfectly created. When that core treasure is matched with the rest of your package (your personality, giftings, heritage, etc.) you become a very distinctive person. If we know God's wise and

benevolent heart for us, and if we understand that He has made us a unique way, then we know that there will be a matching void in our world around us which only our *uniqueness* can fulfill. I don't think this extrapolation of God's heart is too big of a stretch for most of us. Remember, He's good, always good, and what He makes is good. When He made you and me, He designed us to fulfill a plan which no one else can fulfill.

It probably goes without saying that most of us haven't given much thought to the discovery and development of our uniqueness. Mostly, our society pushes us into *same-ness*—cookie-cutter little clones of each other. This is done to us because we're easier to manage when we act like everyone else. In addition to that, we don't threaten others when we look like them. Unfortunately, we comply with these societal trends and pressures because we're insecure or ignorant of anything different. It's a given that most of us are living far below the intentions of God's design for us. We must have a revelation and then be taught how to discover our unique treasure, because within that treasure is one of the keys to enjoying the liberties and joys of Heaven's design for provision.

Let's continue.

If I buy into this premise of the treasure, it follows that I will want to give myself to defining it, nurturing it, and getting skilled at communicating or using it. So stay with me, if you will.

Remember Jesus' parable of the man who found a treasure in the field and went and sold everything he had to buy the field so that he could possess the treasure (see Matt. 13:44). The issue wasn't that the field that was so special; the treasure was!

We're all quite aware that the primary truth in this passage is that Jesus is the treasure, and we must sell all to obtain the Treasure. A secondary truth is that we are Jesus' treasure, and He gave His life to buy you and me back to Himself. Lock these truths in, because we have no intention of diminishing their transforming power as we move ahead into a slightly different application of this parable.

Try this perspective of that same Matthew passage.

You and I are the field, and hidden inside of us is the God-placed and God-designed treasure of great price. We must sell all (seek diligently) so that we can buy (understand and secure) the field (our life) in order to possess and develop the buried treasure (the unique God-designed *us*) of great price. And if we will hone and nurture that treasure, ultimately the treasure will begin to define the field. The field will only be secondary to the treasure, which has become our primary focus of importance. Then when we get skillful at giving the treasure away, I believe we'll be surprised at how desperately needed that unique treasure is in our world around us.

I also like to think of it in terms of Ephesians 4:8, “[God] *gave gifts to men.*” This has two levels of meaning. First, God gave personal gifts to each of us. And second, He then gives *us* as gifts to others. You see, as we identify and nurture the treasure given to us, we then become a treasure, or gift, that God can give away.

A principle in the Kingdom is that when a hungry heart encounters God, it will fall and worship God. This is an automatic and God-designed response. The heart opens to receive the Gift and then gives worship and resources back to God. This is validated throughout Scripture, and we see it happen in anointed meetings. Each time a human heart meets God, it voluntarily wants to pay homage in relevant ways (e.g. praise and worship, time and money, commitment, sacrifice, and service). When we give away our God-designed and invaluable treasure to those around us, most people will voluntarily experience a desire in their hearts to acknowledge God's good gift to them. In many cases, we are the closest tangible expression of God that they know (at least as it relates to our unique treasure). So don't be surprised if and when they open their hearts and resources to you.

Obviously you didn't offer your treasure for hire. You did it because that is what your treasure loves to do and is designed to do. You love to see the King and His Kingdom glorified. But because most knees bow and tongues confess when they see the real Jesus, the spirit instinctively wants to give honor and homage. When this happens, you don't front with false humility (which is really pride) by saying, “Aw shucks, it wasn't me.” Rather, you respond with, “I love how you love Jesus. He's amazing. I love loving Him

with you.” You see, you graciously respond, you graciously receive, and you graciously pass the honor on to your Source.

You may ask, “Isn’t this cause and effect? Isn’t this sowing and reaping?”

Well, it all boils down to the motive of your heart. What was your intention when you began this endeavor? Was it to bring glory to God, or was it to gather provision? This is the crux of the matter. Both of these motivations may look exactly alike on the external, yet be diametrically opposed on the heart level. Remember, Jesus was all about the heart. He affirmed a few external rules, but mostly His message was all about the matters and motives of the heart. We must train ourselves to live in and from the heart. Our first objective has to be “doing the Father’s business.” We must wean ourselves from the preoccupation and anxieties of conjuring up provision-gathering methods. Our motivation must be, “What does my Father desire today for the increase of His Kingdom?”

It all boils down to the motive of your heart.

Again you may ask, “Does that treasure have to be a spiritual gift or grace?” I believe the answer is *No!* If you’re a janitor who shows love to people all day long, if you make them feel better about themselves and happy that they’ve been with you, they’ll keep coming back. Now, they may never offer you a tangible form of provision, but you gotta know that our Father in Heaven is watching. You are laying up treasures in Heaven, and at the right time, He will dispense exactly what you need. Not only does the Bible declare this, but my experience firmly proves it.

Go ahead! Be whatever your treasure is designed to be. Don’t be pressured by people’s whims or wishes for you. Don’t be lured by just some job that has the potential of the highest earthly reward. And don’t be shaken by a little testing or delay of provision. This is a life-long journey. You are laying up treasures in Heaven that *will* afford rewards in this life and the one to come. And remember, the treasures in the life to come are of far greater worth than any workaday reward could ever be.

## **Brother Lawrence's Simple Devotion**

Brother Lawrence lived in eastern France in the 1600s and is known best for his writings about finding joy in the simplest of tasks. He was a “lay brother” working in the kitchen of a monastery for most of his life and as a repairer of sandals in his later years.

In one of his best known maxims, Lawrence writes,

Men invent means and methods of coming at God's love, they learn rules and set up devices to remind them of that love, and it seems like a world of trouble to bring oneself into the consciousness of God's presence. Yet it might be so simple. Is it not quicker and easier just to do our common business wholly for the love of him?

Again he simplifies devotion to God,

Nor is it needful that we should have great things to do. We can do little things for God; I turn the cake that is frying on the pan for love of him, and that done, if there is nothing else to call me, I prostrate myself in worship before him who has given me grace to work; afterwards I rise happier than a king. It is enough for me to pick up but a straw from the ground for the love of God.

I began to live as if there were no one save God and me in the world.

As often as I could, I placed myself as a worshiper before him, fixing my mind upon His holy presence, recalling it when I found it wandering from him. This proved to be an exercise frequently painful; yet, I persisted through all difficulties.

Brother Lawrence said his soul,

had come to its own home and place of rest. <sup>1</sup>

I believe that most of humanity wants to find and interact with their Creator. They just don't know how, or they believe that it's too difficult. Brother Lawrence's simple devotion to God makes it attainable for everyone, rich or poor, lowly or royalty, child or sage.

## **Discovering Your Treasure**

Let's talk a little about how to discover your treasure. If it's inside of you, how do you find it? For starters, ask yourself these prompts:

**What experiences made you feel really *alive*?**

- You couldn't sleep for thinking about it the night before.
- You haven't been able to stop thinking about it since.
- You refer to that experience as a high water mark in your life.
- If time, money, and fear weren't an issue, what would you love to do the rest of your life?
- Have you ever experienced tears of joy over what you were doing?

**What have you done that caused unusual response from people you influenced?**

- People profusely expressed their gratitude to you.
- People told you how it transformed their lives.
- People told you how it adjusted a deep attitude or broke a stronghold.
- People offered you money or reciprocation of favor.

**What is it that always seems to *just work* for you?**

- People and things just come together uncannily.
- Money or practical issues come together when you do this.
- Unusual grace and freedom from difficulty make it easy.
- Your spirit, mind, and strength seem empowered beyond normal.

**What comes up repetitively in prophecies over you wherever you go?**

- No matter where you go, do you seem to get picked for a prophetic word?
- When you transcribe the words, do you find a familiar pattern emerging?
- Is it an activity? Is it a grace? Is it a skill? Is it a commission?

**Do recurring dreams cause you to wake with unusual passion to live your dream?**

- Have you written down your dreams? What pattern is emerging?

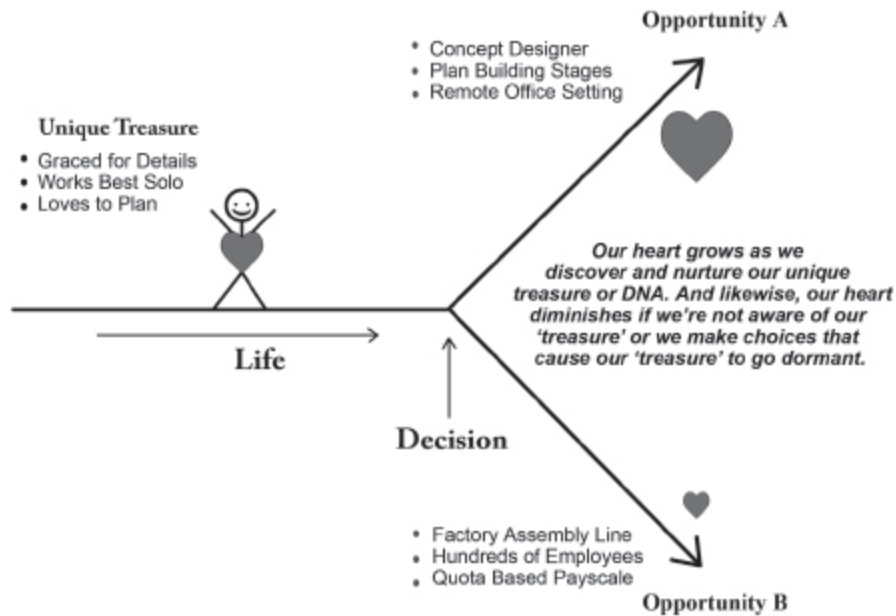
- What kind of setting? What kind of people group? What are you doing?
- Have you experimented with recreating this setting and doing this activity?

I imagine that something clicked for you in these prompts. Next, you'll want to begin to purposefully experiment with this activity, skill, or service that came to mind to see if it gets easier and more effective as you exercise it. If it gets easier and more effective, and if you find it deeply fulfilling, then you'll want to study it and pursue it with the same commitment as if you were going to college. This is quite likely your treasure. In the premise I'm presenting, this treasure will afford the best potential to inspire you and provide for you in life. Why? Because it is the treasure God placed in you, and He has a special plan for it. There is a void in this world that truly needs your specific treasure, and God will give you the grace to empower you to fulfill that void. Your treasure is designed to bring God glory by answering the problems of your world. And if you're wondering where to apply your treasure, just look for the needs of others that are within the scope of your treasure. Many of your opportunities will be found in solving the needs of others.

You must find and comply with Heaven's design for your treasure, because only in that connection with Heaven's plan will you get the life source necessary to *soar* with this treasure. If we live pursuing our treasure our hearts will grow and we will thrive in life!

# Knowing Your Treasure/DNA

Empowers you to make life decisions



*Pursuing an opportunity that fits our DNA will cause our hearts to prosper and grow. Conversely, if we pursue an opportunity that stifles or ignores our DNA, our hearts will diminish.*

So have you discovered the unique treasure called *you*? Have you sold all to find it, define it, nurture it, and give it away? I hope you can believe this: Your greatest asset is already closer to you than your next breath. It's inside you. I believe that God-placed treasure, when developed, will define the person you are to become and will provide an answer to a unique void in the world around you. As you apply your heart to be all that your treasure was meant to be, you will find that God's provision will mysteriously and wonderfully show up, sometimes at the oddest times or from the strangest sources.

