

What Do We Do When There's No Paycheck Coming?

What do we do when our place of provision dries up?

There are many now who have been released from their jobs and their regular paycheck. Even with the hope of the stimulus package, there are many who are counting their bills and mouths to feed against what they have available and recognize it's not going to be enough.

What do we do when there is no paycheck coming?

Years ago, my husband and I moved back to America after living and working/doing ministry in China for several years. We really had nothing to our names. We had to get a place to live, furniture, a car ... We were like kids just moving out of their parents' home starting life, only we were in our 30s with a small family. It was a rough season. We were essentially living on a China budget in America. Translated: We didn't have enough. Not nearly enough for even our modest living situation.

It was hard not to be afraid and angry. I remember having plenty of arguments with God during that challenging season as I reminded Him through tears of our faithful service for Him over the years. While most of our friends were buying nice homes and cars and building up their nest eggs, we had been serving overseas. And *this* was how God took care of us?

I remember one day sharing with a good friend how I had been praying, but God hadn't answered our prayers for more provision.

"You're not praying," she responded gently. "You're complaining. Why don't you dig in the Word and find every promise you can about His provision and begin to pray them out

rather than continuing to whine about your situation?" Now that is a word that only a close friend can deliver. It stung, but I recognized she was right.

She gave me the kick in the pants I needed. I did exactly what she instructed and began to dig into the Word. I wrote out every Scripture I could find about God's provision. And you know what? I found they were everywhere.

My times of prayer then changed from complaining to scriptural declarations:

1. Thank You, Lord, that in times of famine, we will have abundance (Ps 37:19).
2. I trust You that just as You took care of the children of Israel when they were in Egypt and when you freed them, they left with the silver, gold and wealth of the nation. Thank You that You are setting us free from the captivity of fear, and You can release us into a time of abundance, not lack (Ex. 12:35-36).
3. Thank You, God, that your Word says that You supply all of our needs according to Your riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).
4. I know that *all* things work together for our good because You have my best interest in mind (Rom. 8:28).
5. I have been young and now I am old(er), but I have never seen Your children begging for bread (Ps. 37:25).

It's impossible to fill our heads and hearts with the words of promise from the Bible and not be affected and changed. As I quit complaining and began declaring, fear and anger were replaced with peace and expectancy.

Did the situation change overnight? No. In fact, we walked through another two years in which we had a \$2,000 gap in our budget every month. During that time, we did everything we knew to do. My husband worked long hours at a physically demanding, low-paying job *not* in his field of education,

because it was what was available. With two young children, 5 and under, along with a newborn, I looked for and took any kind of work I could do from home. I pinched pennies harder than Scrooge and learned some amazing ways to stretch a dollar, shopped double-discount days, and we kept things very simple. Of course, we continued to pray and declare His Word. We were changing even if I didn't see immediate change to what was coming in.

I used to joke that during that time, I couldn't even buy a McDonald's hamburger and split it three ways for my kids. That was completely true. But a greater truth was that He *did* supply somehow, every single month. .

During that season, we never missed a house payment or car payment. We never missed a meal. I still look back and shake my head because I can tell you the numbers didn't add up. We shouldn't have made it. But we did. There was no excess, but there was enough.

We personally met Jehovah Jireh, our Provider.

(It is interesting to note that my home-based business launched during that hard season, which has been a place of ongoing provision for 20 years now. God used that time to propel us to a new place.)

I share this because I want you to know that He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. If He did it for me back then, He can do it for you today. He doesn't change.

What did the widow woman do when she looked into the pot of flour and jug of oil and there was only enough to make one last small meal for her and her son? She had no husband to provide for her. No family. The situation looked completely hopeless. And then a prophet of God came and asked her for the very last she had.

Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said,

but make a little cake for me first, and bring it to me, and afterward, make some for your son and you, for thus says the Lord God of Israel: The barrel of meal will not run out, nor will the jar of oil empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth."

She went and did what Elijah told her to do, and she, he, and her household ate many days. The barrel of meal did not run out, nor did the jar of oil empty, according to the word of the Lord, which He spoke by Elijah (1 Kings 17:13-16).

The provision she received wasn't cash in her mailbox, which is what we want, right? Instead, it came as an opportunity, as the prophet Elijah asked her for the very last flour and oil she had in her reserves.

Now, I'm not telling you to blindly give everything away. What I am saying is to look for God in the opportunities He will provide. Because He will. But He also will give us opportunities to give in order to see Him multiply. That's just the way He works!

The widow used the last of her flour and oil to make Elijah a small meal. She gave her last, but her best. And when she did, she released an unending supply of flour and oil that provided for her, her son and the prophet during the season of famine. Her willingness to walk by faith and give in the time of utter lack became the key to her provision.

This isn't the time to horde in fear. This is about trusting God to provide and watch for the opportunities to share and give to others. It's not a time to stop tithing, as our giving releases resources.

We have to remember that God doesn't think or work the way we do. We see that in the Scripture below:

"One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another

withholds unduly, but comes to poverty" (Prov. 11:24, NIV).

I want to encourage you today, that no matter what situation you face, God is bigger. I've been there, and I know. May I encourage you, as my close friend did me years ago? Don't spend your time angry or fearfully complaining to God. Instead, begin to speak out and declare His promises over your family, situation and over our nation. Could it be that just as He did for the widow woman, just as He did for my family and me years ago, He is able to do the same for you now?

He is, because that is how He works.

This time in history isn't as much about our paycheck not coming as the opportunity to go deeper in our walk with Him and learn what promises He has already made. Let us begin to listen to what He wants to say in this hour and begin to declare His promise of provision over our families and nation. May this be an opportunity that we get to know Him and trust Him more intimately as our provider.

He will provide what you need. {eo}

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