

God Hasn't Forgotten How to Provide

If God owns it all, why do so many Christians find themselves lacking? Here's how to experience the miracle of supernatural abundance from your heavenly Father—and what that really means.

I like to share the story about two girls who met at a camp on the East Coast. A bratty, rich girl introduced herself to the other: "Hey, there. I come here every summer because my daddy owns part of this property. Do you see that speedboat on the lake? My daddy owns that boat. Do you see that mansion on the side of the mountain? My daddy stays there when he comes to visit me."

Looking upward, she then exclaimed, "Oh! Do you see that airplane? That's my daddy up there," and waved enthusiastically, as if the passengers could see her.

"So, who's *your* daddy?" she asked in a condescending tone.

The other preteen was a good Christian girl but wasn't wealthy. In fact, her mother had sold some of her personal jewelry to cover the camp's registration fees. Feeling embarrassed and insignificant, the girl looked down at the dirt by their cabin.

Then she smiled and lifted her dejected head. With a twinkle in her eyes she said, "Do you see that large lake that your daddy's boat is in? My Father created that lake. And you know that mountain your daddy's cabin is on? My Father owns that mountain. As a matter of fact, do you see that big, blue sky your daddy's plane is in? My Father owns that sky."

Check Your Perspective

After reading that kind of story, you might be thinking, “So if God owns it all, why am I lacking?” The quick answer is that you possibly have a wrong perspective.

Perspective is everything, as shown by a recent experience my husband, Tommy, and I had. On a dark county road we noticed a red, out-of-control pick-up truck approximately 300 feet in front of us. Weaving back and forth, the driver jerked the truck from left to right and then sashayed into a circular pattern. We immediately called 911 to alert the authorities, only to discover later that the driver worked for the Texas Department of Public Safety and was testing a new type of road base. From our limited perspective he was a drunken fool. In reality, this good man was working late at night to keep our roads safe.

Perhaps you have a wrong perspective of God, believing He wants you to barely get along. But God is not like an earthly father who would say to his son, “Now, son, you know that I am a millionaire, but I don’t want you to become proud, so you can have only a dollar for lunch today.” No, no—a thousand times no. He is a loving Father who would say something more like, “After football practice, let’s go out for pizza; in fact, invite the whole team.”

I challenge you to renew your mind and think bigger. Spend time in Isaiah, where it says, “Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing” (40:15, NKJV).

One drop. Ponder that when your faucet drips tonight. Let one drop fall on a plate and stare at it. In God’s mind that drop represents 196 nations on the earth. You can tap into the unlimited resources of heaven by meditating on His greatness.

Know the Father’s Heart

It’s normal for parents and grandparents to lavish genuine

gifts on their children. My paternal grandfather rewarded each of his granddaughters with a dress when we broke our thumb-sucking habit. My two older sisters both selected a conservatively priced dress. Not me! I spied a cheerful polka-dotted dress with a full petticoat and a matching kelly-green coat. Yes, it was the most expensive dress in the department. But Granddaddy never flinched. As a 5-year-old, I wore his love proudly. While my sisters teased me, they could have done the same thing if they had wanted.

Let me be clear: I believe God wants believers to prosper us with as much as He can trust us with. God is a Father. The New Testament refers to Him as a Father no less than 245 times, including more than 100 times in the Gospel of John. The issue of a believer's prosperity is not his treasures but his pleasures. If you are ready to serve God wholeheartedly, whether abased or abounding, God can trust you and prosper you. Your Father loves you, but don't forget that you're on assignment.

Remember Your Source

So, let's talk about how to live in light of God's generosity and the truth of our need. My husband, Tommy, and I know all about this, as years ago we founded a youth camp, called Discovery Camp, that forced us to learn what we believe about faith and finances.

Early in the process, we made a covenant with each other to obey God wholeheartedly, to never merchandise the anointing, and to never, never, never develop sticky fingers. To assure that we could put the ministry on solid financial footing, Tommy refused to receive a salary for the first five years. I believe much of the supernatural provision in our lives is a direct result of that covenant. As we strive to do God's bidding, He has been faithful to exceed our greatest expectations.

When we started, a retired accountant asked us how we planned to pay for everything, such as \$6,000 in monthly land payments, food for thousands of campers and staff salaries. I remember thinking, "What a dumb question. Doesn't he know that God provides where He guides?"