Go ahead, try Him out. You'll not tax Him too much. In fact, He'll be delighted to support you on your journey into finding the real you.

The world has a saying that if you do what you love, then you'll never ever have to work a day in your life. I'd like to elaborate on that a bit. If you find and express your unique treasure, you will feel most alive and you

will experience the most grace for life. Now that sounds like fun to me. But then, isn't that the way it should be? Listen to what Jesus said:

*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly (John 10:10).*

You see, there really is a better way!

## **2) Possible Sources of Provision**

From here, the possibilities are endless because they are as limitless as God's creativity. We must develop eyes to see, a heart to expect, and a history to give us faith for strange, mysterious, and wonderful surprises of God's Goodness. Here are a few potential sources of supernatural provision which will hopefully jump-start your imagination.

### **Natural Provision added to you**

- Jobs and Better jobs
- Raises and Bonuses
- Benefits, Sales, and Commissions
- Positions and Promotions
- Favorable settlements
- Estates and Inheritances
- Interests and Income
- Rebates and Returns
- Checks in the mail
- Gifts and Surprises
- Finding money

### **Liability reduced or forgiven**

- Bills and expenses decreased or canceled
- Mortgages and debts forgiven or paid off

## Spiritual Provision

- Heaven opened, Earth invaded
- Storehouses unlocked
- Miracles created
- Dreams and Visions
- Angelic visitations and angelic declarations
- Divine Manifestations
- Anointings, Giftings, and Calls
- Positions and Promotions
- Provisions and Resources to go to the nations
- Souls and more souls from every generation<sup>2</sup>

How about a few more possible sources:

- Don't forget about supernatural interventions from angelic help (Elijah was fed cakes and water by angels). We know that there is a spirit of infirmity and there are angels of healing. And if that is so, then there may be angels of prosperity. Let's invite their activity in our lives. (Read about them in Noel's testimony in chapter 16.)
- Money appearing mysteriously in your bank account is not out of the question. (Read Luke's testimony in chapter 16.)
- And speaking of computer accounts, I have two friends who, after they became Christians, found that their criminal records were completely removed from the legal system without an expunging process. It was a surprise to all—my friends and the legal system.
- I've had several auto accidents, some my fault and some the other person's fault. But almost all accidents turned out to have a silver lining outcome. (Read about one such experience in Chapter 8.) You see, we have a God who makes *all* things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.
- Unusual favor from bosses, giving you raises that you didn't ask for or know were coming. Years ago I worked for a man on his terms and

rate of pay. But one day he voluntarily gave me two raises—in one day! (Read Chapter 16.)

- Inheritances from estates when you didn't even know your name was listed as one of the beneficiaries.
- Several years ago, I decided to do an online search in (my state) Missouri's "Unclaimed property." I found that I had money being held in the state's account that had been there for nearly 30 years, still waiting for me—with interest. What fun!

We could go on. But really and truly, God's creativity is astounding if we'll just let Him have a chance.

What it all amounts to is that I see God as a great benevolent Father who loves to dole out the resources of Heaven upon whomever He can trust. He watches over His people and says, "Look at Joe Christian over here. Oh, I love him so much. I'm going to amaze him and forever secure in his memory how **big** and how good I am. I'm going to manifest a miracle of unusual proportions in his life. He'll be stunned. But you'd better believe that he'll never forget it. He'll still be telling his grandchildren how good I am. We'll both be tickled each time he retells the story."

To be sure, God has a host of reasons and methods to shower His goodness, although those reasons may never be known to us until we talk to Jesus face-to-face. But just suffice it to say, whatever He does is **good!**

## **Personal Testimony—Hungry for Meat (Sheep lay down their lives)**

When I was just a young lad, our family was very poor. Meat at mealtime was a luxury. On one occasion, I remember that I expressed a wish for some meat for our meals. My mother secretly forwarded the request to God. Within a few days, just a short distance from our home, a freight train hit a flock of sheep, killing or maiming many of them. It just so happened that a group of boys were playing not far away. When they heard the commotion and saw the scene they came and told my father. Dad soon found the owner of the sheep and asked if we could salvage the meat. The farmer quickly

agreed. And within a few hours we had more meat than we knew what to do with, which served our family for many months.

Meat was never provided in this manner again, but meat and other groceries showed up on our doorstep many times. Sometimes, farmer friends butchered livestock and shared with us. Sometimes, a farmer would need to leave for a vacation or trip and they would ask my father to milk their cows and gather the chicken eggs, providing us with ample supply.

One time my mother prayed for meat, and within a short time she counted 12 different kinds of meat: duck, turkey, squirrel, chicken, goat, turtle, and rabbit...just to name a few. God is so ingenious and creative in how He brings His provision to us. I can never remember going hungry for lack of food in my whole life.

### **Let's pray:**

*Jesus, I'm intrigued by this idea that there is a treasure hidden in me. I sincerely want to find my treasure. I'd like to give myself to doing that thing that awakens my heart and feeds my spirit. And bottom line, I truly want to please You by fulfilling your plan for me. Would you help me find my treasure? Would you put people around me to mentor me and steer me into truth? I want to experience life more abundantly, and I want to do my Father's business all the rest of my days. Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is the law that is higher than sowing and reaping?
2. What heart motivations will distinguish the difference between doing a thing with sowing and reaping in mind versus being about our Father's business?
3. What does it take to earn the privilege of living under this higher law?
4. Can I be trusted with Heaven's resources?
5. Do I really believe that I have a divine treasure inside of me?

6. What is my treasure? Can I define my unique treasure?
  7. How can my God-given treasure lead me into His provision?
  8. Have I developed my treasure so that I can effectively give it away?
  9. In what groups and in what venues is my treasure best suited and effective?
  10. Have I practiced giving this treasure to these people?
- 

**Endnotes:**

1. Brother Lawrence, “The Practice of the Presence of God,” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brother\\_Lawrence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brother_Lawrence); accessed October 11, 2011.
2. <http://www.ibethel.org/offering-readings>; accessed October 11, 2011.

# CHAPTER 13



## *The GoldCoin Story (Testimony)*

This book assumes that we all know that we must have a personal relationship with God. But that's not all. We must have a functional and current language base so that we can dialogue with Him. Jesus said in John 10:27, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*" The voice of our Shepherd must be a familiar voice if we're going to walk in this grace. There is no *living* without hearing.

So what does it mean to hear, and how does it happen? I'm going to give you an example of how the Lord got my attention, then I pursued Him with those prompts, then He got my attention further...and so on. Hearing and responding must be the basis of our Christian walk with God. After experiencing this next story, I possessed a revelation, or *rhema*, from the Lord that has become a significant part of my history. You'll read about a gold-colored coin which I now carry in my pocket. It constantly reminds me and inspires my confidence in God's favor over me. I hope this story will give you tangible examples to encourage you into your own supernatural provision.

In this personal story, I think you'll like the stunning ways that God designs all of the separate events to come together in a most astonishing conclusion. This story has some bizarre twists, but is centered around a gold coin. Watch how simple obedience from several of us is all it took for an exciting outcome. It wasn't hard for any of us. In fact, none of us knew the others were involved. And there wasn't much of a cost required from any of

us. As you read, be careful to take special note of the many details at the beginning of this story because each one is surprisingly meaningful as the story unfolds.

## יהוה יראה

Early in 2008, in one of our local prayer meetings, I was intrigued with how cicadas emerge from the ground at their *fullness of time*. When they emerge, they split their skins and are literally transformed from larvae into winged insects; then they fly away free. I scratched some notes regarding how Jesus helps us through our own transformation process, and I placed those notes in my Bible.

Later, in August 2008, I was reading Matthew 17:27 about Peter finding the coin in the fish's mouth to pay the temple tax for him and Jesus. (We'll discuss this passage in the next chapter.) My research that morning indicated that the coin may have been gold. I was impacted that this story was another personal confirmation that I should never *work* for my provision. This subject has been (and still is) a 15-year learning process for me. God wanted me to let Him be Jehovah Jireh (Provider). That, of course, doesn't mean I will never work again, just not for my provision.

The next day I was meeting with my friend Walt when, out of the blue, he reached into his pocket and said he felt that he was supposed to give me two gold-colored U.S. dollar coins. This really got my attention because, to my knowledge, no one had ever given me a gold coin before. I was struck with their significance regarding God's provision and how it tied into the Matthew 17 passage I had read just the day before. I was very confident that God was speaking clearly to me about His provision. Now, I know that when God gives you a *rhema* and it has been established with an experiential history in your own life, you can then impart it to others. So I later went to the bank and obtained more gold coins. I wanted to be prepared to impart this revelation of God as our Provider to others. I've enjoyed watching the Lord lead as to when to give someone a gold coin.

On the morning of Friday, August 15, 2008 (this date is important), I was prayer-walking on a familiar sidewalk and noticed a dried cicada shell.

Within a very short distance, I had picked up ten cicada shells and acknowledged to Holy Spirit that a special timing (*fullness of time* or *shift*) was occurring. These shells had not been there a couple days before. I prayed into that while feeling an unusual faith for embracing a *shift* for myself.

That same Friday afternoon, I realized that I had time to attend a revival meeting about 30 minutes south of Kansas City at a church that I had only visited once before. I had been trying to attend these weekly meetings for about a month, but was always prevented by various schedule conflicts. I almost left my house that evening when I felt compelled to return to my bedroom to get a gold coin to take with me. I had no idea who I would give it to or if I would even know anyone at this church, but I felt confident that I would know when and to whom.

I slipped into the meeting late as unobtrusively as possible because I wanted to be in the *receive mode* that evening; I didn't want anyone to recognize me or ask me to do anything. I was sitting on the back row all by myself. The row in front of me was full of people, so I felt like I was well *hidden* so that I could just soak and receive. In preparation for what I might hear, I had my digital audio recorder on the seat beside me, along with my notepad and Bible. I was completely engaged with hearing from God that evening. But about 45 minutes into the meeting, a man that I'd never met named Cesar stood up and said he had some prophetic words for several people, and then he pointed to me. I stood and was very blessed to hear God poignantly identify times and issues in my life. It was extraordinarily reassuring. I felt the weights fall off of me as I received life from Heaven. A shortened version of that word follows.

### **Word to Mark From Cesar**

“The Lord says that you are searching. But the Lord says, ‘I’m blowing the sand out from under you. And you’re going to realize that you’ve been standing on rock this whole time.’ The Lord says, ‘This is the hour of release in your life.’ And God says, ‘I’ve implanted gifts

of teaching in you. I'm going to call you to be a fathering teacher. I'm going to release that mantle in a whole powerful new way.

“And even tonight, there's a whole shift. Everyone say, it's a shift, brother. God's planted you in a whole new way. Everyone say, Lord, plant him in a whole new way.

“The Lord says, ‘You are a tree of life.’ I see Psalm 1. It is your season to bear fruit. You are in the time of release.

“So this is an awesome time for you.”

