

In the past 12 years you may have heard one or two sermons on giving because we were covering a passage that dealt with it. Many churches will do a yearly series on tithing. I'm not saying that is wrong, I just don't think it is necessary. I have a conviction that I believe is based on Scripture (2Chronicles 31:21). If your elders guide the church at the leading of the Spirit and are faithful to minister God's word to the flock, then the Lord will prompt people to give to meet the needs. That takes the burden off the congregation and puts the pressure on your leadership to discern God's leading and proclaim the pure Word of God.

Why do I think that is true? Well, I've seen it over the past 16 years of ministry and in my own life, but more importantly I see it in Scripture. Did Moses lack anything when God told him to build an elaborate tabernacle? In fact, he had to tell the people to stop giving (Exodus 36:5-6; 2Chronicles 31:10). And where did all the provision come from? When they left Egypt, God had them collect some back pay. They "borrowed" from their neighbors all the goods they left with (Exodus 12:36).

When Solomon built the Temple, did he lack anything for the most amazing and expensive building in the world (2Chronicles 3:4-10)? David had amassed an abundance of material from his conquests (2Chronicles 5:1). The best timber in the world was provided by a

neighboring king. Enormous marble pillars were imported.

But that is all in the Old Testament. What about under the new covenant? Has God changed? At Pentecost the Lord had people sell their possessions to meet all the needs while the Apostles were teaching the thousands of new converts. All the needs were met (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34). Later when there was a famine in Jerusalem, the believers in other cities gave to meet the need (1Corinthians 16:2).

The Apostle Paul said there were times when he suffered a lack of things, but that God met all his needs in Jesus. In other words **the grace of God brought him safely through those times of need** (Philippian 4:12-13). He was arrested numerous times, but God saw him through, broke him out of jail once (Acts 16:25-26), and provided a house for in home incarceration. Even the opportunity to write his letters that became part of the Bible were a part of the provision of time courtesy of the incarceration. Provision of our needs sometimes comes in disguise.

I love to read about the missionaries and men of faith that trusted God for everything. Some of them have numerous stories of not seeing any natural means of support, and yet God faithfully provided for what He called them to do. I had a British mentor in Japan, Dennis

**Commented [notes1]: 2 Chronicles 31:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered.

**Commented [notes7]: Acts 2:44-45 (ESV)**

<sup>44</sup> And all who believed were together and had all things in common.  
<sup>45</sup> And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

**Commented [notes8]: Acts 4:34 (ESV)**

<sup>34</sup> There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold

**Commented [notes9]: 1 Corinthians 16:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

**Commented [notes10]: Philippians 4:12-13 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.  
<sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

**Commented [notes11]: Acts 16:25-26 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,  
<sup>26</sup> and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

**Commented [notes2]: Exodus 36:5-6 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> and said to Moses, "The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do."  
<sup>6</sup> So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, "Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary." So the people were restrained from bringing,

**Commented [notes3]: 2 Chronicles 31:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> Azariah the chief priest, who was of the house of Zadok, answered him, "Since they began to bring the contributions into the house of the LORD, we have eaten and had enough and have plenty left, for the LORD has blessed his people, so that we have this large amount left."

**Commented [notes4]: Exodus 12:35 (ESV)**

<sup>35</sup> The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing.

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**Commented [notes6]: 2 Chronicles 5:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Thus all the work that Solomon did for the house of the LORD was finished. And Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, and stored the silver, the gold, and all the vessels in the treasuries of the house of God.

Turner, who was such a man. He prayed for his provision to do what God had called him to do. There was no prayer letter or pleading with churches for support. **He looked to the Lord to meet his meager needs and God never failed him.**

You've probably heard stories of people of faith praying for a need and just when it was due it came in the mail from an unexpected source and was the exact amount they needed. We help support India Evangelical Mission, a Bible College and children's home in India. When Dr. Mathai bought the land it was a total step of faith. He offered to buy the property without any money in the bank. Right up until the time of the sale he had raised very little of the total. Then at the day of the sale God provided the whole amount. We've had the privilege of helping with some of the expansion of that Bible College.

In the past we have had years of tight budgets here. God has tested my conviction that He alone is the One that provides. When some who were wealthier left the church we wondered what would happen. Would we be able to meet our promise to missionaries? Where was our faith? Though we were faithless God was faithful (2Timothy 2:13). Sometimes when we have a shortfall I encourage those doing the budget to look over past years. Some years there is a surplus and some years there is a shortfall but it all balances out.