To give you some quick background, for several years Tommy and I had led successful youth ministries, first separately and then as a couple. When we married, it represented the grand climax to our respective youth networks. Brimming with optimism as we set out on our camp venture, we mailed out newsletters to 2,000 friends and ministry contacts, inviting them to support us for \$5 per month.

Initially I questioned Tommy: "Only \$5? Why not suggest \$10? Or \$25?"

"No, Rachel," he responded. "Only \$5. They are all members of a good church, and our objective is be a friend to the local church."

Reality struck us between the eyes a month later when only 42 people responded to our newsletter. It didn't take long to do the math—\$5 times 42 people equaled \$210. Suddenly that \$6,000 land payment looked more like \$60,000.

"What are we going to do?" I asked.

Grinning, he replied, "We're gonna get busy reaching kids for Jesus like He sent us here to do, because God is faithful."

I'm not sure how we made those first few payments, but we remained faithful and steady. I watched, amazed, as we were never late on our mortgage or other bills. Plus, Jesus wouldn't allow us to call anyone for financial assistance. He continually reminded us, "Men are not your source."

Dare to Be Debt Free

In January 1992, faith rose up in our hearts to pay off the

mortgage on the camp property. Tommy led our staff in a strong confession of faith: "By Dec. 31, this ministry will be debt-free." We confessed this constantly, despite our bills dramatically increasing each month.

(By the way, miracles don't happen just because you repeat something over and over like a parrot. It's the Holy Spirit who deposits in your heart the faith to believe for something. He makes suggestions that you can accept or reject. If you choose to agree with God and mix your confession with faith, you'll receive the manifestation. I'm not referring to a selfish-oriented "blab it and grab it" claim but a genuine faith promise that advances the kingdom of God. When God is the initiator, He is inviting you to be a part of a miracle.)

Tommy felt financial burdens pressing on his shoulders that year. The cost of operating a 553-acre campus requiring ongoing maintenance of land and vehicles, staff housing, insurance and food costs seemed to regularly escalate. We rejoiced if the monthly electric bill stayed under \$20,000, while Tommy said things like, "Lord, if You help me pay this camp off, I'll give away free camps to hurting kids." Keep in mind, no megachurch or rich men's committee underwrote us, just faithful pastors, partners and friends who obeyed His voice. We had numerous "\$5 grandmas" who accepted the call to intercede. Great will be their reward in heaven.

You have to come to the place where you declare confidently, "Man is not my source, the mail is not my source and events are not my source. God is my source." We spent that entire year standing on His promise to be debt-free by the end of the year. On Dec. 24, I looked at the calendar and wondered why God seems to take such pleasure in last-minute miracles. Friends, don't let go of your promise in your 11th hour. God is faithful.

By Dec. 26, we miraculously had the funds in the bank. However, we still needed to complete some legal paperwork. Our

confession remained strong because we knew that “He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:23). Sometimes if the door doesn’t open, you have to kick it down. Such was the case for our debt-free miracle. Tommy drove 300 miles to collect the necessary paperwork and then drove another 200 miles to finalize everything. Although some banks weren’t open because of the Christmas holidays and some doors slammed in our face, we never wavered in our confession of faith. On Dec. 29, with a check in hand for \$139,, we raced to the title company. Against all odds and to the glory of God, we paid off all 553 acres of the camp on the last business day of the year.

Keep Your Vows

In gratitude for God’s goodness and remembering Tommy’s vow, the next year we committed to give free camps to 2,000 underprivileged kids. We covered their registration and food and underwrote the \$400 fee for a rental bus to bring them to camp. Some came from orphanages or lived on the streets with their homeless mothers. We saw no Scooby-Doo sleeping bags or designer jeans at those camps. One child’s lunch plate shook as he marveled, “I’ve never seen so much food on one plate!”

More than 20 years later, we have remained true to our vow. More than 25,000 children from impoverished backgrounds have enjoyed free camps, and most of them have decided to follow Christ. So have many of their chaperones. It seems that giving camps to these poor children opened heaven’s windows and released supernatural provisions. Solomon addressed this principle twice in Proverbs: “He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given” (19:17); and “He who gives to the poor will not lack” (28:27).

Make Room for the Supernatural

Tommy had just completed a sermon series titled “Seizing Your God-Given Opportunities” when a friend alerted us about a feed store in the process of being dismantled in Uvalde, Texas.

Even at a super-low price, buying iron from the dismantled building sounded like a hassle, yet Tommy felt an inner witness to pursue it.