There were other parts to this word which stated very accurate timings in my life. These were extremely meaningful to me. They gave me profound comfort. But did you notice the word *shift*? That was so perfectly suited to what the Lord had impressed upon me that very morning around the cicada theme. I thanked God for His confirming voice.

The meeting continued. Several noteworthy things were publicly shared by various people. I opened my note-filled Bible to scratch down some of the inspirations that were being shared. As I began writing on the first piece of paper I found, I realized that it was the very same paper I had written my cicada notes on earlier in the year—another confirmation that “shift” was the *word for the day*. It was obvious that a prophetic swirl was happening.

Later, the pastor asked all those who had grace and faith to exercise in the First Corinthians 12 gifts of the Spirit to step forward. About 15 people responded. A young man shared a dream he had the night before about Cesar (the prophetic man) searching for gold. In the dream there were some complicating issues about the gold, but Cesar was going to be given gold coins. Up to this point, I had not even thought about the gold coin in my pocket. But now, I instantly knew that God had me bring the gold coin for this very moment. It was obvious that I was drafted into *active duty* and was to give my gold coin to Cesar. So I walked around to the pastor and whispered that I felt like I had a follow-up to the young man's dream. I was given the microphone and shared how I was strangely impressed to bring this gold coin with me to give to someone this evening. It was now apparent that I was to give it to Cesar. I affirmed the young man who shared the dream by telling him that he was hearing correctly from God and then

walked over to Cesar and handed him the gold coin. We were all stunned by these unique developments. I then sat down for the second time, thinking that my involvement for the evening was over.

The whole thing was bizarre and exciting. But when I gave the gold coin to Cesar, he quickly and privately showed the pastor's wife an email that he had received on his cell phone several weeks or a month earlier. It was from a prophetic friend in Atlanta. Well, about 20 minutes later, Cesar got up and said that he wanted to share the rest of the story. He read the email as follows:

### **Cesar's Comments and a Prophetic Word to Him**

“A prophet friend of mine from Atlanta, Christopher, sent me this word; I guess it's been about three weeks ago. It says,

‘There are some hurdles ahead of you that are higher than the previous ones, but you will clear them with no trouble because your legs are stronger now, and they will cause you to stand, and you will be an overcomer. And on August 15 you will be handed a medal and it will encourage you to press on and contend for those promises that are yours.’

Holding up the coin, Cesar declared, “This is my medal. So I think that all came to pass.”

Notice the date—it was August 15th! We all erupted with applause at the complexity and accuracy of our Lord's timing and strategy. Just think of how many people, schedules, and sharing had to take place for all of this to fall into place! Certainly, too big for all of us together to pull it off, but it was no problem for an amazing God who loves to display His supreme supernatural strategies!

Now consider Mark 12:17, “*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.*” This passage was a strikingly perfect blueprint for what happened that evening. We all

marveled as I rendered to Cesar that which was Cesar's, but of course, the primary point is that we must also render unto God that which is His.

That whole gold coin occasion was the topic of discussions for many weeks afterward.

It's amazing how God can use us if we just listen and respond. It was all so simple. No stress. No strain. Just get simple, like a little child. I'm amazed at how simple and easy God's Kingdom is if we'll just get simple with Him.

I carry that original gold-colored coin with me as a constant reminder of God's intention and delight to provide for me like a great Shepherd. Once in a while, finances get a little tight. It's then that I pull out my gold coin and hold it in my fingers. Without striving, I try to get as small as I can, like a child, and I tuck inside the security of His love.

We read in Isaiah 30:15, "*In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.*" Striving in my mind and anxiety in my soul will avail little but fatigue. I must get as small as possible and let His great love completely cover my heart. According to Isaiah 30, I must stay in quietness of soul and confidence in His love in order to see the unhindered flow of His goodness to me.

I then remind myself and God of all the really cool stories of His provision in my past. (He loves to hear how much we cherish His activity in our lives.) And then I express my sincere excitement and eagerness to watch another truly amazing story unfold in the near future. Honestly, I rarely find myself even asking for provision. With the token of His promise in my hand, it would be inappropriate for me to beg. To beg would show lack of confidence in His promise and would be evidence that I don't really know His heart. So my *mission* is to secure my heart and mind in the very center of His loving care. When my heart finds that place of rest, Heaven is stirred into action because Heaven and earth are now as one. This truth is more profound that we may realize. Becoming as a little child is vital to releasing Heaven's provision. Then somehow, someway, and without much delay God manifests provision. He's so good!

I've given away many gold coins since receiving mine, each time inviting others into the Law of Blessing. That gold coin is a first token of the great promise of God as our provider. Nowadays, some of us rally around a fun but faith-building phrase, "We're members of the Brotherhood of the Gold Coin." The single gold coin illustrated on the front cover can be your reminder that God would be delighted to be your Provider for everything you need, and more. I love how God can use something like a little coin to inspire our hearts to simple devotion and secure dependence on Him.

### **Let's pray:**

*God, I'm jealous to have more of my own powerful stories of Your goodness in my life. I realize that I get so anxious and driven that I may be clouding my heart's ability to receive. Would You please forgive me. I want to be simply childlike before You with all the issues of my life, especially provision. Would You give me a trophy story of Your kindness soon. You're amazing, God. I love you! Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. Have I developed a rapport with Jesus such that I can easily and consistently recognize His voice?
2. Can I identify some parallels between the dynamic shift that cicadas experience when they emerge from the ground and the shift that I can experience in my mindsets and life?
3. Like cicadas, am I ready to be liberated from lower laws that keep me in servitude?
4. Do I actively go on *hunts* to find fresh installments from God?
5. Have I journaled (and hallowed) the special times when God gave me amazing provision?

# CHAPTER 14



## *The Gold Coin Story* *(The Gospel Account)*

Let's have some fun in this chapter.

Gold coins...at their very mention, I get fanciful visions of discovering gold doubloons on some sunken Spanish treasure ship. Or they conjure up thoughts of having all the gold and wealth that we could ever daydream about.

### **Gold—Just Street Pavement**

We think of gold as being one of the most valuable elements on earth, so much so, that we've used it for our standard of currency in commerce for thousands of years, but just for fun, let's consider a completely opposite perspective. Gold is the stuff that Heaven uses to pave its streets (see Rev. 21:18,21). From Heaven's point of view, if we chase after or hoard gold, it's the equivalent of hoarding bits of concrete. This perspective makes seeking for and trusting in earthly gold seem foolish in most heavenly respects.

Then why do we use gold as our standard to communicate ideas of wealth and provision? Probably because God does. For some reason, He chose gold as the primary element to describe value, at least while we spend our time here on this earth.

### **Gold—A Word in Season**

How about a thought-provoking sidebar regarding the symbolism of gold in Heaven? Let's start here.

*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver* (Proverbs 25:11).

In other words, when we get a timely word of encouragement, it's like gold to us. When we receive a *rhema*, or prophetic, word from the Lord, it is a *word in season* (also see Isa. 50:4). So could we infer from this Proverbs passage that gold is like prophecy? Ok, then try this. We won't have a problem agreeing that when God speaks from the Throne, Heaven is energized with His powerful *word in season*. Well then maybe this is why Heaven's streets are made of pure gold (see Rev. 21:18,21), for as God speaks His voice creates *golden* travel routes to support and lead us about in the heavenlies. Just something to think about.

## **Gold—A Family Anecdote**

Here's a true story about gold which happened in my family history. My great-great-uncle was a farmer, but he had a penchant for going on gambling binges from time to time. Now his wife had no fondness for such excesses and was very put out each time he ventured off unannounced to seek his fortune. You see, he could be gone for weeks without a word regarding his whereabouts while she was left to face the bill collectors and hopefully make a bid for more time. He always eventually came home.

As the story goes, one time he returned and entered the front room where he found his wife sitting quietly occupied with her knitting. Her stony face and the icy absence of a greeting were clear warnings that all was *not* well. With measured approach, he walked up to her and began to toss one gold coin after another into the skirt which stretched across her lap. As each coin *clunked* into the others, the icy atmosphere gradually but steadily warmed into a tolerable summer day. My father chuckled every time he told us this story about his great uncle.

Let it be known, our family does not advocate gambling, but this one anecdote illustrates the power that gold has exerted on people's hearts for millennia. Gold in itself is neither bad nor good, but the intents and motives

of humankind's heart make it a tool for good or evil. Isn't it interesting how something so inert and base can be either luxurious and regal or destructive and evil?

## **Peter's Gold Coin**

Now to the main part of this chapter.

Bills, bills, bills! Will they ever end? It was Benjamin Franklin who said, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." <sup>1</sup> Well, that's a pretty sad commentary on life. But in actual fact, even Jesus had to pay taxes. So hang on for some fun with a passage in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus and Peter are confronted with the fact that they have taxes to pay and no money to pay them. What do you and I do in a time like that? Do we get a second job or take out a loan? Let's see how Jesus approached the problem in Matthew's account.

*When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?" He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?" Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you" (Matthew 17:24-27).*

Now let's elaborate on this passage. Jesus and Peter had ventured off of the ministry trail and into the temple. For sure, most of their lives were occupied with "being about their Father's business" outside the walls of organized religion. But now they found themselves running smack-dab into another of religion's many laws.

Both of them were being asked to pay the temple tax that amounted to about two days' wages each. I don't know about you, but this seems a little steep just to go to church. Jesus then asks Peter a not-so-veiled question which had rather overt implications about the wrongness of the religious

system. Yet He doesn't seem to get too flustered about it and doesn't want to cause a ruckus, so He switches His focus from the temple guys to Father's brilliant rainy-day pension plan to pay their taxes.

## יהוה יראה

Can you imagine for a moment Jesus as just an average man functioning under the normal rationale of the logical worldly mindsets? Well, let's try. Ready? Now hold on to your hats as we create a somewhat spurious variation of this passage.

### **Mark's Paraphrased and Entirely Unauthorized Version**

O Peter, I completely forgot about the taxes coming due this month. What a bummer! I guess one of us will have to find a good-paying job to earn the drachmas needed to pay these temple guys. Now, as you know, it's been a long time since I've had a job, but it was only last year that you and the boys were still fishing. So how about this plan? You go round up the Sons of Thunder, get the boats and nets out of mothballs and plan for a two or three night fishing extravaganza. Won't that be fun?

You know we need four days' wages to pay this tax bill, so if all you guys get together, I think we can get this paid and make a little extra for Saturday night at the movies. Hey, I'll even do my part; I'll make sure that the fish are plentiful when you let your nets down. How's that? I'll partner with you. God helps those who help themselves, you know!

Ok, ok! Maybe that isn't the Authorized Version. But isn't it a pretty common response for us when we're faced with unexpected bills: work extra hours, get a second job, or take out a loan? Since most people think that their provision comes from the strength of their arm or mind, then they must *kick into* gear to make the extra money to pay the bills. With that mentality, it seems like our lives are always ruled by the bills.

