

## Introduction

In 1993 I was scheduled to play in the Fort Meyers Open. Since I was a former winner of the event, and knew the course well, I chose to use the pro-am on Wednesday as my practice round. I had a one o'clock tee-time in the pro-am and drove down to Fort Meyers from Orlando that morning. I decided to take my son, Bill, with me to the tournament. Normally, I make reservations at hotels months in advance. This time I did not have a reservation. While we were driving down there, I told Bill that we were going to pray about a place to stay. God promises to provide food, clothing, and our basic needs for us, so we asked the Lord to provide a place. We prayed specifically that the Lord would move on the hearts of someone in my pro-am group to invite us to stay at their house. When we were walking off the 18<sup>th</sup> green, Steward Matter, owner of the Matters Brothers Furniture Store, asked me to stay at his house. He had a nice house, and a talking parrot, which stayed on his shoulder as he walked about his house. My son Bill had a fantastic time. More importantly, he saw God answer a very specific prayer for our provision, and his faith in God grew stronger.

We are in a series on Seeking First the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Last week we looked at seeking His righteousness. We saw that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees if we are going to enter the kingdom of heaven. The Pharisees had an outward righteousness, driven by works. God says that we do not enter the kingdom of God based on works. "It is by grace that we are saved through faith, not as a result of works, that no man should boast." When we come into a relationship with God, there is an exchange. He takes our sins and He imparts to us His righteousness. We obtain our righteousness through a relationship with Christ.

(Eph 2:8-9) "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

We also saw that even though He forgives us and cleanses our hearts, we have work to do. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We cannot be squeezed into the mold of the world. We must think His thoughts. The only way that we can seek his righteousness, is by living according to His word. We must submit to God and to His word. It is the plumb line for righteousness in our lives. His word has been given to us for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. It is by reading, studying, and meditating on His word that we are renewed in our minds and can seek and walk in His righteousness.

This week, we will be concluding this five-week series, and will be looking at the last part of this promise: all these things shall be added to you. I say promise, because this is a promise from God that He will supply all these things to us when we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. We are going to take a look about God's promises. Second, we will look at the requirements of God's provision in this promise. Third, we will look at the provisions of the promise.

## God's Promise of Provision

1. Understanding God's Promises
2. Conditions of Matthew 6:33 Promise
3. Provisions of Matthew 6:33 Promise

(Mt 6:33) "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."

## 1. Understanding God's Promises

The scriptures are full of God's promises. One source said there are 8,810 promises. Another source said there are 3,573 promises. Bible Gateway states there are 5,467 promises. In Hebert Locklear's book, *God's Promises in the Bible*, he states there are 7,147 promises. No matter how you count them or which source you use, there are thousands of promises in the Bible. God's promises cover everything we need in life; they are comprehensive. In 2 Peter 1:3-4, God promises to grant us everything pertaining to life and godliness. God has all power and authority, and by His divine power He has granted us these promises. We discover these promises in the true knowledge of Him. We need to get to know Him so that we discover these wonderful promises. In verse four, God refers to these thousands of promises as precious and magnificent promises. Why has He granted us all these precious and magnificent promises? He has granted them to us so that we might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. God's will for us is transformation. He does not want us conformed to the world and its lusts, but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. God wants us to live holy and righteous lives. These promises give us everything that we need pertaining to life and godliness. They are powerful, transforming, and comprehensive.

(2 Pe 1:3-4) "seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. {4} For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."

What is a promise? A promise is a commitment by someone to do or not to do something. In the New Testament, there are a couple of Greek words used, but they both have the same root words. In 2 Peter 1:4, the Greek word is *epangelma* (Strong's G1862), and it means a self-committal or to make a promise. God has committed and obligated Himself to thousands of promises in the Scriptures. Because God has committed Himself, His response to answering His promises is always, "Yes!" In 2 Corinthians 1:20, Paul wrote that "as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us." God is cheering us on, saying yes, yes, yes to us. He wants us to receive the promises. God is glorified through us when we stand on His promises and receive them. He wants us to exercise and grow in our faith, by standing on His promises.

(2 Co 1:20) "For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us."

Some of God's promises are unconditional promises, meaning that God will do or not do something no matter what our actions or responses are. When God promised that He would not destroy the earth again with a flood, it was an unconditional promise. Even if mankind is as wicked as it was in the days of Noah, God is not going to destroy the earth again with a flood.

