

## ASSURANCE of GOD'S PROVISION

Jesus observed a poor widow as she threw *"two mites"* into the offering box. In contrast to the rich and religious people around her, no one could even hear a soft "plink" as the tiny coins fell to the bottom. She didn't have much to give, but Jesus complimented her because she ***"cast in all that she had, even all her living."*** Mark 12:44

I bought a couple of those itsy-bitsy coins when I was in Israel several years ago. Don't ask me where they are today . . . they were so small they were quickly lost. Those "widow mites" were so thin you could hardly feel them between your fingers, and I can assure you they wouldn't make a very impressive clanking noise when they were thrown into the offering box.

Jesus said: ***"This poor widow has cast more in than all they who have cast into the treasury; For all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."*** Mark 12:43

Wow! She cast in her last two tiny pennies. **WHY** would she do that? **HOW** could she do that? Had she no concern about saving a little for a piece of bread tomorrow?

The poor widow must have been totally **COMMITTED** to the God she knew, loved and served.

The poor widow must also have been **CONTENT** with what she had . . . and didn't have.

The poor widow was obviously **CONVINCED** that the Lord would somehow meet her needs for the next day!

What a great example she was to all of us today . . . **COMMITTED** . . . **CONTENT** . . . and **CONVINCED** of God's future provision.

## WILL GOD TAKE CARE OF YOU AND ME?

People (like you and me) often worry about how we'll survive the next day. David, the Shepherd King of Israel, once remarked: ***"I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful and lends; and His seed is blessed."*** Psalm 37:25-26

There are two possible interpretations to verse 26 above: *"He is ever merciful, and lends"* could be referring to the righteous man who walks with God and is genuinely concerned about the needs of others. He is merciful and even lends to those in need.

Or that verse could be referring to the Lord Himself . . . we know that He is merciful and lends to His people. The fact is, EVERYTHING belongs to God . . . and what we enjoy has been "lent" to us for our good and His glory! ***"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it."*** Psalm 24:1

If you are a born-again child of God, you can be assured that the Lord will take care of you. His very Name declares that truth. He is Jehovah Jireh . . . "the Lord Who PROVIDES!" The Names of the Lord are a **DESCRIPTION of His character** . . . but they are also a **DECLARATION of His commitment** to those who know Him and trust in Him! **The Lord DOES what His Name DECLARES!**

## TAKE THE QUIZ!

#1 Jesus COMPLIMENTED the poor widow who gave at the Temple Treasury.

#2 The poor widow must have been CONVINCED that God would provide for her and meet her needs.

#3 Jehovah Jireh is one of the Names of the Lord and means THE LORD PROVIDES.

#4 The Names of the Lord \_\_\_\_\_.

**ANSWERS: DESCRIBE HIS CHARACTER and DECLARE HIS COMMITMENT TO HIS PEOPLE.**

## JESUS TOLD US NOT TO WORRY!

Jesus was speaking to a multitude of people on a mountain side when He said:

***“Be not anxious for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than raiment? Behold, the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?” Matthew 6:25-26***

The Lord feeds the birds . . . and the cattle of the field . . . and He certainly is aware of our needs as well. Jesus went on to say:

***“And why are you anxious for raiment (clothing)? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, And yet I say unto you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith.” Matthew 6:28-30***

## CONDITIONAL BLESSINGS?

Are there conditions that have to be met for us to expect the Lord to take care of us?

As a matter of fact there are:

***“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33***

God didn't promise to feed and clothe just anyone or everyone . . . and in particular, He didn't promise His provision for those that despise His Name or just ignore Him . . . the promise He made was to care for those who look to Him in faith, and who seek His righteousness and fellowship.

This promise of God to care for His children that love Him and seek to walk in His way and serve Him is found repeated in Philippians chapter 4. The Apostle Paul was confident that God would meet the needs of His brothers who lived in the ancient city of Philippi. He assured them: ***“But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19***

Does this verse imply that we can quit our jobs and just lay back and let the Lord feed and clothe us despite how we live or despite our neglected relationship with Him? Not at all! Paul's confidence in God's provision was based upon his observation that the believers in Philippi were very generous in meeting the needs of others . . . in this case, they had sent funds to help the Apostle time and time again.