But now, would you indulge me again as I present a better version of the conversation between Jesus and Peter? It goes something like this:

## **Mark's More Nearly Correct Expanded Paraphrased Version**

*Peter: Jesus, the temple guys say we owe taxes that equal four days' wages. I forgot my wallet, don't have my check book, and the ATM is broke! What are we going to do?*

*Jesus: No problem, Peter. What have we been doing the last several weeks?*

*Peter: Healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, bringing sight to the blind, and speech to the dumb.*

*Jesus: Yeah—lots of fun doing our Father's business, right?*

*Peter: You bet!*

*Jesus: So since we've been doing our Father's business then, it will be our Father's delight to take care of our bills. You see, soon John is going to write my conversation in his Gospel account, "My food is to do the will of the Father" (see John 4:34). What I mean is that when we do our Father's will, He will take care of everything else. In other words, if you've been about your Father's business and you have bills to pay, it's time to go on a vacation. How do you like that, Peter?*

*Peter: Sounds too good to be true—like a fairy-tale. I like it, but then it still comes down to who's going to pay our taxes?*

*Jesus: Ok, listen up. Go get your fishing pole, then go down to the lake and cast in your hook. ["A hook" is exactly what Scripture says.] On your way to the lake, make sure that you stop by Starbucks and pick up a large iced coffee. I want you to just relax today. Today is all about relaxing! You just lean back against a log and listen to the gentle lapping of water on the shoreline. Remember, today is all about relaxing.*

*Now, just so you don't think that I'm trying to get you to work for your taxes, remember it would be impossible to catch enough fish with a hook to pay taxes that equal four days' wages. And as I said, the thing that is going*

to pay our taxes is **not** the catching or selling of a fish, it's a miracle—a coin in a fish's mouth. If I had wanted you to go get a job to pay our taxes, I would have suggested you round up James and John, gather the boats and nets, and fish for a few nights to acquire the tax money. My point is that this is **not** about **working for a living**.

Now, just one more thing before you leave: I know that you are prone to being somewhat anxious and impetuous. So remember this when you're sitting there on the shore: The **first** fish you catch **will** have a coin in its mouth. Now, it **may** be later in the day before you catch that first fish. Don't fret or worry! Today is all about entering into rest! Be sure to take a nap (and don't worry about the fish that got away—that won't happen), watch the puffy white clouds float by and remind yourself of how cool it was when that lame man began shouting for joy when he found out that he could walk. Do you remember? Yeah, I can see it now; you're going to have a great day! See ya later.

Obviously, Peter's experience unfolded just as Jesus had foretold. I wonder what Peter's expression was when he finally caught that tilapia (sometimes called St. Peter's fish)? I'll bet he briefly had a thought of disbelief quickly followed by amazement and celebration as he refreshed his mind with the words Jesus had previously spoken.

And I can't help but think that he must have pondered the comparison between slaving for several nights out in the boats with his smelly friends to how simple it was to just do Kingdom *stuff* and let Father take care of the rest. And *rest* is the key word for what Peter did all day. You see, Jesus' objective had nothing to do with Peter's labor to acquire his provision. That day was all about entering into rest. When he got that gold coin, I'm sure he ran off to pay the temple guys and then back to Jesus to report the good news (as if Jesus would be surprised). So what did he do with the fish? Oh, he probably had Mrs. Peter fry it up for one of the finest fish dinners they'd eaten in a long time.

So with these principles and truths in mind, would it be too much of a stretch to create an axiom something like this?

## **Got taxes to pay? Take a vacation!**

Gosh, that's almost offensive, isn't it? It sure flies in the face of our common work ethics. It even messes with our religious tenets. We must be respectable and responsible, you know! But don't forget that this whole issue of God taking care of our business is predicated upon the premise that Jesus presented earlier in Matthew 6:33: If we "*Seek **first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness [then] all these things shall be added to [us].*"

Can it really be that simple? Well would God lie to you and me? Of course not! Then it must be true. And if it's really true, then it just doesn't get much better than this!

## **Insight Into Peter**

It's quite probable that fishing was one of Peter's boyhood passions and pastimes. No doubt, he was very good at it, good enough that it became his occupation. As commonly happens, his vocation became an obligation until he lost his joy and passion for fishing. This loss of passion may have been a strategic reason why he could later leave his boats and nets to follow Jesus. But I can imagine that Peter's original passion for fishing was rekindled when Jesus told him to go fishing with a hook. The Master was speaking to something deep within Peter's heart and soul. The icing on the cake was the gold coin miracle which happened in the very context of his boyhood passions. Isn't it just like Jesus to meet Peter at the very point of his *DNA*?

Do you have a passion for which you've lost your joy? Like Peter, the Master could restore it as you give yourself to being about His business. Sound good? It is. And He is.

## **Personal Testimony—Time to Go Fishing (Get into rest)**

Occasionally when our household is faced with a large, upcoming bill, my wife Debbie will say, "Mark, it's time to go fishing." I then get out the gold coin I told you about in Chapter 13. I hold it in my hand and begin to quiet my heart while I walk, pray, and "strive to enter into rest." I remind

myself and God of how good He is and how much He loves me. I remind myself and God that my past worry has gotten me nothing, so I'm not going there this time. I recount how He has consistently provided in marvelous ways. I tell Him that I'm sincerely excited about how this next provision story is going to become another trophy to His goodness, a trophy that will empower me and others to rest even more in His "so believable" goodness. Then somehow, I just forget about the whole issue and soon, out of the blue, we realize the bill is taken care of. The bills are resolved differently each time, but still with the same outcome—our Provider God does what He loves to do: provide.

*You're so good, Jesus!*

### **Let's pray:**

*Jesus, I love how You were so unconventional with Peter. I think I get it. I think I understand what You did with Peter. It's way outside of the norms of my society, but it's beginning to make sense now that I can see how good my Father is. I have to confess that it's still a stretch to think of these truths working in my life, but I really want Your reality to be my reality. I want Your easy yoke. And I want to make You really happy as You watch me just skipping around like a little child without an anxious thought about provision. Oh, make it happen in me, Jesus; make it a reality in me! Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. How many times per day do I process how my next bills will get paid?
2. Could I be as unflustered about unexpected bills as Jesus was?
3. In what ways have I limited God's provision? (anxiety, striving, etc.)
4. When I look at myself as Jesus' Bride, are my bills and debts mine or His? Consider how a man marries a woman and accepts all of her assets and liabilities as his.... Just a thought.

5. When I look at myself as God's son or daughter, are my bills and debts mine or His? Consider how parents accept all expenses incurred by their children.... Just a thought.
  6. Can living in His provision really be this effortless when I'm "about my Father's business?"
  7. Have I had any *gold-coin-in-the-fish's-mouth* experiences?
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**Endnote:**

1. Benjamin Franklin (1706-90) used it in a letter to Jean-Baptiste Leroy, 1789, which was re-printed in *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, 1817: "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."  
<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/death-and-taxes.html>;  
accessed October 11, 2011.

# CHAPTER 15



## *Let's Get Started*

Some members of my family like a crazy but hilarious movie, *What About Bob?* One of the repeated lines is “baby steps” —which implies that progress is made by taking “baby steps.” Generally speaking, small steps of faith will be the order of the day if we’re to attain our objective. But be ready if Jesus says that He wants figs, and He wants them now!

When reaching for this faith walk, don’t bite off more than you can chew. Don’t take crazy leaps of faith until you’ve built a history with God and have seen His faithful care and provision. Just as physical exercise makes a muscle grow stronger, so it is when we hear from God and step out of our comfortable boat. Each step on the water gives us greater faith for the next step.

Don't take crazy leaps of faith until you've built a history  
with God.

Find a good comrade to accompany you on this journey into supernatural provision. I’ve been inspired by the heart connection between the two men in this passage:

*Now when he departed from there, he met Jehonadab the son of Rechab, coming to meet him; and he greeted him and said to him, “Is your heart right, as my heart is toward your heart?” And Jehonadab answered, “It is.” Jehu said, “If it is, give me your hand.” So he gave*

*him his hand, and he took him up to him into the chariot (2 Kings 10:15).*

Don't you just long for kindred-spirit friendships which are mutually inspiring and give you courage to face your battles? What an asset they are to a hungry-for-God believer! Ask God to give you a sincere comrade to run with. And if they won't accompany you, ask them to at least be a sounding board so that you don't do something dumb. No one wants to pay the consequences of erroneous or ill-timed decisions. Of course, we realize that God can "*make all things work together for good,*" but it may take a while to undo those consequences of wrong choices.

Tell God you want to walk into this higher Law of Blessing and that you want to leave the lower law behind. Tell Him that you really want to purge your mind and life from all entanglements to the lower law ideals. As you begin this journey, if there seems to be a problem, be willing to assess your progress realistically, even go back to the beginning, put everything *on the table*, and re-evaluate all the previous decisions to see if you *missed it* anywhere along the line.

## **Overview**

Let's recap, in short, what we've learned. Here's an easy memory jogger to keep our valuable *gold nuggets* of inspiration and revelation within easy access.

## **Memory Jogger Review**

1. Considering the higher Law of Blessing, would I want to remain under the lower law mandates?
2. Is working for my provision inspiring to my spirit?
3. Does working for my provision allow God to be my Jehovah Jireh?
4. Do I understand the difference between my own provision-gathering and letting God be my Jehovah Jireh?
5. What will I do with Jesus' commands to...

- Seek first the Kingdom of God, and then all these things will be added (see Matt. 6:33).
  - Take no thought of tomorrow (see Matt. 6:34).
  - Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap (see Luke 12:24).
  - Consider the lilies, for they neither toil nor spin (see Matt. 6:28).
  - We must become like a little child to even enter the Kingdom of Heaven (see Matt. 18:3).
  - With food and raiment let us be content (see 1 Tim. 6:8).
  - Do not seek what you shall eat or drink or be of doubtful mind (see Matt. 6:25).
  - Do not labor for food that perishes, but for food that endures (see John 6:27).
  - Be anxious for nothing (see Phil. 4:6).
6. Does my life manifest the highly favored status of the Law of Blessing?
  7. Can I communicate my new understanding of the Law of Blessing?
  8. How frequently am I melted with tears at the overwhelming goodness of my Fascinating God?
  9. Do I spend time with God, enough to hear His secrets and know His heartbeat?
  10. Do I know what my treasure is?
  11. What is the Father's business for my life?
  12. Have I embraced and cultivated the Father's business in my life?
  13. What Kingdom value is my work currently contributing to my life?
  14. Under what circumstances should we say, "If a man doesn't work, he doesn't eat?"
  15. How much true rest am I experiencing in my life?
  16. How has Romans 4:4-5 had an impact on my foundational understanding of God's provision?

17. How creative could I let God be to give provision and reduce liabilities in my life?
18. Could I really enter into Peter's "gold coin" kind of rest when I experience unexpected bills or demands on my life?
19. Do I have a comrade to run with in these matters?
20. Create a journal to document and hallow the provision God has brought into your life.

Remember God isn't hiding these things *from* us; He has hidden them *for* us. He's excited for us to find them...if we'll only search for them. He'll even help us find them. And for a little incentive He gives us a tip in Psalm 25:14, "*The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him.*"

He's eager for us to believe for and walk in His good provision. And it will be His great pleasure to lavish all the provision and authority of Heaven on us as we mature. This wonderful favor will set us apart from all the peoples of the earth. He's so eager to crown His beloved with these distinctive gifts.