Allow me to remind you of one of those miraculous provisions in our past. Years

ago, God laid on my heart that we had too much money sitting in the bank and needed to give away \$100,000 to mission needs. Some on the board felt they needed to remind me that once the money was gone there was no more. My response was that it all comes from God. He gave us what we have and He can touch hearts to give us more when we need it. People caught the vision and agreed to give the money. It helped begin the new Hope Cottage that houses homeless women and children (James 1:27), furnish the India Mission expansion, and met a number of missionary needs.

The very next week a lady came to my office. Mariko and I shared our vision with her. She began to cry and said she had an offering for the church. Later I found out she had already given it to another church, but realized she hadn't waited upon God as to where to give it. She went and asked for the check back. Can you imagine the conviction it took to do that? And how much do you think the check was for? \$100,000! Now you may think it was just a coincidence. It's by far the only gift that large we've received since I've been here and it happened right after we decided to obey God and give that very amount. What are the odds? **We call that a godincidence not a coincidence.**

Did we learn the lesson? What was the lesson? I don't think it was to just give to for the sake of giving, but to give when and where God leads and know He will provide. He has no problem providing (James 1:17). He won't provide for our wants but He will provide our needs when

**Commented [notes13]: James 1:27 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

**Commented [notes12]: 2 Timothy 2:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> if we are faithless, he remains faithful. For he cannot deny himself.

**Commented [notes14]: James 1:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

we are doing His will. What kind of a leader wouldn't give his workers what they needed to do the job they are asked to do? **If we are convinced something is God's will, we should never worry about the cost.** Where God guides, He provides.

The way you know if you really learned a lesson is how you deal with it when the test comes round again. Some that supported the church have moved or left in this last year or two. We kept up our mission giving pledge but that meant we were ending the year with quite a deficit. We cut what we thought we could without hurting the ministry. Still we gave 20% to missions and projected a deficit for next year. When we brought it to you, you expressed faith. You believed that we were doing God's will and that He would provide. I was thrilled with the way the meeting went, because more than ever, I saw the congregation ready to go forward in faith believing we are doing what God has called us to do (Psalm 125:1).

God has already provided for times such as this. If we were to see a shortfall these two years, we can still say He has provided because we have the funds in savings. But I believe God really wants to drive home this point that **we can operated by faith in His leading.** That is why the very next day I opened up a Christmas card an inside was a check for \$10,000. That covered a large part of this year's deficit. I thought to myself that surely the rest will come in. We will see God is faithful to provide (Psalm 23:1). This check did not come from a member of the church, nor did they ever know of our deficit. They were praying about their

year-end giving and in their words, "God directed me to send this to you." They had been receiving the series in Romans, and it spoke to their heart. God prompted them to give. We minister the word and a God provides our needs.

Well, that is something we might reason in our minds was a wonderful coincidence. One day we passed the budget and the next there was this check. What I didn't tell you was the Christmas card was sitting in my office for over a week before I opened it. God gave us a chance to step out in faith and then see the results were from Him. But it doesn't stop there. Just in case there are those of us with little faith, God did something even more amazing (Luke 17:5).

While I was gone on a break, a call came in about a trust fund that was moved. We receive a check each year from a trust fund and I thought they had just switched companies that handled that money so I was in no hurry to call them back. It was now two days after the budget meeting. I was still marveling how God provided. I had caught up with things I needed to do and had time to return this call.

Did any of you know Albert Young? He was a member of the church decades ago and left part of his estate to the church. His last remaining relative was handling another trust that he set up to care for the graves of his parents. The relative couldn't find reliable people to maintain the grave sites and moved them to a cemetery that cared for the site regularly. She thought the balance of the trust

**Commented [notes17]: Luke 17:5 (ESV)**  
<sup>5</sup>The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

**Commented [notes15]: Psalm 125:1 (ESV)**  
<sup>1</sup>Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.

**Commented [notes16]: Psalm 23:1 (ESV)**  
<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

would go to a seminary her husband helped establish, but then she thought she'd see where Albert had left money when he died. She found his will and discovered that he left part of his estate to Wayside and a couple of other charities in Sedona. She decided that would be the best way to honor his wishes so a third of the remaining trust account will be sent to us after it clears the courts. Together those funds more than cover our deficit for both years.

When I hung up the phone from that conversation I was just overwhelmed at the faithfulness of God. More than the provision itself, I was hoping we got the message. It isn't about money! It is that God is at work through Wayside. As long as we seek His will and do things His way, we can trust that He will provide, finances, elders, trustees, deaconesses, those who visit the sick, or whatever the need is. Sometimes we need a shortfall for a time so that we pray and see God is our Provider. I asked you to pray for new members to make up for those who have left, and God is bringing them in.

