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# God Is Your Provider (2 Kings 4: 1-7)

We don't know much about the widow in this story, except that she was part of a company of prophets within Israel. But that tells us quite a lot. Firstly, she was clearly a believing Israelite, and secondly she knew Israel's history with God as his covenant family who enjoyed a special relationship with Him. In verse 1, when she says her husband feared the LORD, she uses God's covenant name. God had on many occasions manifested his character to His people to show who He was. You find many of these in the Old Testament: The Lord your Healer, The Lord is Peace, The Lord is There, The Lord is my Banner, The Lord is my Shepherd.

## The Provider

But perhaps embedded more in a Jewish mind than any other name of God was one we find in Genesis 22. In fact the first name we come across as a covenant name of God in the Bible is Jehovah Jireh. It means the Lord will be seen to provide. It comes in one of the darkest, harrowing, yet most amazing stories in the old testament, where God asks Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac (who had been born miraculously to him and Sarah in old age and represented the entirety of God's promise to Abraham that he would bless the world.) Abraham believed God was fully to be trusted, even when he didn't understand how it would work out. God spared Isaac, providing a ram instead for the sacrifice. In utter relief and worship, Abraham names the place "Jehovah Jireh" - the Lord will Provide. From then on, Jewish people knew that God could always be relied on to provide.

The widow in 2 Kings 4 knows this story. She knows this is who God is. Her situation is difficult: she is affected by the death of her husband, by debt and by dependent children. Godliness doesn't mean we live a trouble-free life.

As she's wondering where Jehovah Jireh is, it **increases** her trust in God. Genuine faith always increases under pressure. She needs a miracle and she knows God is the person to do it!

## God's Normal Provision

The normal mechanisms for God providing for her aren't available. But for our benefit let's see what they are before we look at the miraculous:

1. **Self-Provision (Work):** She is unable to work. But God's usual method for provision in your life is for you to get a job! Before the fall Adam set to work in the garden - it was part of God's way of providing for him. Even after the miracle of oil provision, the widow in our story had to work to sell it!
2. **Family:** She was fortunate enough to be married until her husband died. Her kids in that culture were the equivalent to her pension in old age. When we (or our family members) face pressure, our family is usually God's provision for us. In seasons of life we are made to be **dependent**; from the moment you battled from the womb to you nursing the mother who nursed you!
3. **Community:** She was part of her prophet's community; she knew Elisha. Today in the city you're living in you're part of more than one community: friends, geography, work, church, etc. Each has its part to play in meeting your needs. Not everyone can help but someone sometimes can.

Be careful not only to recognise certain things as "*God's provision*". Isaiah 26:12: "*ALL that we have accomplished YOU have done for us.*" All three of the above provisions are God's blessing in your life. Make sure you are **thankful** to God and don't take them for granted.

Give God glory for normal mechanisms of provision when they work. When you're 43, life can seem boring and predictable and we can lose faith in God. Don't wait for **tragedy** to wake you up to trust again.

## God's Supernatural Provision

When normal means are exhausted, God can be **trusted** to go beyond. Here are some principles:

1. **Miracles come out of prayer:** She calls on God (Elisha was the messenger of God).
2. **Miracles often start small:** She is directed to bring her insignificant resources to God. (Elisha asks her what she has, which is the same question Jesus asks His disciples at the feeding of the 5000!). God usually begins his supernatural activity in us through ordinary vehicles.
3. **Private personal faith:** God often works behind closed doors. Why? Because he cares for us. Most of our stories are personal testimonies of God's goodness; unseen and unquantified by the world.
4. **Obedience to God is key:** She must have felt foolish with her tiny oil jar pouring it into a big jar (especially in front of her kids!). God often asks us to do the ridiculous to produce the miraculous.
5. **Doing the same thing again and again:** This was a repeat miracle. With one jar of oil filled she could have moved on and asked God for some bread or some money! But she knew that God often repeats the same miracle again and again. I think she probably filled her smallest pot first and then as she saw God provide, filled bigger and bigger pots.

Don't look to copy God's grace in other peoples lives. Ask God to use the gifts He's given you more and more significantly.

Put yourself deliberately in a place of needing God. Ask Him to help you and fill you through the seasons of life that you come into!

## The Bigger Story: the Jar's Perspective

In *2 Corinthians 4:7*, Paul likened Christian life (the glory of God filling a human soul) to having "*treasure in an earthen vessel*".

The pots in 2 Kings 4 were borrowed from neighbours by the kids (likely to be the equivalent of ice cream tubs and chipped crockery!). But these pots received a wonderful new commission: to be the containers for miracle oil!

To be a Christian isn't to be perfect, but it's to be filled with God's miraculous provision

- His forgiveness, His glory, His love. God's provision for you is bigger than you can imagine. Abraham's son Isaac was on the altar awaiting to be sacrificed until a substitute was made.

Years later God would send His own Son, Jesus, to the cross. This time there would be no substitute. He was The Sacrificial Lamb. He was subbing for us! He took our failure and guilt and shame and it died with Him.

How do I know that God will always provide for you when you trust him? The best verse of the entire Bible tells us why:

*"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?" (Romans 8: 32)*

## Questions

- **Knowing God:** How do you think the lady in *2 Kings 4* was helped by her knowledge of her special covenant relationship with God as her provider? Do we have a special relationship with God? What has God promised to be for us? Think of some scriptures that support these promises.
- **God's Normal Provision:** Which of the normal provisions (work, family, community) are operating in your life? How can we grow in gratitude for these normal mechanisms of God's provision?
- **God's Supernatural Provision:** Which of the elements in the story do you identify with? Starting small/ordinary; personal/private nature of the miraculous; obedience (looking ridiculous to see the miraculous); or persevering in the same thing again and again.
- **Treasure in earthen vessels:** Read *2 Corinthians 4:7* again. Why does God put his supernatural power into our human imperfection? How does that encourage you to believe that God will always fill you with his miraculous power?
- **All things:** Read *Romans 8:32* what things are you asking God for (that you could comfortably share in your group!)?



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