After the iron was delivered to the camp, we learned it was worth double the price we had paid for it. It was a case of supernatural provision! We used those funds to build classrooms for our Texas Bible Institute.

The same thing happened with our camp road, which started out as 1,800 feet of dirt base. In Texas we enjoy what the locals call “gully washers,” which are relentless, torrential rainstorms. For nine years we lived regularly with mud, mud and more mud. Campers routinely tracked mud into the dorms and chapel. Our guests’ vehicles frequently got mired in the muck. We used to joke that in heaven, our shoes wouldn’t be muddy.

Though we stayed focused on our God-given mandate to serve local churches and reach young people for Christ, sometimes the mud tried our patience. Still, like Paul, we declared, “I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound” (Phil. 4:12).

Finally faith rose up in our hearts to spread an oil cap over the road. We sent out a letter to our precious pastors, partners and friends and issued a strong appeal in our monthly magazine.

We were surprised our partners didn’t embrace this need immediately. But after many months of standing in faith, a man called for Tommy while he was ministering in Odessa, Texas, at one of our partner churches. The man told Tommy that while he was praying that morning, the Lord told him that he was to cover the expenses of a camp project we were working on. Since we didn’t know this man personally, Tommy questioned him further.

“Praise the Lord, brother,” Tommy said. “You must have experienced our muddy road firsthand.”

"No, I haven't been there for years," the caller replied.

"Oh, I see. Well, you must have received our partner letter asking for help."

"No, Tommy, I was in prayer, and the Lord Jesus assigned me to cover the expenses of a camp project."

In one last attempt to figure it all out, Tommy said, "Perhaps you read about this need in our magazine?" (He wasn't a doubting Thomas, just curious.)

Somewhat aggravated, the man responded, "No, Tommy, I don't receive the magazine. I told you that I was in prayer this morning and the Lord told me to cover the expenses of a camp project. Now tell me what you need, and I'll put it in the mail."

Thank God Tommy had the sense to quit probing before the man got angry and changed his mind! Sometimes trying to figure out God's leading can mess up a miracle.

One week later, our financial secretary called Tommy and said, "Sir, I have good news. The funds have arrived!" Today campers, pastors, partners and friends drive through a handsome array of American flags and flowers as they enter our campus via a lovely, paid-for, one-and-a-half-mile-long paved road.

God has good people everywhere who are quick to obey the nudges of the Holy Spirit and help ministries like yours and ours. To this day, I don't know the name of that kind man, but his offering of \$12,000 has blessed thousands of our guests. Thank God for an end to the mud!

Be Generous

Many people live from problem to problem and bill to bill, but you can climb out of that rut through generosity. Our debt to God is made payable to man.

We have some friends who set a personal goal to tithe 90 percent of their income to God's work and live on 10 percent. It took them 30 years, but they are now retired and are some of the happiest people on earth. Their stories of constant supernatural surplus are astounding. Why wouldn't God bless them? He knows their priority is to advance His kingdom.

Don't wait until you can afford to give to God's work. Start where you are. If you planned to give \$50 to the work of God, give \$53. I dare you to pray, "Lord, I'll give away any extra money that I earn, find or receive this week."

Perhaps it will be a quarter under the couch or a product rebate you forgot about. Don't be surprised when it arrives, and promptly keep your vow.

How big is God? As big as you will allow Him to be. Prosperity with a purpose comes with a responsibility too. God blesses you so that you can become a blessing to your relatives, your church, your city and the world. To achieve this mindset, meditate on 3 John 2: "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."

The secret to true prosperity lies in renewing your soul, which is your mind, will and emotions. We all have to deal with some "stinkin' thinkin'" by rejecting wrong thoughts about surplus, as if those who have an abundance must have done something wrong to get it. Though that may be true sometimes, it isn't always the case, particularly when God causes His children to prosper. The world certainly needs more people willing to radically give to Him.

Be encouraged today that although thousands of years have passed since Israel crossed the desert, God hasn't lost His recipe for manna. For 40 years the Israelites received miracle bread, miracle meat, miracle guidance and miracle protection, and then they received a miracle covenant that led them to a miracle land. That was in the Old Testament, recorded for our

learning as an example of the goodness of God.

Believers in the New Testament have a better covenant established on better promises. This brings me to a logical conclusion: It's natural to expect the supernatural, and many of your miracle moments will include supernatural abundance.

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