Now there are those outside the church who advised me to do a fund raising campaign through the end of the year to cover the deficit. I'd rather trust God. And there is the temptation to not tell you about this amazing answer to prayer because you might back off on your giving. During my pastoral training I was told to always let the congregation know about the needs but not necessarily about any surplus as it might discourage giving. That advice seems to place faith in people rather than in God. I'm more

concerned that you **see how faithful God is and trust Him in your own life.** I believe we will give at His leading like these people gave. May the Lord help our faith as a church and as individuals increase so that when God leads us to give we don't hesitate or question God. Amen?

In my lack of faith I wrote the missionaries we support and told them the budget for the coming year. I asked them to pray because if our giving continues to decline we may have to make more cuts. Now I have to write them back and apologize for that lack of faith, thank them for their prayers, and hopefully encourage them with the news of the amazing provision of God.

A part of the church at large is teaching a dangerous doctrine that is called the prosperity gospel. It is based on Scripture but distorts the intent of Scripture. In a nutshell, it says to give to get. If you want more money, give away more money. Jesus did say <sup>38</sup> *give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.*" Luke 6:38 (ESV) The only problem with using that verse for gaining wealth is that it was in the context of giving forgiveness and grace to others (Luke 6:37). Giving to get material prosperity is contrary to the life of Jesus and His disciples (Matthew 8:20). Giving in obedience to God to gain joy is a whole different matter (Ecclesiastes 2:26). Jesus went to the cross for the joy that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). We serve

**Commented [notes18]: Luke 6:37 (ESV)**

<sup>37</sup> "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;

**Commented [notes19]: Matthew 8:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

**Commented [notes20]: Ecclesiastes 2:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

**Commented [notes21]: Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

God and reap the joy of fellowship with Him and with one another.

We do know that one of God's names is Jehovah Jireh (Genesis 22:14). He is the God that provides. He provided for our salvation. He provides our daily bread. He provides our needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19). And if God has provided an abundance for us, it is so that we can give at His direction (1 Timothy 6:17-19). After all, it came from Him. We can reap the joy of giving.

**Faith in God is trusting that everything is in His hands**, the spiritual and physical worlds. If He is leading then we can trust He will provide. If there is hardship, we can count on Him to see us through it. This faith sees God as our heavenly Father, and just as a child counts on his or her father to take care of them, so we look to God and trust Him in everything. To fear is to lack faith in God as if He didn't care or was incapable. Faith casts out fear. Faith acknowledges God for who He is and trusts in His faithfulness.

As we go forward into 2014, let us operate in faith. At our annual meeting the elders would like to amend some of the 2014 budget in response to God's goodness and faithfulness to provide. We want to give back to God more of what He has given to us. I understand and appreciate the desire to be conservative in our expenses so that the work continues, but we must also operate in faith at God's leading. We must learn that if we are doing His will, He will certainly provide. I encourage you to speak up if

you feel we are not being faithful with our finances. If you don't understand why we spend in a certain area please do ask. Pray that your elders carefully discern God's leading and have the faith to obey.

What I'd like you to take away from this message is **a childlike faith in an amazing God**. This is not so much about finances as it is about the faithfulness of God. It is an encouragement for you to step out in faith in your own life. God wants each of us to enter into the peace of trusting in Him and His faithfulness. We should marvel at His affirming provision for this church and for each of our families. We should be filled with gratitude. We should increase in faith when we see what He has done. Let us go forward into 2014 determined to be people of faith that act at God's leading for His pleasure. Let us have the confident assurance of the joyful reward that is ours in Jesus.

Can we really believe that passage we studied in Romans 8:32? *<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* We are His witnesses that it is true!

#### Questions

- 1 What are some Scriptural examples of God's provision?
- 2 Does God promise prosperity?
- 3 Do you know stories of God providing the exact amount at the last second?
- 4 What is the lesson God is teaching us?
- 5 How do we know we learned the lesson?
- 6 Review the stories of God's provision?
- 7 What should we learn from them?
- 8 Why does Luke 6:38 not apply to the prosperity gospel?

#### Commented [notes22]: Genesis 22:14 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide." For as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

#### Commented [notes23]: Philippians 4:19 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup> And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

#### Commented [notes24]: 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.  
<sup>18</sup> They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,  
<sup>19</sup> thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

- 9 How do we have faith in God?
- 10 Why is fear and faith incompatible?
- 11 Do you have childlike faith?