***“ . . . you have done well in that you did share with my affliction . . . Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me as concerning giving and receiving, but you only. For even in Thessalonica, you sent once and again unto my necessity.” Philippians 4:15-16***

The Philippian believers were generous and were concerned about the welfare of Paul as he traveled from place to place proclaiming the message of God's love and grace. On the basis of their **COMMITMENT** to the Lord and their **CONCERN** for the needs of others, Paul could say with great **CONFIDENCE** . . . ***“my God shall supply all your need.”***

## BACK TO THE QUIZ!

Commented [CA2R1]:

#5 Jesus told us not to worry about \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

Commented [CA1]:

**ANSWERS: WHAT WE ARE GOING TO EAT, and WHAT WE ARE GOING TO WEAR.**

#6 Jesus told us not to worry because He \_\_\_\_\_ (2)

**ANSWERS: GOD TAKES CARE OF THE BIRDS OF THE AIR, and WE ARE OF GREATER VALUE THAN THE BIRDS!**

#7 Why could Paul assure the believers in Philippi that ***“God will meet all your needs according to His riches in glory?”*** (2)

**ANSWERS: THE BELIEVERS WERE CONCERNED FOR OTHERS AND GAVE GENEROUSLY, and THE BELIEVERS WERE COMMITTED TO SERVE THE LORD AND HELP OTHERS.**

#8 The Philippian believers were **COMMITTED** to the Lord and **CONCERNED** about the Apostle Paul so they gave generously.

## WHY BOTHER TO WORK?

Paul instructed the believers in Ephesus to **WORK** so they could **GIVE** to others!

***“ . . . let a man labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that is in need.” Ephesians 4:28***

The same truth was presented in the Old Testament where we read:

***“He that has pity upon the poor lends unto the LORD, and that which he has given will He pay him again.” Proverbs 19:17***

God's promise to meet the needs of His people IS conditional! When we show mercy and help others in need, and depend upon God to meet our needs, He responds!

These truths of God's provision are often misused as “tele-hustlers” try to con people out of their money by promising great material wealth to those who will send “seed money” into their “ministries.” Be wise and discerning . . . if you want to help someone . . . help someone in dire straights . . . a brother or sister in need. But give out of a loving and generous heart . . . **don't give to receive** . . . this is a form of legalism and is the wrong motive. The Bible tells us:

***“Every man as he purposes in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:7-8***

**God loves a cheerful and generous giver. And He loves to give to cheerful and generous givers!**

In the 1800's there was a missionary by the name of George Mueller who lived in Bristol, England. At that time, there were hundreds of orphan children living in the streets. The government saw the children as a nuisance and ignored their plight, but God was concerned about them and burdened the Muellers to begin taking care of them and educating them.

Their work grew in a remarkable way, and the Lord provided the funds for building a home for 300 children. Soon, however, even that was not enough, and more buildings followed in Bristol so that by 1870, 1,700 children were housed in five orphanages with a total of 500 rooms.

There are many stories of how, when he and his staff were at the point of running out of either food or money, last-minute unsolicited donations or gifts arrived. On one occasion Mueller found himself with 300 orphans assembled for breakfast and no food to give them.

What would you do in such a situation?

Mueller sat them down at the tables and confidently gave the Lord thanks for the food they were about to eat. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. It was a local baker who had been awakened at 2 a.m. with a feeling that he needed to bake more bread than usual and take it to the orphanage. Shortly afterwards a milkman also arrived to say that his wagon had broken down outside the orphanage and he wanted to offer his milk to the children.

Mueller was never presumptuous . . . but he learned to live by faith in God's faithful provision . . . and the Lord responded! He delights to meet our needs as we serve those around us!

## **FINAL QUIZ QUESTIONS!**

**#9 According to Ephesians 4:28, what should our motivation be in working?**

**ANSWER: WORK SO YOU CAN GIVE TO HELP OTHERS.**

**#10 Proverbs 19:17 says that when we give to the poor, it is like LENDING to the Lord and He will REPAY!**

**#11 God loves a CHEERFUL GIVER, and He loves to GIVE to them! 2 Corinthians 9:7-8**

**#12 George Mueller was an example of a believer who SERVED God and DEPENDED upon God for every need.**

One of the fascinating things about Christianity is how very different the great men and women of God are. George Müller (1805–1898) was not just different, he was unique.