(Ge 9:13-15) "I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. {14} "And it shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, {15} and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh."

Other promises are conditional, and have specific conditions that must be met. Proverbs 3 is a great chapter of promises. Most of those promises have specific conditions. For example, if we want favor and good repute with God and with people, God gives a conditional promise and if we meet the two conditions attached to the promise, God will give us favor and good repute. The conditions are that we must not let kindness and truth leave us. We must bind kindness and truth around our neck. We must write kindness and truth on our hearts. If we do this, we will find favor and good repute with God and with men. This is a conditional promise.

(Pr 3:3-4) "Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. {4} So you will find favor and good repute In the sight of God and man."

Another example of a conditional promise is about making our paths straight. We all need direction from the Lord. None of us want to get off track in our lives. In Proverbs 3:5-6, God gives us a conditional promise for making our paths straight. There are three conditions which must be met in this promise. First, we must trust in the Lord with all our heart. Second, we are not to lean on our own understanding. Third, we must acknowledge God in all our ways. When we do those three things, God has obligated and committed Himself to make our paths straight.

(Pr 3:5-6) "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. {6} In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

I am frequently asked about God's will for someone's life. As I pray and counsel with people, I find these promises very useful. I pray for the person to trust the Lord with all their heart. I pray that they would not lean on their own understanding. I let the Lord know we are acknowledging Him about this matter, and I ask Him to make their paths straight. These promises are not only great for our own lives, but in ministering to others.

Another conditional promise in Proverbs 3 pertains to God's provision in our lives. God makes a promise to us that if we will honor Him with our wealth, and from the first of our produce, He will fill our barns with plenty and our vats will overflow with new wine.

(Pr 3:9-10) "Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; {10} so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."

There are two conditions to that promise. We must honor the Lord with our wealth. Honoring the Lord with our wealth means to give Him the very best, the fat portion. God rebuked Israel in Malachi because they were bringing their sick and lame animals to be sacrificed, rather than the best. God was not honored at all, and He asked if their governor would be pleased with offerings like that. Our offerings must honor the Lord. We must honor the Lord from our wealth. This is not necessarily our new income; but everything that God has entrusted to us, our existing wealth.

(Mal 1:6-8) "A son honors *his* father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?' says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?' {7} "You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the Lord is to be despised.' {8} "But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer

it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the Lord of hosts."

The second condition is that we honor the Lord from the first of all our produce. We must honor the Lord with our first fruits or tithes. A tithe is 10%. For us to see God's abundance poured out into our lives, we must honor Him with our tithes and offerings. God also rebuked Israel for not bringing in the whole tithe. He told them to bring in the whole tithe so that there would be food in His house. The tithes are how the Levites and priests received provision. God promised to rebuke the devourer and pour out a blessing on them if they would bring the whole tithe in. These are conditional promises. When we fulfill the conditions, we can trust God to do what He says. We must search our hearts and our lives to make sure we are fulfilling the conditions.

(Mal 3:8–11) "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. {9} "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation *of you!* {10} "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. {11} "Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes,*" says the Lord of hosts."

God's conditional promises often require faith. In Romans 4, Paul wrote, "with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform." Abraham latched on to God's promises and was not double-minded. He did not waver in unbelief. He held on and clung to God's promises. It says that He grew strong in faith, giving glory to God. He became fully assured that God was able to do what He promised. Abraham waited many years for that promise to be fulfilled. We need both faith and persistence in receiving some of God's promises.

(Ro 4:20-21) "yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, {21} and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform."

God promised Abraham that He would make him a father of nations. Even though Abraham and Sarah went past the normal age to bear children, Abraham and Sarah did not waver in unbelief. They kept holding on and clinging to God's promise. In Hebrews 11, we find that Sarah received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time in life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. God had given a promise to them, and they considered or trusted that God would make the promise good to them.

(He 11:11) "By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised;"

We grow strong in our faith by seeing God fulfill His promises in our lives, and in the lives of others. Testimonies are an excellent way of building up each other's faith. Learn to pray about all things, not just the big things. When I saw God answer specific prayers for an \$8.00 oak tree, or other small things really got me excited, and it built my faith. It was also a great testimony to share with others Your faith will grow as you see God fulfill His promises in your life.

