

GOD PROVIDES WHEN WE GIVE
Exodus 16; Philippians 4:10-19

(Read Philippians 4:10-19)

INTRO: My love for the subject of Math is legendary. Legendary in that my love for Math is completely non-existent. In fact it's quite the opposite. I can do the basics like adding and subtraction, multiplication and division, if they are not too complicated – other than that, I'll take a calculator, thank you very much!

I think I've told you about this, but Algebra, Geometry, and Trigonometry in 9th, 10th and 11th grade (in that order) were my increasingly rapid slide into the abyss of Math H-E Double Hockeysticks. After I received a D in Trig, only by the grace of my 11th grade teacher, he told me to never take math again because, "Tyson, you're just too stupid for it."

I realize that nowadays such a statement could get a teacher fired and then vilified in the press and social media, but I was beyond elated! I was FREE!!! I took History and English in my senior year along with a bookkeeping course, because I had a small painting business, and had a 98% average for the year. It was only 98% because it was pulled down by the average grade I received in Bookkeeping. Bookkeeping required what? Yes! Some MATH!

So, it's funny then that my talk today is on the subject of Math. Well, actually what the author of my reference book for this series refers to as supernatural Math. It's like this, we will always discover that what happens when we give is that God WILL provide. We will look at the Exodus 16 passage that Heather read and the passage from Philippians that I just read, but they are just two examples in God's word of the many where we see God's supernatural Math.

I can really relate to supernatural Math. Why? Well, because it truly doesn't make sense. What it does prove, as we saw with the widow in Luke 21 last week, is that as we give sacrificially, we find that we cannot out-give God. Just last week, someone told me of how, even though, from a human point of view, they did not have the money to give to a couple of ministries that really needed support, they faithfully gave a very significant sum, considering their financial state, to those ministries. Within a day they received a check for over 8 times that much for something they had no idea was coming. It was so random that they thoroughly investigated the check before they deposited it. It didn't make sense, but God's Math makes it work. As I always say, you cannot out-give God. With that in mind let's look at it. First . . .

There is a clear connection between our generosity and God's provision

- The author of my little book writes,

"Throughout the Bible, you'll see that God's way is different. But not only is it different, God's way is better.

The generous heart of God is better than great wealth without his involvement. Of your income, 90% with God's blessing goes further than 100% of your income without God. That's supernatural Math.

I know what the spreadsheets say. I know how the formulas work. I know what messages the media send you. Despite all that, the Bible's alternate worldview on this is just as true as it was in the first century.

"*And my God,*" Paul writes, "*will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 4:19 NIV). True back then..., still true.

Romans 8:32 states, "*He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*" God our loving Father, wants to bless us. He wants to meet our needs.

In the Lord's Prayer – one of the most famous prayers – Jesus teaches his followers how to pray. In that model prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray for 'our daily bread'." (End Quote)

- Here is the truth, no gift ever made a person poorer.

God's reminder to the Israelites AND to us is "I WILL provide."

- God had a lot of lessons for the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness. It was necessary schooling for them to truly be his people. They needed to know, most of all, that no matter what God will provide.

- But they didn't have to get too far from making bricks in Egyptian slavery to begin thinking that the full cooking pots in slavery were better than the campfires of wilderness freedom. They preferred food over liberty. Isn't it amazing how short our human memory is? Their griping reached the front office and God promised them food. It would be bread and meat. And it would be enough. God always promises to provide enough. His word to the Israelites and to us is this is how we will always know it is the Lord who is our provider.

- Notice when the Israelites tried to hoard manna, it would get wormy and stinky. It comes down to trust or worms. Which would you choose? Let's be less worried about what we can hoard for tomorrow, and see where God would have us minister today. He will take care of our daily bread.
- In fact, we need to have a different view what daily bread is. Is it a Mercedes or is it a Ford? Is it a condo or is it a mansion? Paul says in our text that he found the secret of contentment. The world says contentment comes from what you can do for yourself, or get from the world in the form of stuff and fame. But the truth is, contentment comes from God and God only. It's the difference between self-sufficiency which will leave you wanting, and God's sufficiency which will never let you down.

God ALWAYS provides and generosity's blessings are both now and eternal

- Going further in that Philippians text, it is obvious that Paul is deeply touched by the gifts he had received from his dear friends in the church at Philippi. They didn't have much but they gave anyway – out of love and dedication to God, and in gratitude for Paul's ministry to them. He was in jail in Rome, it was not a picnic, so he was moved by their encouragement and the mere idea they were thinking about him. What is also evident is that he really didn't NEED any gifts. He was not ungrateful, but he was just stating facts – he had learned the secret of contentment – it's called the sufficiency of God.
- So Paul was glad for their gifts to him for their sake much more than his own. He knew that it showed their heart. Also, their giving showed their partnership with the Gospel. Giving isn't just throwing resources at the Church, it is intimate participation in the work of the Good News. This has Kingdom and eternal ramifications.
- And he referred to it in Old Testament sacrifice terms as “. . . a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.” Philippians 4:18b. And then he goes on to promise this *And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.* Philippians 4:19. Giving in a spirit of love, expectation, and faith will never lead to poverty – as we give out of faith we tap into the riches of God himself. Paul can promise this from his God because his God was also their God, and their God is also OUR God! These promises are our promises.
- Listen to the author's words.

“The blessings of God are not limited to the financial realm. Some people incorrectly teach this principle and reduce God to a slot machine. Giving is not a formula to corner God into giving you a new car. If you put money in the offering plate, God doesn't promise to surprise you with a forgotten rebate of the amount later in the week. God's blessings don't work that way.

A \$100 contribution might not result in a \$100 blessing, but I do know this—you will be blessed in some way. And just because those blessings might not be financial doesn't mean they are unimportant. If the best things in life can't be bought with money, perhaps the most important blessings from God are not financial.” (End Quote)

Conclusion: A text that I often use for generosity sermons is a familiar passage from Malachi. Let me read it to you: *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,*” says the Lord Almighty, *“and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.* Malachi 3:10. God is daring his people to just try it and see how their trust will open the floodgates of his provision. Let me turn our theme What Happens When We Give which is a statement of fact, into a question and ask you, WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE GIVE? Well, test him and see. You will definitely find out, I guarantee, GOD PROVIDES. Amen.