Müller was born in the then Kingdom of Prussia (now Germany). He grew up into a young man who was frequently involved in petty crime, often to do with what we would call ‘scams’ and even a time in jail did nothing to reform him. However, in 1825 Müller attended a prayer meeting in someone’s home where he encountered Christ. With his life dramatically transformed, Müller felt called to mission work and ended up in London working amongst Jews. An illness led to him going to Devon to recover his health and that began life and ministry in the West Country. It became evident that he was gifted as a preacher and an evangelist, and he became the minister of a chapel. Soon he and his wife moved to Bristol. There he became involved in creating Christian schools and supporting missionaries. Müller established 117 schools which offered Christian education to tens of thousands of children, and he continued to support a great number of missionaries throughout his life.

Müller is, however, remembered above all for his extraordinary achievements with orphans. In the Britain of the early 19th century the combination of large families, extreme poverty and a high level of adult mortality had resulted in many orphans, most of whom ended up on the street. The state ignored them and in 1836 Müller and his wife began taking in orphans. Their work grew in an astonishing way, and they built a home for 300 children. Soon, however, even that was not enough, and more buildings followed in Bristol so that by 1870, 1,700 children were housed in five purpose-built homes with a total of 500 rooms. By the end of Müller’s life, his homes had housed 10,000 orphaned children. Müller’s commitment was not simply to house children but to clothe, feed and educate them and ultimately, where possible, to find them jobs.

This achievement alone would justify Müller’s hero status, but what is astonishing is that in doing what he did he never made requests for financial support. He simply prayed that God would supply all his needs and left it to him to supply them. Extraordinarily, God did just that regularly and for decades. Müller was a meticulous administrator and his detailed accounts reveal that in his lifetime he received £1.5 million pounds in money and gifts; a figure that today would be over £100 million. Always astonishingly generous, he refused donations for his own well-being and died in near poverty.

These figures disguise an astonishing reality. There are many well-attested accounts of how, when he and his staff seemed to be on the point of running out of either food or money, last-minute unsolicited donations or gifts arrived. On one occasion Müller found himself with 300 orphans assembled for breakfast and no food at all. He simply sat them down at the table and confidently said grace. At this point, a knock at the door occurred. It was a local baker who had woken up at 2 o’clock in the morning with a feeling that he needed to bake more bread than usual and take it to the orphanage. Shortly afterwards a milkman arrived to say that his wagon had broken down outside the orphanage and he wanted to offer his milk to the children. Over the decades, Müller’s ever-expanding work often ran on a hand-to-mouth basis, but it never ran into debt.

With time Müller prayed for someone to succeed him as a manager and, having found him, handed over the reins in 1875. He then began 17 years of missionary work across the world in which he travelled over 200,000 miles teaching and preaching. Müller’s funeral in 1898 brought Bristol to a standstill with tens of thousands of people standing along the route. In a different form, his work continues today with the George Müller Charitable Trust.

Müller is a challenging figure in a number of areas but the most spectacular one is how he found funding for his work without openly asking for it. It’s a strategy that many Christians have grappled with. Two things must be said.

First, Müller was a unique individual and this was a personal decision: he never set this out as a model for other Christian workers. He felt that this was what God wanted for him and that it would demonstrate that a miracle-working God still existed. It may also have involved an utter rejection of his pre-conversion tendency to raise money through fraud. We are all led by God in different ways; St Paul, for instance, is open in asking for money to support Christians in Jerusalem (see 1 Corinthians 16:1–4; 2 Corinthians 8:1–9:15; Romans 15:25–31). Personally, I am in awe of Müller’s decision (and must admit my faith is hugely challenged), but like St Paul I have mentioned the financial needs of my own ministry.

I am reminded of my favorite George Müller quote: ‘Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man’s power ends.’ Indeed that was true then and continues to be true today.

Yet there are other areas of Müller’s life that are challenging. His prayer life was astonishing, and he had an extraordinarily deep relationship with God. Fundamental to this was how, despite running an enormous and complex charitable enterprise, he made sure that time with God came first.

It’s hard to not be impressed by the way that Müller’s faith gave him breathtaking audacity in what he planned and achieved. Most of us would have been daunted by a goal of housing a hundred orphans, let alone a hundred times that.

Finally, Müller was committed to both preaching the gospel and doing good deeds. He clearly felt no tension between sharing the good news of Jesus and working to care for orphans.

George Müller’s unique life demonstrated to his contemporaries that God could be trusted. It says the same to us today.

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