



*Faithfulness...
even in my finances?*



The Model Prayer is the answer to the question raised when Jesus was asked to teach us how to pray.

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13)

Yet we often hear people say, “Follow your heart.” This is not a good idea. Why you may ask? *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)* The Amplified version states it this way, “...Who can understand it fully and know its secret motives?” Solomon reminds us to “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

According to these verses, where should we look for our daily provisions? Do we?

A Lesson from the Israelites

While in the wilderness, the children of Israel had to look to God for all their provisions. There was only so much they could carry out of Egypt. It was in no way enough to last for the forty years they would be in the desert, waiting to be led into the Promised Land. Looking through the book of Exodus we can see how God provided for them during this time of wandering.

Name some things needed by families within the forty years during their journey.

List as many provisions as you can find in Exodus 15 & 16, then share and compare differences.

Who is the Shepherd? Who provides all of the needs? Who owns the pastures and all that is in them? (John 10:1-18)

We are His and the pastures (means of provision) are His. In the Scriptures we just read, it is clear we should look to our Shepherd, the Lord, for leadership and provision. In the book of Exodus we saw how God provided for the Israelites in the wilderness which should serve as a reminder that He can provide for us every day.

We should remember God's provisions often come with instructions to be followed closely. Did the Israelites follow His instructions? What were their attitudes about most of God's provisions? Did they exhibit an attitude of gratefulness?

God's Hall of Fame

*"But my God shall supply all your **need** according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).*

Similar questions arise. Who is the one that supplies? What is supplied? But notice carefully, this verse mentions our needs, not our wants. The Bible reminds us the Son of Man did not have a place to lay His head (Luke 9:58; Matthew 8:20).

Does this prompt us to rethink our "needs"?

Are we thankful for the provisions God has given: a place to live, food, job, money, transportation, clothes, etc.?

Do we follow God's instructions concerning these matters: tithing, offerings, giving to the poor, supporting missions, helping others, being Christ-like in our workplaces, etc.?

A personal example from what I call "God's Hall of Fame" illustrates this principle. God provided for our family in a miraculous way several years ago. Mark was laid off for a year and wasn't preaching yet. We were purchasing a home, had two children, a car payment, and utilities to pay—all of the usual expenses for a typical household.

He did odd jobs for people and every time he received money for one of the jobs, we tithed and gave offerings. Needless to say, things were tight, but God always provided our needs. We were able to meet all our monthly financial obligations and only once were we a few days late on a house payment.

It was interesting when it came time to file our taxes for that year. Our tax preparer, a Christian as well as Mark's brother-in-law, kept saying it didn't make any sense on paper. How were we able to keep our financial commitments current, give tithes and offerings while living off what we had reported? It was a special testimony to us and our family who knew the situation.

God was faithful during this time of unemployment, as He used the people in our church (Bethel FWB Church, South Roxana, Illinois) to bless us with groceries, Christmas gifts for our children, and an anonymous \$100 gift that showed up at exactly the right time.

We look back on God's faithful provision and can relate to Paul in Philippians 4:19-20. He supplied our needs and a few wants that we felt were a hug from the Lord. To God be all glory!

God's Loving Correction

When a sheep in the flock goes off on his own, the shepherd breaks its leg then carries him until the leg is healed. During the

time the shepherd is carrying the sheep, a special bond is created between them. The sheep that went astray learns to totally trust and depend upon his shepherd for all its needs. You have probably seen pictures of Jesus with a sheep around his neck resting upon His shoulders. The Lord loves us and wants us to look to Him for all our needs.

My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure the chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Hebrews 12:5-8).

These verses let us know God corrects, chastens, and scourges His own children. Thinking back to the Israelites, can you see God's provisions for them, their attitudes of ungratefulness, as well as disobedience to His instructions? Do you recognize the need for the correction they experienced? At one point while they were in the wilderness, they even wished they were still back in Egypt (Exodus 16:3). They longed to *"sit by the flesh pots, and... eat bread to the full"*; they quickly forgot the slavery, mistreatment, and unkindness they had endured.

Was it God's will for them to stay in Egypt or to be delivered?

At this point, would it have been the right decision for them to follow their hearts' desire?

My Hall of Shame

Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers in Genesis 37. Much later he was able to say, *"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good"* (Genesis 50:20). God eventually placed him in an office of high authority and led him to store grain because

a time of famine was coming to Egypt. *“As it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20c).*

What do you think would have happened if Joseph had not obeyed what God had revealed?

What did Joseph do in times of plenty in the land of Egypt?

Can you think of a time you thought money matters were your decision to do as you wished without asking God what He wanted you to do?

A few years ago, we were redecorating a bathroom. We went to choose the bathroom fixtures and could not agree on which ones to purchase. The ones I wanted were quite a bit more expensive than the ones Mark had suggested we get. Because we could not agree, we walked out of the store without buying either.

A few days later, I decided to take some of “my money” I had earned and buy the ones I wanted. I figured if I had earned the money and there weren’t any other financial needs in our home at the time, I could pay for them. I should be able to get what I wanted with my money.

I raided my “mad money” stash, stuck \$300 in my pocket, and headed to pick up the fixtures. In the self-checkout lane, I rang them up, then reached into my pocket for the money. It was not

there! I had lost it somewhere in the store. I retraced my route several times but the money was nowhere to be found. That was a lot of money! With a sinking feeling, I was sick to my stomach. I returned the fixtures to the shelf, left the store, and headed home.

On the way, the Lord reminded me of several Scriptures. This remembering continued my Shepherd's loving correction that began with losing the money. The verses of ownership and of Him being Lord came to mind: Romans 12:10, Ephesians 5:22, and Colossians 3:18.

As you read these verses, does it say we should put ourselves first? Is what we want more important?

After reading my account from "My Hall of Shame," it is plain to see it was all about "I and me." When we feel the need to justify, it usually is not a good situation. We need to pause, remember the instructions from God's Word, and reconsider our decisions and actions.

Commitment

As we have sung before in church "Some to Jesus I surrender, some to Him I freely give..." Oh wait, that's not right. The song says *all* not *some*. Do we really surrender all? Sometimes we think of surrendering everything until we have a financial decision. Instead of trusting Him to provide, to guide whether in little or much, or bless and correct, we leave Him out and make the decision ourselves.

"One of the great challenges of life is to limit distractions in order to focus on what matters the most. Regardless of how much or how little we have, issues of money threaten to sidetrack us."

Financial Faithfulness,
Roger Gum, Missy Schrader

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind (might)” (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27). What does that leave? I’m sure you have heard the saying “If He is not Lord of everything, then He is not Lord at all.”

Write James 1:22.

Read, sing, or listen to “Take My Life and Let it Be” as a prayer of dedication (*The Free Will Baptist Hymn Book: Rejoice*, page 491 or 507). You can also find it on YouTube.

Take a moment to be still and see where the Lord is shining the light of His Word into your life. Are there areas you need to surrender to His truths?

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Wouldn’t it be a huge stress reliever to trust the Lord to guide in all He has given us?

About the Writer: Khristi Shores lives in Checotah, Oklahoma, where her husband Mark pastors First Free Will Baptist Church. She and her husband have had the blessing of leading six ETEAMs. She is the mother of two sons, grandmother of four, and blessed with two wonderful daughters by marriage. 