## **Insights and Tips to Consider**

Remember The Lord's Prayer found in Luke 11:4, "*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*" Obviously, we know that our Father forgives us in the same manner that we forgive those who have offended us. But could it also mean just what it says? Literally, it says that if we'll forgive our debtors (those who owe us), we will be forgiven our debts (what we owe others). What if we were to ask God for grace to forgive everyone of all debts, financial and otherwise? Then we could ask God for the forgiveness and cancellation of all our financial debts just as we've forgiven others. We'll let Him work out the details, but it's important for us to do our part, forgive. Remember, part of the joy of walking with Jesus is just simply believing what He says—even taking what He says at face value—simply believing like a little child.

Practice tithing and giving. This is the only activity in which God invites us to test Him. God knows that giving sets all kinds of good things in

motion. And He's so sure that you will be blessed that He even invites you to *prove* His good intentions.

*Bring all the tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house. And test Me now with this," says Jehovah of Hosts, "whether I will not open the windows of the heavens for you and pour out a blessing until there is no sufficiency of room to store it" (Malachi 3:10 LITV).*

Practice generosity. This noble virtue *oils* our own hearts, the hearts of those who receive from us, and the heart of God. Remember, freely we've received, freely we give. Aspire to a lifestyle of generosity beyond the expected.

Speak positively over your life. Decree over your life, heart, and labors that you are blessed of the Lord. And make valiant efforts to stop all negative self talk, confessions of doubt, unbelief, and trouble.

In the appendix, I've listed several prayers of faith you can proclaim over your personal giving. And I suggest that your church or your group declare these prayers in unison as a corporate statement of faith over all of your areas of giving (not just financial). Several churches I know use these corporate prayers of faith and have amazing testimonies to show for it.

## **Before You Jump**

There is a saying, "We are what we eat." So if we've been eating pauper food and living with the fear of not having enough, then we'll probably continue in a peasant mentality. What are we "feasting on" as a steady diet? What do you behold and what do you think about on a day-to-day basis? If we ask God for His perspective and if we begin to feast on it, then we'll find ourselves being transformed like Paul says in Second Corinthians 3:18, "*As we behold and are changed from glory to glory.*" Just think of it—changed from glory to glory. Now that's what I'm talking about!

Remember Adam before the Fall? Be diligent to tend the 'garden' that the Lord has given to you. Pray for it, tend it, dress it, nurture it. This is the essence of being about our Father's business. Expect God to walk and talk

with you in the “cool of the day.” That’s the life of happy and in-love-with-their-God “gardeners.” You’ll be given authority and dominion to name and rule over the issues in your life. You’ll be given marvelous comrades (Eve) to walk with you, and you and God will delight in knowing each other.

Establish a memorial, just as Jacob did after he had the dream of the ladder with angels ascending and descending from Heaven. The next morning he piled some stones and hallowed that place before God. Every time God does something unusual and surprising in your life, I suggest that you set it apart as holy unto the Lord. Commemorate His sovereign intervention of provision. Hallow those times. Let your heart know and let Heaven know that you highly value God’s handiwork in your life.

I constantly carry several tokens in my pocket and mementos in my Bible that remind me of visitations and encounters with God. These serve Heaven notice that I love every time Heaven draws near in a relevant, deeply-felt way. And these mementos give me easy on-ramps into *re*-encounters as I ponder what the Lord did in that previous experience.

Practice living within your means, with whatever God gives you. Don’t *strive* for more. If *fear* of not having enough or *greed* for more begins to motivate you, ruthlessly demand that your heart gets back to dependency upon God. Require your heart to be content with God’s allotment to you. My heart is pricked occasionally as I remember the policy of the Old Testament priests who had to live with whatever stuck on the flesh hooks as they were drawn out of the boiling water. God would like to be our portion and establish the portions for our lives.

Make sure that you are actively pursuing wisdom, character, and righteousness in your life. And make sure that you have a history of walking in faith for God’s provision in smaller areas before you leap into the big ones. Then if you find that you don’t have enough faith or if you’ve hit a brick wall, be willing to ask yourself some tough questions.

- Was I premature?
- Did I make a wrong turn?
- Was I resisting God’s first word? (Consider Jonah.)
- Do I need a job for a while longer to tutor my character?

- Should I have paced myself better as I phased into this?
- Do I need to persist to allow God to build my faith muscles?
- Maybe I just came up with an idea and am trying to force God to bless it.
- Have I had a revelation or am I just excited?
- Do I have a proven track record of hearing from God?
- Have I had two or three confirmations from “ignorant” sources?
- Have I let God do it His way and in His timing?
- Have I been trusting in “horses and chariots” (natural strength)?
- Should I wait for other factors/ingredients to come into the picture? (Consider Joseph who had to wait for the fullness of time.)
- Maybe I’m in a wilderness season of my walk with God and must be patient.

Expect that it will take from two to ten years for you to move fully into this mode of living. Thank God if it’s shorter, but be prepared for the longer time. Be as serious about this as you would about pursuing a college degree. You’d embrace the college tuition matter-of-factly, and you would set aside two, four, or even eight years to study for your desired objective. You wouldn’t think that this was abnormal or unduly intrusive in your life. Why? Because you really want the knowledge and the credentials that you’ll have when you complete the course.

Expect that it will take from two to ten years for you to move fully into this mode of living.



Why not treat this journey into faith in the same way? You could be living in the Law of Blessing at the end of these transition years. You will have discovered and activated the unique treasure in your life and may be operating at its full strength. And because of your history of walking in God’s provision, you would be equipped to give it away.

Be prepared to maintain your conventional income source during this time. This complete process won't likely happen for anyone in a single moment. It is usually attained incrementally over time.

*And the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for you (Deuteronomy 7:22).*

Even when the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, God told them that He wouldn't give them the whole country all at once, lest the wild beasts overtake them. God knows we need to learn how to handle our freedom and learn greater commitment to obedience. We must learn how to trust God for financial provision when there are no predictable sources. Unfortunately, these are all big issues which conventional wisdom doesn't address. As a result, we'll need to develop our faith foundation and faith *muscles* to walk in them.

So as I say, this is a process of unlearning our old dependence upon conventional provision-getting. It is a process of learning to hear God's voice clearly and follow it. It is a process of learning how to walk on the water of faith and trust in God's amazing supply.

Believe me, this is something worth reaching for, something worth living for. Oh, the joy and freedom of letting Jehovah be our Jireh. I hope you can feel His smile this very moment as He watches you ponder this possibility? *Selah!*

## **Last thoughts**

I leave you with these thoughts. Consider the pleasure that God experiences as He sees us prosper. One can only marvel at our God—for our success is His delight!

*Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers (3 John 1:2).*

*Let the Lord be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant (Psalm 35:27).*

God is extremely excited about you receiving and walking in all of His provision. He wants to show Himself strong. He has seen ahead and already has the details worked out to provide for “everything pertaining to your life and godliness” (see 2 Pet. 1:3.) Yes, He’s delighted about the prospects of being your Jehovah Jireh in every area of life.

### **Let’s pray:**

*Our wonderful Lord Jesus, our hearts are pierced afresh with awareness of Your intentions of goodness for us. We’re so glad that You’re deeply in love with us. And even though we know we’re undeserving in our own merits, we’re beginning to see ourselves as highly favored and set apart for training to rule and reign with You, even in this life. We realize that Your intentions for us are so much better than we had ever imagined.*

*We ask for grace to dismantle strongholds in our minds of slavery to provision-gathering. We sincerely want to walk in all of Your favor and provision. We now open up our hearts to give You the position of Jehovah Jireh in every area of our lives. To be honest, we’re probably going to strive and fumble a little as we learn how to let you be Provider, but our heart’s desire is to enter into complete rest in the “so believable” love of God.*

*Thank You for Your commitment to love us through the process until we walk in all that You have for us. Amen.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. Ready for the journey?
2. Do I have anyone who can join me on this journey? One I can confide in as a sounding board and prayer partner?
3. What is my first move? In what area can I take my first *baby steps*?
4. Am I willing to be honest and realistic as I evaluate my progress?

5. Have I received a revelation (*rhema*) which will empower me to rest in God's provision?

# CHAPTER 16



## *Real Life Testimonies*

So what good is a testimony? And why should we tell a story of God's goodness over and over?

We love testimonies because you and I want to know if these pleasant sounding *theories* work in the real world. Each story of God's provision in someone else's life increases my faith to believe for the same outcome in my own life. When it is shared, every testimony contains the DNA necessary to reproduce itself. So read with your antennae up.

### **Family Testimonies**

A Wife's Perspective (Walking together in agreement)

(Debbie, my wife and comrade in this faith walk, offers her firsthand perspective.)

Thinking back through the experiences of my childhood years, it's obvious that the Lord was inviting me into a life of trusting Him to provide. In the mid-'60s, my father attended seminary and then pastored a little church on the weekends. Auto mechanics was Dad's side job while Mom babysat during the day. On Friday nights, our family of five made the 260-mile round trip to church, using the parsonage during the weekend and returning to our seminary apartment by Sunday evening. Ministry life was extremely full and money was scarce. It wasn't much of a sacrifice for me as a child because all my needs were taken care of, but my parents

bravely modeled this faith walk as a way of life. Believing that the Lord would take care of us was as “normal” as breathing.

Our family meals were designed to stretch as far as possible, and I didn’t realize until many years later all of the prayers that were prayed to keep me fed and comfortable. At times, we would nearly run out of groceries when miraculously God would make a way for our refrigerator and pantry to be filled again. We never went hungry. God *always* provided. From the time I was a little girl, I learned that my daddy always took good care of me; and my Daddy God *always* took special care of me—even extravagant care.

One of my early memories at 5 or 6 years old was when there was *no* money to send with me to school for milk. I’m serious, our family didn’t have two cents! Over breakfast we prayed together for provision and wondered how Jesus was going to take care of our needs, remaining confident that He would. I had my little lunch bag and opened the front door to head out to school and there... right on the front porch step were two pennies! I was wide-eyed and squealed with delight upon the discovery. We all rejoiced at the “milk money miracle”! This memory moves me to tears because Jesus was, and always has been, so real in our everyday lives. Two little coins made my heart explode with love for the One I knew would take care of me. His heart was so big that He cared enough to give me a half-pint carton of milk to drink. This childhood memory made a huge impact on my life. I believe He loves when we become like little children—filled with wonder, simply trusting in awe of how big and strong our Daddy is and how He always takes care of His kids.

By the time I was around 9 years old, we lived in St. Louis, Missouri. Our church met in an old firehouse, and we were hosting meetings for a special speaker who was traveling through. This minister laid hands on me and prophesied that I would have a “gift of faith.” I knew something happened at that moment, but little did I know *faith* would be a hallmark in my life...my future husband’s life, my future children’s lives, and surely generations to come.

Mark and I have been married 34 years and have walked this journey of faith most of our married life. Our grown children know no different! As

often as possible, we've included them in the reality of bills and unusual needs so they could share in the joy of provision when God's plan of provision unfolded. All of us get excited together when God creates another miracle! Even recently our daughter felt that she was to go on a very expensive mission trip. We expressed our reservations about the cost. Lydia's response was, "Where's your faith? It'll be there when I need it!" Now, our kids help us practice what we preach! This is how they grew up: believing for things unseen! And sure enough, the Lord supernaturally took care of her whole trip. Our children can already write their own testimony books to pass on to their children and grandchildren!