## 2. Conditions of Matthew 6:33

In the promise given in Matthew 6:33, the two conditions are that we must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The verse starts with "but." Both the New American Standard and the King James start with "but." However, in the original Greek manuscripts, the word does not appear. It is implied by the text, and the translators added the word "but" to help render the proper understanding. The but refers to everything else that Jesus has been speaking to the crowd about. We took a look at those four keys in the introduction. These keys now serve as a checklist to see if we are seeking the kingdom of God in our lives.

(Mt 6:33) "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Jesus said we must have the right treasury. We cannot be trying to store up treasures on earth. Instead, we need to store up treasures in heaven. In verse 21, He says that our heart will be where our treasure is. If our treasure is on earth, our heart will be on earthly things, instead of eternal things. If we are going to seek first His kingdom, our heart must be towards the kingdom of heaven, not our kingdom here on earth. We must be storing up treasures in the kingdom of heaven rather than here on earth.

(Mt 6:20-21) "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

The second key that Jesus said is that we must have proper vision. He says that the lamp of the body is the eye. If the eye is clear, the whole body will be full of light, but if the eye is bad, the whole body will be full of darkness. We saw that haplous, the Greek word that is used, actually means to be folded over into one, or single. The KJV correctly translates this, "if therefore thine eye be single." We cannot have an eye set on the world and an eye set on God's kingdom. When our focus is singularly focused on the kingdom of God, and not on earthly treasures, we will be full of light and will be able to see clearly.

(Mt 6:22–23) "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. {23} "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

The third key is that we can only serve one master. We cannot serve both mammon and God. Jesus said that we will hate the one and love the other, or will hold to one and despise the other. He concludes, "you cannot serve God and mammon. We must decide if we are going to serve God or money, for we cannot do both.

(Mt 6:24) "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

The fourth key is that we will have to trust God. We are not to be anxious or worry about our provision. Jesus used the Greek word, *marimnao* (Strong's G3309), five times, and depending on your translation, it is either anxious or worry. Jesus tells us not to be anxious about our clothing. Finally, He tells us not to be anxious over our food and drink. He says that the Gentiles eagerly

seek these things. He says that our Father already knows that we need these things. Our anxiety reveals a lack of trust and faith in God to provide.

(Mt 6:25) "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?"

When Jesus said, "but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you," He is referring to seeking after all the things that we need in our life, like food, clothing, and shelter. Instead of being anxious about these things, we are to eagerly seek after the kingdom of God and His righteousness. If we seek after God's kingdom and His righteousness, all these things will be added unto us.

Even though the promise has two requirements, to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, the context includes these other keys. If we are serving mammon, we are obviously not seeking first the kingdom of God. If we are storing up treasures here on earth, it is clear that we are seeking first the kingdom of God. If our eyes are on focused on the things of the earth, then we are not seeking first the kingdom of God. If we are anxious and worried about our food, clothing, and other provisions, we are not trusting God for these things.

If we are seeking first the kingdom of God, we will be storing up treasures in heaven, not here on earth. We saw that there are many ways to store up treasures in heaven. When we pray or fast in secret, there are rewards in heaven. When we visit the sick, the prisoner, or given to the poor, we are storing up treasures in heaven. Sowing generously into God's work here on earth is obviously a great way to store up treasure in heaven, but it is not the only way. If we are not giving our tithes and offerings to God, it reveals that we are not seeking the kingdom of God first. It shows that we are not honoring the King of the kingdom. If we are going to seek first the kingdom of God, we must seek it in every area of our lives, including our finances.

Since this promise is about God's provision, it is important that we put this promise in the proper framework of the rest of Scripture. If we are seeking first the kingdom of God, we will not be living unruly lives. We saw in 2 Thessalonians that Paul referred to those who were not working as being unruly or undisciplined. The Greek word is *ataktos* (Strong's G814), which literally means not in proper order. Some of the Thessalonians were living off of others instead of eating their own bread, and that is not in order. If you are seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, you will not be living a disorderly life, or an unruly life. You will be following God's principles about work. Paul commanded those that were not working to follow the example they set, and to work with their own hands and eat their own bread. He told the rest of the church to keep away from these unruly brothers and not to let them eat. When we are going to claim God's promises in any area, we must make sure that we are satisfying all the requirements in the promise, and any other applicable commands from other passages.

(2 Th 3:6–12) "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly (*ataktos*), life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. {7} For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, {8} nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; {9} not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would

follow our example. {10} For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. {11} For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined (ataktos) life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. {12} Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.”

