

Jesus, the Abundant Provider

Throughout the last 21 years in the ministry I have seen God provide for needs in many ways. Some obviously miraculous and others hardly noticeable.

- One of the first miraculous provisions was in 1987 – my first year in missions – when our team of 7 in Zululand sat down for a meal and each one of us had an egg on their plate when there were only 6 eggs in the egg carton – and no extra loose eggs prior to preparing the meal.
- Another time in Spain I was staying with friends in a village and we all ran out of money and our provisions were almost finished. We went to the bank to find that there wasn't anything in the account. With our very last money we put petrol into the car so that we could visit some friends in a city. We put enough petrol in to get there but not back. Our friends – new believers – gave us a good lunch and then we had to get back. We mentioned that we didn't have enough petrol or money for petrol. Our friend jumped up and went to his draw and pulled out a cheque on my name that had come for me a few days prior to that and he had forgotten about it.
- In India our money ran out due to a bank problem and our Catholic neighbour who lived downstairs brought us 2 plates of food every day during that time. We hadn't told her of our problem.

John 6: 1 – 15

1) Called to be God's co-workers

- Jesus asked Philip where they should buy food for the crowd to eat. He said this as a test to see what Philip's reaction would be.
 - God often puts needy people along our path and asks us what we should do. He tests our faith to see how genuine we are and how much we would trust God, not only for our provision, but to provide for others.
- In Matthew's account (14: 13 – 21) The disciples approach Jesus telling Him to send the crowds away so that they can go and buy food. Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."
 - It is easy to talk about how God provides for us and how much he cares, but when the crunch comes of their needs being supplied we are quick to send them away to find their own way in the world.
 - Some of them might not have been poor but were there to experience Jesus. Once they have experienced Jesus and comes the time for their practical need to be met that's where the disciples drew the line and wanted them to be sent away.
 - Jesus didn't say that they must just organise the people and He will feed them. He said "You give them something to eat."
 - Yes, God provides but He wants us to take up our responsibility of being His co-workers.
- Jesus had told His disciples to do something that was beyond their human ability.
 - 200 denarii which was about 8 months' wages at that time wouldn't have been enough to give each person a bite to eat.
 - There were 5000 men besides the women and children.
 - All they had were 5 small barley loaves and 2 small fish that a young boy had.
- Jesus did not just want helpers to distribute food, He was imparting His heart for the lost and needy to His disciples
 - His disciples wanted to send the people away. They weren't concerned about the people on any level – physical or spiritual
 - When Jesus saw the crowd he had compassion on them (Matthew 14: 14)
 - How many times have we been taught a lesson in theory and it did not do anything for us and then one day we encountered a person in need that had a profound

effect on our lives? Jesus imparted compassion for people to His disciples by demonstrating compassion and getting them involved in the ministering to them as well.

- Although He and His disciples were tired and were actually in the process of withdrawing to a quiet place to rest he still took time to heal the sick who had come to him. He always saw other people's needs before his own.
- Jesus imparted faith – to see what God can do with nothing when we make ourselves available to Him
- Andrew saw the loaves and the fish and brought them to Jesus. It was a naturally ridiculous thing to do but Jesus took it and used it.
- When God calls you to partner with Him in this world He wants us to give Him whatever little we have that we can be amazed at what He will do with it.
- Don't hold back because what you have may seem ridiculous in the natural. Give yourself and whatever you have to offer God to Him

2) The Provision of Jesus

- The first thing that Jesus did before he provided the food was get everyone to sit down
 - Sitting down denotes rest.
 - In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve rested in God and ate from the trees that God had provided for them. It was at the fall that the ground was cursed that they would need to eat by the sweat of their brow.
 - The Kingdom of God was breaking through in this incident of God's provision to more than 5000 people
 - Matthew 6: 25 – 34 God's abundant provision so do not worry
- Jesus took the loaves of bread and the fish and distributed it to everyone
 - If, for arguments sake, say that each loaf was 800 grams, the weight of our standard loaf then each person would have gotten 0.8 grams of bread – hardly enough to taste never mind to satisfy hunger.
 - However we are told that “they had all enough to eat” or Matthew 14 says “they all ate and were satisfied”
 - Whether God's provision is for our physical, emotional or spiritual needs He will satisfy us.
- Will we take the time to sit and rest to receive His provision or will we be too busy worrying about where it will come from?

3) The Abundant leftover

- There were 12 baskets filled with leftovers
 - Why would God provide leftovers
 - I think that was to be a testimony of what God had done – one for each disciple
 - Secondly, that it could provide for the needs of others
- “My aim never was, how much could I obtain, but rather, how much could I give.”
George Muller
- God often provides more than what we need so that we can bless others who are in need.
 - When we get extra gifts from someone we need to ask whether God has given it for myself or for someone else and I am merely the channel through which God is providing for their need, or both.