Ultimately Mark oversees the finances of our family and ministry, but I've usually been the one to process our daily bills. I'm detail-oriented and actually enjoy doing it, while paperwork takes the joy right out of my sweet husband. I like taking care of finances...when there's money. I must confess there are times when I have that slight twinge of unbelief. These moments are rare because I've seen the consistent faithfulness of the Lord in our lives. When there is an impossibility, I remind myself of *all* the times He has surprised us! He loves surprises. So to get on top of my circumstances, I renew my thoughts and get out of a poverty mindset! Then God comes through. What a joy to see the provision to meet our obligations and more than enough to overflow to others! And the issue of finances is only one dimension of His care.

We try to not make decisions based on whether we have money or not. When Mark and I have peace and unity about a thing, we know we're on the right track. We ask Jesus what He wants us to do or where He wants us to go. When it feels like His voice and His will, and there have been the appropriate confirmations, then the finances are always there when needed. I know some people think this is kind of a scary way to live, but for us it's exciting. Again and again, He shows us how good He is.

One of our adventures in life is that we don't have a predictable income and are amazed every month as we watch the Lord meet our needs! Sometimes I realize that a large bill is coming due and will let Mark know that it's "time to go fishing" like Peter did when the fish he caught had a gold coin in its mouth. "Go fishing" is our code phrase for entering into

God's rest while expecting that "gold coin" to arrive. For instance, recently we had a \$10,000 bill approaching. We continued to "fish" *and* be about our Dad's business. We leaned into prayer personally, releasing finances and thanking God for His promised provision. It certainly didn't look possible in the natural. We had about \$3,000 in the bank, but needed another \$7,000 in the next nine days. In the middle of the week, we prayed that Jesus would make a way where there seemed to be no way! A few hours later, Mark placed a \$500 check on the table someone just gave us, that afternoon I went to the mailbox to find a check for \$455, the next day we received a check in the mail for \$5,000, the following day a couple gave us \$500, and Saturday evening I discovered a check in our mailbox for \$1,000! A total of \$7455 was given to us within four days, with a few days to spare for the checks to clear before the bills were due! How do you like that? Jesus is so detailed! That's just another example of how the Lord delights in taking care of His children.

This way of life may seem like it's living on the "ragged edge" and some will respond with, "That's not the life for me." But really, it's a matter of perspective. Do we focus on: is the glass half-full or half-empty? If we try to cross bridges before we get there, wondering how every future bill will get paid (this is the poverty mindset), then life is full of fear, tension, and anxiety. But if we focus on the fact that every bill is paid and we have some left over (this is the favored and beloved mindset), then life is one wonderful experience of God's loving kindness after another.

### **Grocery Gifts (Eating at God's table)**

Many times over the course of our lives, both Debbie and I have seen food show up on our doorsteps, both when we were youngsters and in our married years. Sometimes it's been a mystery as to how the groceries were left there, but most often it was compassion and love that motivated a friend to bring a gift for our table.

### **"Jesus Hippie" Trip (God-stories galore)**

My parents were always hungry for more of God, so in 1970 when my father read about the revival that was happening among the California Jesus Hippie people, he couldn't resist experiencing this phenomenon. Early that year, he decided that if our family had \$80 to our name by July, we would drive from Illinois to Los Angeles to witness it firsthand. We had the \$80, so we loaded our car with travel items: tent, guitar, work tools, and clothes, of course. We camped and stayed with relatives on the way. When we arrived, we lived in a Jesus hippie commune with on-fire young people for about a week. It was a life-changing experience for all of us.

Now obviously, \$80 won't take you very far, even if gasoline was \$0.20 per gallon at the time. We visited a church one evening when they announced that a couple was leaving for a few weeks and was looking for someone to house-sit their apartment. Someone recommended us to the couple. That apartment was a God-send to our family. It came complete with food and a pool. My father and I knocked on doors in a very affluent part of LA and asked if they needed any work. A wealthy, older Jewish couple who were both doctors hired both of us for several days. At the end of those few days, they offered to put me through high school and pay for my college. We didn't take them up on it, but *what an offer!*

This short testimony doesn't come close to telling all the God-stories that occurred on that trip. God took care of us in so many ways because we were on a quest to find and obey Him. We experienced the first uninhibited expressions of charismatic worship which many of us appreciate today, on-fire hippies by the hundreds, many salvations, mass ocean water baptisms, and our own supernatural provision for six weeks, after which, we were finally ready to go home. Before our return home, someone insisted on giving my father the necessary gas money for our trip. Our family arrived back home in Illinois with \$30 to our name, just enough to get my sister and me into school that next week.

Not only were we indelibly impacted on that trip, but that precedent began a heritage that Debbie and I have modeled and passed on to our children. This has been the standard mode of living throughout our whole lives. It has taken us around the world and yielded life-changing experiences that secure our hearts and prove the goodness of God's big

heart. Simply put, as we walked in sync with God, He always came through with exhilarating testimonies of His provision.

### **Sit in the Dust (Humbly dependent upon God's provision)**

Years ago, we lived in a region of the Midwest that was very economically depressed, and I was without a job. I was trying desperately to receive God's provision God's way so I committed to Him that I would work for anybody, doing anything, at any rate of pay. An older neighbor who was a horse breeder and trainer took a liking to me and offered me a job. He volunteered, "Would you like a job? I can pay you \$4.50 an hour to scoop manure out of my stable box stalls." I said, "I'll take it," remembering my commitment to the Lord. That job lasted for a week or so. We got along famously, which included some soul-searching heart-to-hearts on several occasions, and we're still friends to this day.

At the end of that job, another man asked if I would help him remodel his house. I agreed to work for him at his rate of pay *if* he would honestly evaluate my performance at the end of the first week and pay me whatever he thought I was really worth. On the fourth day of our job, he gave me two raises in one afternoon, from \$6 per hour to \$8 per hour to \$10 per hour. We became good friends. I worked off and on for that man for nearly 10 years and made many eternal investments into his life.

### **One Forgotten Song (God sees and opens doors)**

One warm summer night in the late '80s, I was praying in the dark on a well-manicured golf course when I received a new song. The words of multiple verses and a chorus just rolled out of me as if it was a familiar song. I could hear all the chords, yet it was brand new. The song moved me deeply, and as a worship leader I knew that this song was *world class*. Within a few minutes, the thought came to me that I might forget this song, so I headed back to the house to write it down. As I was about to exit the golf course, my heart was painfully struck with the thought that I was leaving Jesus to go write down this song. Without question, His presence

was much more precious to me than any song could ever be. So I turned around to spend time with Him. I told Him that it really didn't matter if I ever remembered that song again. The rest of that evening in the golf course was unusually intimate and unforgettable.

And you guessed it: I never remembered that song again, and I have no regrets.

Over ten years later, our children were musicians and singers and we ministered together as a family. An inspiration came to me for a family music CD. From this inspiration came a CD entitled, *Twenty Four Seven*. It was actually quite humble, in that it was recorded in our living room on our first computer, one music track at a time. This simple instrumental CD is a tool to help facilitate personal and corporate prayer times.

A few years after it was released, our family was asked by a ministry in Taipei, Taiwan to come minister in their house of prayer. The reason we were asked was because they had been playing our *Twenty Four Seven* CD daily for over two years. That trip was monumental for our family, and we discovered many new friendships. Because of that trip to Taiwan, we were invited back many more times, and it created open doors to other Asian countries, seven countries and counting.

For me, I attribute it all to when I chose His presence over a song. He saw and duly noted the intent and passion of my heart when He saw me sow that song back into God like a seed. In the right timing, He gave back much more than any one song could have ever given. The lives touched for eternity and the memories of countless "God-times" have been well worth the investment.

### **Hospital Bill Reduced (We just asked)**

We incurred some hospital bills and didn't have insurance to cover them. So we went to the hospital and simply asked if they would reduce our bill. To our surprise and relief, they cut thousands of dollars off of our bill without a hassle. All we had to do was ask. Jesus said to ask, seek and knock.... His ways are so good.

## **Mortgage Interest Rate Reduced (Didn't even have to ask)**

We had an adjustable interest rate mortgage at one time and the rate was climbing. I entertained the idea of refinancing, but decided to call my mortgage company and tell them what I was thinking. They immediately volunteered (without me asking) to lower it one point without any hassle at all. Yay, God!

## **New Van Needed (Heavenly dividend payment plan)**

Our family of six, including four children, has done quite a bit of traveling across country in a full-size passenger van, sometimes pulling a trailer filled with equipment. This put significant wear and tear on our vans and it was time to replace our vehicle again. We watched the papers and searched the Web for a good buy, but the truth was, we just didn't have enough money to buy the quality of van that I knew we needed. This wasn't alarming because God knows what we need and has promised to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory (see Phil. 4:19).

We had ministered several times in a very small church in a neighboring city, and they gave us an honorarium each time. Several years later, unknown to us, their leadership reviewed their church finances and determined that they weren't being wise stewards of their sizeable bank account. So they decided to make several unusually gracious contributions to area ministries.

Without knowing about our need for a new vehicle, they called us at Heaven's perfectly timed moment and said, "We're going to send you \$20,000 to use however you wish." That very small church gave us even more than this over-the-top financial blessing. One time while serving there, a spontaneous song came during ministry time. That song later became one of our impacting songs on our family CDs.

It is said, "Despise not the day of small beginnings" (see Zech. 4:10). I could say, "Despise not the small places of ministry." God sees **all** our investments and makes note of them, no matter to whom. He's always perfectly *on time* with His heavenly dividend payment plan.

## **Asia Trips (All for Him)**

On one of our trips to an Asian country, as our host offered an honorarium to us at the end of our time with them, they expressed regret that the amount was less than any other time we had served with them. I immediately said, “Don’t you worry about a thing. God knows, and He has everything under control. You watch, He’ll make it all work out perfectly.” Less than an hour later I opened our email to find that a person from Europe whom I barely knew sent notice that they would be supporting us monthly for the next year with an amount that was quite above the diminished amount of honorarium. I excitedly shared with our host the good news of how God makes it all work out so perfectly. All of us were astonished at the swiftness of God’s provision.

We ministered in another country and had received barely enough honorarium to cover our expenses. In addition, we had given what resources we had to a family of poor believers in a shantytown community. Wholeheartedly and with tears in our eyes, it was a joy to pour our hearts and financial resources out on these simple and precious saints. After ministering in that country, we discovered that our time there had been a spiritual and financial investment. Yet our whole family was united in our joy to serve this country. Shortly after we flew to the next country, we received an email from someone back in the States offering us a very nice luxury automobile for free. With delight, God showed the family how He sees what we do in secret and how He loves to reward in overtly benevolent ways. God is way good!

Several countries and venues in Asia have been like that: We left the country with little or no honorarium. As a family we sincerely thanked God for the opportunity to sow into hungry hearts, and at the same time we knew that God would, without a doubt, take care of the financial matters. And He always has and always will.

## **St. Louis Trip (Led by the Spirit)**

I called a friend in St. Louis, Missouri, to inquire about a monthly meeting that they had invited us to attend for the last three years. It just so happened that meeting was going to occur the next evening. When I heard this, I *knew* this was one of our first God-indicators that His presence was with us. So we went to St. Louis on Friday and attended the meeting. We had not planned to lead, and there was no invitation to lead. The only persons who knew that we were coming were the ones we were with. But as we walked in, the Lord opened the door wide. We were asked to lead the worship and share. It was an exceptional evening!