All through Scripture we have a principle of how we must work. It is God's primary way of providing for our needs. So, when Jesus says that the birds do not sow, reap, or gather into a barn, He is not saying that we do not need to sow, reap, or gather into a barn. We need to sow and reap. Work is God's primary way of providing for our needs. We still need to gather into a barn. We need to put away money into our savings so that it can be used as we need it. And we need to give the first of our income to the Lord. When Jesus said that the birds do not sow, reap, or gather, and God provides for them, He is not saying that we do not need to work.

My father had a patio built at the side of his house, right near his peach tree. One of his favorite things to do was pull up a chair in the spring and watch a mother and father robin feed their babies. Even though these birds did not sow, reap, or gather into a barn, they worked hard from sunup to sundown. The mother robin would sit on the nest and wait for the father robin to return. He would come with a worm, cricket or other bug in his beak. As he flew to the nest, they switched roles. He would feed what he had brought to the baby robins, and then stay at the nest until the mother returned with the food that she had found. They took turns doing this all day long. They worked very hard at feeding themselves and their babies, and my father really enjoyed watching them do this.

When Jesus spoke about the birds, He also said that we are of much more value than them, and that God would certainly provide for us. Jesus spoke about anxiety and worry and He contrasted worry with trusting God for their needs. He is telling them that our Father knows their needs, and they are not to be anxious about it. Anxiety reveals a lack of trust, and God wants us to seek first the kingdom of God, which includes trusting Him.

Seeking first the kingdom of God means that we are trying to establish God's rule and reign here on earth, and most importantly, in our lives. God does not force His will on people, and we should not force the kingdom of God on people. In other religions, peer pressure and the threat of punishment is used to make people conform. God's kingdom works from the inside, not the outside. The Pharisees looked good on the outside, but inwardly they were full of dead men's bones, uncleanness, hypocrisy, and lawlessness.

(Mt 23:25–28) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. {26} “You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. {27} “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. {28} “So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

The two explicit requirements of this promise are that we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. Seeking first His kingdom means that our pursuit of the kingdom of God is our highest priority. We saw that a kingdom must have a king, and our pursuit of the kingdom of God starts with a relationship with the king.

In Matthew 7, Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." If we are seeking first the kingdom of God, we will be obedient to God, and will be doing His will. He went on to say that "many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" If we are going to seek first the kingdom of God, it begins with knowing the King of the Kingdom. Our relationship with Christ is the highest priority. The things that we do, like prophesying, casting out demons, performing miracles, feeding the poor, ushering, greeting, leading a small group, or any other act of service cannot and will not replace our relationship with Christ.

(Mt 7:21–23) "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. {22} "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' {23} "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

Jesus' words also speak about righteousness. Those who are seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness will not be practicing lawlessness; they will be living righteously. John addressed this and said that those who practice sin, practice lawlessness. No one who is abiding in Christ sins, and no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. John had already taught that when we sin, we are to confess our sins, and that God would forgive us. In this passage, John is speaking about a lifestyle of sin or practicing sin. If we are seeking His kingdom and His righteousness, we will not be practicing sin and lawlessness.

(1 Jn 3:4–8) "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. {5} You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. {6} No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. {7} Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; {8} the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil."

Our lives are to be radically different than those in the world. John wrote, "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious; anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother."

(1 Jn 3:9-10) "No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. {10} By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother."

If we are going to know Christ, then we must spend time with Him. We must spend time talking with Him. We must spend time listening to Him. Will spend time worshiping Him. We must seek to learn all we can about Him. We will spend time with the body of Christ, and will be part of a local family.

When Karen and I met, I was a sophomore in college, and was on the golf team. I had all morning classes, as my afternoons were spent on the golf course. I spent more than forty hours a



week playing and practicing golf, so it was like a full-time job. Since I had all morning classes, I went to bed early. This was okay with me, as I was a morning person. On our first date, we went to Quick Draw, a popular place to eat. They had the best ham sandwiches I have ever eaten. Karen and I sat there and talked until after 1:00 a.m. I don't know how I even stayed up that late, as that was so late for me. When you are interested in someone, you spend time with them, and I was very interested in Karen. When you are seeking God, you will want to spend time with Him.

In Revelation 2, God spoke to the Ephesian church. He commended them about their deeds, toil, and perseverance, and for not tolerating evil men. But in verse four, He rebuked them for leaving their first love. God wants relationship with us far more than our service. God told them to remember from where they had fallen, and repent and do the deeds they had done at first." The deeds we did at first were to spend time with the Lord. Like newborn babes, we longed for the pure milk of the word. We wanted to learn as much as we could. God wants us to stay at Quick Draw with Him for hours talking, just like Karen and I did when we first met.