On Saturday, our hosts and Debbie and I wondered what the Lord had planned for us. We kept saying that we just wanted to be “about our Father’s business.” It seemed right to ask a few friends over to our host’s house for a time of sharing. The evening was truly ordained of the Lord. We were blessed with tears and vulnerable hearts, prayer and prophetic ministry.

Many good things happened that weekend. We had no formal meetings planned, no honorariums, no schedules to meet. We got to model just following the leading of the Lord to our hosts and several people around us. They were intrigued and amazed how many divine appointments unfolded throughout the weekend. The grace and favor of God was on each opportunity.

Even though we didn’t receive any honorariums, nor did we *even* talk about money, an individual slipped us a personal check that covered all of our expenses and then some. The day after arriving back home, we were given a large sum of money—way over the top—from a source unrelated to anything we had done over the weekend. It was a great blessing. God’s payment system is so much better than ours. And just think of it, we didn’t even have to sweat and stew about trying to secure honorariums and financial compensations from all the places that we serve. What freedom!

### **Unusually Large Bill (Angelic help)**

Some time ago, we had unusually large bills for one month amounting to about \$10,000. We had about \$3,000 in the bank set aside for these bills, but

the rest was an impossible amount from any point of view—except the supernatural.

About a week before the due date, I prayed in one of the morning prayer meetings to commission angels to gather all the provision that Father God has in store for us. Less than two hours later, a friend from another state called to say that he was sending a \$5,000 gift. That was so much God! Within the next week, four or five different people gave us a little over \$2,500. Well by that next week a total of about \$7,500 arrived and when we paid the bills, we had \$90 left over. All of these gifts were unsolicited, not honorariums, and totally unexpected. This is a normal example of how God provides for us. Thank you, angels. Thank you, God!

### **Lily Email (Heaven's affirms its promise)**

One morning I was reading Luke 12:27, *“Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”* As I lingered on that verse for a while I was freshly impacted with our Heavenly Father's promise to us of provision. A day or so later I received a random email from a friend in Switzerland who attached a photo of a lily. Here's what he said:



*“I'm sending you a picture I took last year. I was inspired how many lilies God had to make to express His love in Solomon's temple. One of my hobbies is taking inspired pictures. So I went to the mountains to search for a wild lily. They are not easy to find. Eventually, I photographed this beautiful, pure flower. But just after taking this photo, a lady happened by and asked me if I knew the name of this*

*flower. I answered, 'This is a wild lily.' She responded, 'It's a Lily Paradiso,' and went on."*

The timeliness of my friend's email and the reference to it being a *Lily Paradiso* made it especially impacting, as it affirmed Heaven's provision. But it gets even better. The next day a friend gave Debbie a *peace lily* plant as a gift for her birthday, once again affirming that we were in good hands—His.

### **Money Appears in the Bank Account (Anonymous donor)**

Luke was testing this supernatural provision idea when he discovered that he had \$500 more in his bank account than he was supposed to have. Aside from special occasion gifts, unexplained and unearned money had never appeared for him before. He immediately suspected that his mom and I may have deposited it without his knowledge. We told him that we had no idea where it came from. He went to our small bank's manager, who is a personal friend, and asked how the money was deposited into his account. The manager said he remembered someone coming in and asking to deposit the money into Luke's account anonymously, to which the bank manager obliged. But since the person wanted anonymity, the manager could not divulge the person's identity. When Luke came home, we all rallied around the completely unwarranted, undeserved, and mysterious provision.

### **Lydia's School Expenses (Building faith muscles)**

Several years ago, we became acquainted with Bill Johnson, pastor of Bethel Church in Redding, California. They have a school of ministry which impressed us immensely. I mentioned to our daughter, Lydia, that we'd be pleased to have her attend Bethel school after high school. She considered it, but her greatest apprehension was the issue of finances. I told her that from my history in God, I was very confident that if she wanted to go, and if it was God's will, that finances would be the least of her worries. She agreed to go, and even though we had no reserve finances for her, the

money surprisingly showed up from many sources—all without sending a fundraising letter.

During the course of the school year, each student must choose and travel on one of 60 different school missions trips. I told Lydia that the finances necessary for her missions trip would be completely her baby. She must ask the Lord which trip to take and trust God for the funding to cover the cost. The trips' costs ranged from \$50 to \$4,000, depending on where the mission was. Lydia chose Kenya, Africa, at the cost of about \$3,700. I was surprised at her choice, knowing that this would be a challenging (though fun) road to walk.

There were three dates to make non-refundable installments. The first installment was small and easy. At the second installment date, she didn't have the full amount, but neither did many other students in the school. So the school decided to postpone the due date a couple of weeks. We chuckled as we encouraged each other that God needed a couple more weeks to gather the finances. At the last moment, and without knowledge of her specific need, several people from other parts of the country contributed, unsolicited, the exact amount that she needed.

During this time, she asked if it would be good to send out a fundraising letter, the conventional method of securing money from friends. I exhorted her that, "God's will is God's bill," and that if she had chosen the trip correctly, then God would have no problem supplying the need. And if she hadn't chosen correctly, then this experience will be a valuable life lesson regarding hearing God's voice. Even if the \$2,000 she had already paid was nonrefundable, the learning experience would still be more than worth it. You see, you really can't put a value on God's life lessons. I believe that this should be what every God-fearing parent aspires to do: create ways for their children to establish a bona fide and unshakeable, very personal faith-walk with God.

The third and final payment came due. Again, she didn't have the full amount in hand. On nearly the last day, Lydia walked into the school and was met by one of her leaders who said that someone had called the school, inquiring about the outstanding amount of Lydia's trip costs. When

informed, this person wanted to pay the full balance anonymously. Well, Lydia was ecstatic and called us asking if we were the anonymous donors. Happy about the great news, we said no. We weren't the donors and had no clue who it was—and still don't to this day.

That was Lydia's faith journey through her first year of school. Now she's finished her third year and has had identical victories in her faith-walk with the following year's school and missions costs, all without a gainful employment or resorting to fund-raising letters. In fact, she is now in her fourth year and has a part-time staff position at Bethel.

I love watching my children get their footing in this "so believable" goodness of God. They'll be that much more unshakeable in life's storms, and will be pace-setters for their generations to follow.

## **Hawaii Family Trips (God is the best travel agent)**

For our 26th wedding anniversary, Debbie and I spent two weeks in Hawaii, one week on Maui, and one week on Kauai. The first week was tourist travel, but I felt like the second week was going to be ordered of the Lord. Yet since we had no friendships on the island, we didn't know how that would look.

Within a couple days on Kauai, we found lifelong friendships and delightful hearts who really love Jesus. Over the next few years we felt compelled to return to Kauai with our whole family for a longer period of time, over three months. Before we made plans for this trip, I informed the family that this wasn't about recreation; this was about serving the island. I also told them that we would discover relationships that would be meaningful for the rest of our lives.

An important factor of this trip is the lack of promised provision from the island in every area; transportation, housing, accommodations, meetings, finances, etc. This was going to be totally by faith. This step of faith would have been impossible if we hadn't already lived by faith much of our lives. For nearly two years I pondered when to go until I finally felt that I had sufficient assurance from God. Since we live by faith, we have no financial

cushion or bank account to lean upon, so we used our bonus air miles to secure the flights.

When we got to Kauai, one surprising and amazing provision after another came our way. A pastor and his wife volunteered to temporarily move out of their three bedroom house and gave it to our family for a month. They enjoyed a stay in someone else's beach condo that had been offered to them. On another occasion, we lived in a nice home by the beach that, unbelievably, was scheduled to be torn down soon. We moved out the day before the wreckers came. On yet another occasion, we lived on an avocado plantation in servants' quarters for several weeks with all the avocados we could eat! At one time we had three vehicles sitting in our driveway, all at our disposal. We found ourselves in meetings nearly every day: one-on-one discipleship, island-wide pastors' prayer meetings, house churches, counseling situations, church meetings, etc. It was truly an amazing adventure. We were even a part of planning the very first Hawaiian mayor's prayer luncheon. (The mayor of the island had just given his heart to the Lord and was very sincere and passionate.)

A cool thing happened on that trip; our son John met Cheryl, our future daughter-in-law, and they are happily married now. So he really did find relationships on Kauai that will be meaningful for the rest of his life, and our lives too.

We've been back to Kauai several more times in the last five or six years for a month or more at a time. We haven't asked for money or provision from our island friends on any of the trips. In fact, many times we've specifically said that our services were to be received as our gift. The outcome has always been the same—God makes a way where there seems to be no way. Without a doubt, God is the best travel agent ever.

### **From John and Cheryl (Newlywed miracles)**

**Piano for our home**—I grew up always having a piano available to play in our home. Each of the members of our family would daily sit down to play for our own enjoyment. As I was thinking about getting married to Cheryl and about our new home, I asked the Lord what we were going to do

about having a piano and if we were going to have one in our home. I knew it would have to be an upright, acoustic piano. Within two weeks, someone who we've never met called, saying that they had a piano to give away to anyone who needed it. We went to look at it and found out that it was nearly 100 years old, the original owner was the current owner's mother, they had completely refurbished it the year before, and it was an upright piano! I love how God takes care of every need!

**Second car**—We only had one car between us and since we both worked, it was a bit of a strain to accommodate both of our schedules. We could have bought a car, but we just felt in our hearts that the Lord wanted to do something on His terms. The morning after talking with the Lord about our need, someone who knew nothing of our transportation issues called my parents saying that they wanted to give a car away and wanted to know if Cheryl and I would like their vehicle. Of course we said yes and now have a second vehicle! Don't you just love how God's ways are so much better than our ways?

## **Friends' Testimonies**

Aaron and Angie (Ring pays bill)

Aaron and Angie received an unexpected large bill. With no surplus to pay it, Aaron thought he would have to get a loan. But they remembered that one year before, they were walking through a parking lot when their brother-in-law found a ring on the ground. It was all bent up and didn't look to have much value. He gave it to Aaron and said to do whatever they wanted to with it. The ring stayed in Angie's purse or on a kitchen shelf most of that year.

Realizing the large bill was due, Aaron remembered the ring and took it to a jeweler to have it appraised. He hoped to sell it, if possible. He drove to one possible jeweler, but felt led to another jeweler in town. When he went in, the lady at the counter informed him that her husband (the jeweler) didn't usually buy jewelry, but she gave it to her husband to look at anyway. The jeweler came out and said, "I'll give you \$2,600 for it."

Aaron, now thinking this ring may be of even greater value, said he would think about it and took the ring to several jewelers in a larger city. Those jewelers said they wouldn't give him anything for it. Aaron quickly took it back to the original jeweler and asked if the offer still stood. The jeweler affirmed his offer and wrote him a check for \$2,600. When Aaron arrived home, his wife was on the phone with the people they owed the bill to. She had just discovered that exact amount of the bill was \$2,607. They both were incredulous as they realized what God had just done for them.

The story continues when, through a series of relational connections, the jeweler, a Christian, found out about the way God had provided for Aaron and Angie. Upon hearing how God provided them with the amount of their bill, he began crying. He confided that when he picked up the ring he just heard, "Give him \$2,600." This greatly encouraged the jeweler's heart to know that he was hearing from God. He felt the pleasure of God. Everyone's heart got blessed in the process (the ring finder, the jeweler, and Aaron and Angie) by a totally unearned and "so believable" source of provision for an unexpected bill. The whole story sounds like Peter and the gold coin, doesn't it? Yay, God!

### **Ashley & Alicia (Bank account surprise)**

Ashley and Alicia are very dear friends, our spiritual kids, and radical followers of Jesus. They had done well in the previous season of their lives and now it was time to move on for the sake of their hearts. To stay any longer where they were would only diminish their hearts' vibrancy. So in 2009, in an off-hand way, Ashley said to the Lord, "If I had X-thousand dollars in my bank account, I would go to Redding in a heartbeat."

With other confirming factors, God began to stir their hearts about going, until later in 2009, they were sufficiently inspired to move their young family to Redding, California, with the goal of both of them attending Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry. They'd forgotten about the off-hand statement made earlier in the year, but once they began to proceed, they were totally surprised when they found more than that amount in their bank account.

Their excitement-filled email reads, “Well guess how much is in our savings account today as I type this out? The full X-thousand dollars and some change. The Lord didn’t forget! Ya know, I haven’t had to work more for it, and I haven’t had to sweat over it. No toiling at all. It just came in. Go figure! That is why I get so inspired by your book, because it is *truth!*”

Needless to say, their hearts are more secure in God’s Goodness, and now they are well into their second year of school. They faced the unknown, because a *big*, loving God broke into their lives to confirm His will and His way in their lives. There have been many more miraculous provisions, and never once have they solicited funds. God has more than confirmed to this family of four that He knows their hearts and will take good care of them.

### **Gean (Sleeping on the job)**

When I was a child, my father promised me \$5 after the sale of one of my pigs. He never gave me that \$5. Later, the wages I made as a young man were garnished by my father when I arrived home. So I learned to spend my money as soon as I got it because I knew that somehow it wouldn’t be there if I tried to save it.

This affected my adult financial practices. Our married life has been one financial struggle after another, including bankruptcy. Our church even helped us out one time, but I found myself in the same situation because I was trying to change my behavior instead of turning it over to God and let Him help me. I still struggled from time to time because I kept trying to make things work on my own instead of relying on God.

Last year, we attended a church conference. I had two jobs at the time. During worship on the last day of the conference, the Lord spoke to me and said “Quit your second job.” My finances were still a mess at the time, and I said, “Lord, are You sure?” I had to know it was coming from God, so I asked Him for a sign. At the moment I asked, someone walked by me wearing a Nike t-shirt which said, “Just Do It.” When I returned home, I called and gave my notice that I would be quitting. Shortly after I quit, they called back and offered me a job where part of my duties are to sleep on a couch. The person I am responsible for is in bed when I get there and still

asleep when I leave. Soon they offered me another night. It works out great because I get off an hour before I have to go to my regular job. Since then, my wife found a better paying job. Now we have the same days off, and I get paid to sleep. It just sounds like Jesus when He said, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

When my wife and I went to another conference, we were really strapped for money and three times we spent the last of our cash, our last \$5 bill. Each time I spent it, when I looked in my wallet later, there would be another \$5 bill. I’m sure that my Heavenly Father was healing my heart by making up for the missing \$5 when I was a small boy.

Recently, my wife and I listened to a financial planning series and came up with a budget plan to have all our bills (except our house) paid off within two years. The very next day when we went to work, they announced that they were closing down the business within two years. We have stuck to the plan and have four bills paid off with another due to be paid off this month. In the past, we would have been devastated by the news of losing both our jobs, but we know God has a plan for us, and we’re a little excited to find out what it is.

Two weeks ago we received three different unexpected checks in the mail, totaling about \$150. Just after that, we had two unexpected expenses totaling about \$150. You see, as long as we put our trust in Him, He will supply all our needs.

## **Cathy (God provides for homemaker)**

I invited our pastor and his wife over for supper on a certain date, then promptly forgot about the occasion. On the day of the supper, I suddenly remembered our plans and realized that I had no food in the house, and the house was a mess. I tried to think of a cheap, really fast and easy meal. I was coming up with nothing. I just prayed for God to help me because I was stressed to the max and out of ideas. Shortly after I prayed, a friend called and invited us to a pool party and barbecue. When I told her I had guests coming over, she invited us all over. I came home and speed-cleaned the house and got done just in time. House cleaned and guests fed. Just

shows what God can do when you ask. This may not seem like much, but when God steps in and helps out with the little or the big things, it means the world to me.

### **Frank (Still has job after plant closes)**

Frank announced that the whole manufacturing plant he worked for was shutting down. He thought he was going to lose his job. But a year after the plant shut down, he's the only one who still has his job because they needed someone to oversee the empty property and buildings. We've all been amazed at how God has taken special care of Frank and his family.

### **Rob (Demotion/promotion blessing)**

Rob announced that his company demoted him when the recent national economic strains forced them to reduce the number of their employees. But the good part is that he is still in the same company; he makes more money now, and is doing something he likes better. Go figure! So was it a demotion or a promotion? Or was it simply the blessing of the Lord? I guess a blessing by any other name is still a blessing! I just love how God makes all things work together for good.

### **Gary (Debt forgiven as forgiveness offered)**

As of January 2009, I had accumulated \$52,000 debt at my local bank. This was because of loans made to friends and family and a small debt from my business start-up costs.

As I was holding this \$52,000 debt before the Lord, I decided that if *He* would forgive me what I owed the bank, that I would forgive those who owed me for the personal loans I had made, which was a part of this amount.

So, I first forgave everyone of their debt to me.

As of February 2010, just one year later, I have \$0.00 debt on this bank loan.

Deuteronomy 15:1-3 and Matthew 6:12 inspired me in the process toward seeing God's provision.

### **Tom and Fanny (Strange late-night visit)**

They were going on a long trip to attend a wedding and needed \$300 for trip expenses. Fanny worked extra hours as a waitress to make the needed money. But sadly, the last couple of days before the trip, she got cheated out of tables and had tips stolen from her. The night before they were to leave, she was feeling very depressed and even a little miffed that they only had \$200 available for the trip. That same evening, at 11 o'clock at night, a man whom they barely knew and who knew nothing of their financial trial was jogging by and knocked on their door to say that the Lord just told him to go home and get \$100 to give to them. He went home and immediately returned with just the right amount necessary to make the trip.

There is a saying, "Man's extremities are God's opportunities." I wonder how many times God waits until there is only one way that our expenses can be met—supernaturally. Then He gets to do what He likes to do—provide.

### **Tim and Jenny (God paid our taxes)**

We were in a huge financial crisis and behind in our house taxes by a substantial amount. When I mailed in a payment, I got my check back from the treasurer with a note stating, "Your taxes are current. There is no payment needed."

We don't know how the bill got paid. Someone paid it—or God did. I saved the check and the note. I guess it's not for us to know how this miracle happened, rather just to enjoy God's favor to us. It makes us love Him so much more.

### **David (His provision—a wonderful mystery)**

I'm a 37-year-old man, never married, and for most of my adult life have not *worked for a living*—very similar to Mark's story. I've had short seasons of working a job and getting a paycheck, but for the most part, over the last ten plus years, God has provided for all my financial needs. Whether I work or not, it seems like I have the same amount of provision. I don't solicit funds, and although it sounds funny, I usually have no idea where the provision is coming from. There's just always more than enough. It's a wonderful mystery. I'm learning to be content with what He provides (see Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:6). In all my years of trusting God for provision, I've never missed a meal or felt *short changed* (see Ps. 37:25). He's been extremely generous to me.

A notable instance of God's provision happened this past December. I wanted to buy gifts for each of my family and drive back home for Christmas. For this to happen, I needed about \$300 extra. Two weeks before Christmas, I received an unexpected check in the mail for \$300—just what I needed!

I really love this journey which began with a divine invitation and has now become my normal mode of walking with my Lord. My friends say I have *magic money*, but it's not magic: It's God's divine provision. Countless times God has provided me with fine meals, nice cars, stylish clothes, road-trips, plane trips, nice bicycles, computers, the list goes on. But don't misunderstand me, I really do love to work and be productive. I just hope to never *work for a living* again because I'm confident that "God will supply all of my needs" (see Phil. 4:19). So whether I stay at home and spend time with the Lord, volunteer my time and service, or get paid when I help, I know that at the end of the day, it's the Lord who supplies. He's the best Provider.

## **Noel and Mieke (Finance angels in pursuit)**

Patrick Eggleston, a dear praying saint who has gone on to be with the Lord, once had a dream where two finance angels were chasing Noel with money bags in hand and trying to catch up with him. Upon hearing the dream, Noel began to invite the angelic activity in his life. In that next

couple of years, incredible finances broke out from very unexpected sources. There was so much financial favor beyond anything that he merited, that even his house mortgage of \$145,000 was paid off (...*these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you*—Deut. 28:2).

### **Life Church (Over-the-top blessings)**

On May 3, 2009, in unison we prayed the Corporate Prayer of Faith (found in the appendix) over our offerings. These fresh testimonies were shared just one week later.

- Received unexpected and belated \$81 dividend from an account closed 40 years ago
- Unexpectedly received the delinquent payment of a one-year unpaid invoice
- Notified to receive over \$2,500 more than expected on income tax return
- Expected \$600 car repair bill—only \$300, and unexpectedly received new tire for car
- Housing provided
- Received unexpected \$600 refund from overpayment of legal fees
- Healing of migraine headaches saves \$35 per month in medication bills

# Appendix

## Corporate Prayer of Faith #1

*As we receive today's offering, we are believing the Lord for:*

*Jobs and Better jobs*

*Raises and Bonuses*

*Benefits, Sales, and Commissions*

*Favorable settlements*

*Estates and Inheritances*

*Interests and Income*

*Rebates and Returns*

*Checks in the mail*

*Gifts and Surprises*

*Finding money*

*Debts paid off*

*Expenses decreased*

*Blessing and Increase*

*Thank You, Lord, for meeting all of my financial needs that I may have more than enough to give into the Kingdom of God and promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah!*

## Corporate Prayer of Faith #2

*As we receive today's offering we are believing You for:*

*Heaven opened, Earth invaded*

*Storehouses unlocked*

*and Miracles created*

*Dreams and Visions  
Angelic visitations  
Declarations, Visitations,  
and Divine manifestations  
Anointings, Giftings, and Calls  
Positions and Promotions  
Provisions and Resources  
to go to the nations  
Souls and more souls  
from every generation  
Saved and set free  
carrying Kingdom revelation!*

*Thank You, Father, that as I join my value system to Yours, You will shower favor, blessing, and increase upon me so I have more than enough to co-labor with Heaven and see Jesus get His full reward.  
Hallelujah<sup>1</sup>!*

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**Endnote:**

1. <http://www.ibethel.org/offering-readings>; accessed October 11, 2011.

# ***About Mark Hendrickson***

If you have benefited from *Supernatural Provision: Where God Guides, He Provides*, please consider recommending it to your network of friends and acquaintances.

You may also be interested in visiting a webstore found at Dwelling Place Ministry's website where other products are available.

Mark and Debbie speak on several relevant topics and lead worship where encounters with tears or prophetic song are common.

To inquire about having The Hendricksons come share with your group, please contact them at:

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