(Re 2:4–5) "But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. {5} Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent."

### 3. Provisions of Matthew 7:33 Promise

The provisions mentioned in the passage are summed up by "all these things." Jesus had spoken about food and clothing. However, I believe these are just representative of all the other provisions that we need in our daily lives. That would include shelter, transportation, and other expenses.

(Mt 6:33) "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

I believe that we sometimes get mixed up about what are true needs and what are worldly wants. For example, we need transportation, but do we need affordable transportation or a \$300,000.00 sports car? For most of us, an affordable car is the ticket. What is affordable for someone making \$50,000.00 a year and someone who is making \$300,000.00 are very different. One person may decide to buy a Honda, because of its low maintenance costs, reliability and fuel economy. Someone in a different tax bracket may buy the Accura, which is Honda's upper end car, but still very affordable. People need to be on a budget and determine how much they can spend on various categories. From their budget, they can determine what is most affordable for them.

What about housing? Housing is a definite need for all of us, but what is our budget for housing. Do we need a \$6,000,000.00 home? Travis Kelce just bought a \$6 million dollar home in Leawood, Kansas. It has 17,000 square feet, a pool, pickleball court, and is in a gated community. He was looking for more privacy. He can afford the home, but does God promise to provide housing or an extravagant home? Again, it depends on a person's income and budget. I received an email from someone recently that was judging me for being a pastor and living in the North Quarters. Apparently, pastors are supposed to live in a trailer, church parsonage, or low-income housing. The North Quarters is what I would classify as middle-class housing. This was not the first time I received a letter or email about my housing. I once was told that I was fleecing the flock because I lived in a middle-class subdivision. For me, I had a big family and that house fit the bill. I paid \$169,000.00 for the house, and I paid cash. I would not been able to

live there if I was living off my church income. I think I gave more money to the church that year than I received in salary, so I was definitely not fleecing the flock. To me, the home that Karen and I live in fit all the things that we were looking for, and we see it as God's provision for us in this season. It fit our budget, and we are debt-free on our home. For a younger person, who has not been able to work and save up for a home, a starter home would fit his/her budget. Unfortunately, many young couples want the lifestyle of their parents, and the only way to afford that is if both people work. They put the children in daycare, public schools, and work to pay for the larger home, extra car, and other desired lifestyles. When it comes time to sowing into God's kingdom, they are so debt-laden that they cannot honor God with their wealth and their first fruits. We must honor God with our first fruits, and all other financial decisions should be made with that priority. We must honor God's principles, and be extremely careful about debt, as the borrower is slave to the lender. We need budgets, and to live within our budget.

A few years ago, there was a serious downturn in the industry that I was working in. I took a 75% cut in pay, and we had to take out of our savings to live every month. We cut out cable TV and reduced our eating out to once a month. We tried to lower our cost of living to match our income. One thing that we did not cut out was our tithes and offerings. We honored God and we reduced our other expenses to fit our new budget.

What about cable TV? I received an offer from Direct TV this week that said they were having a special on ordering from them. They would lock in a price of \$99.99 a month for two years. That is \$1,200.00 a year for TV. For some, that fits within their budget, and they want to be able to watch sports and news. For others, that item may not fit within their budget. God said that He would meet our needs, and cable TV may not be a need, but a want. In other countries, many people do not have cable TV. They do not see it as a need. For Karen and I, high speed internet is much more of a need than TV. Our church website maintenance, emails, sermon research, and so many things require a good internet connection.

Karen and I have heard many people have made jokes about our large family. It has given us opportunities to share God's view of children. They are gifts and blessings. People have also asked how we can afford it. They say that they can barely afford one or two. I tell them that I cannot afford it, but that God can. He promised in Matthew 6:33 that if we seek His kingdom and His righteousness first, He promises to provide for us, so we have trusted God to do exactly that. We did not let God's provision limit His blessings on our lives. If He was going to bless us with more children, He would also provide for them also. And God has done exactly that; He has faithfully provided for our large family. In a television interview on ESPN, I quoted Psalms 37:25. David said, "I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his descendants begging bread." What a wonderful testimony of God's faithful provision.

(Ps 37:25) "I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his descendants begging bread."

That does not mean that there weren't some tight spots along the journey. I mentioned that anxiety reveals a lack of trust in God's provision. There have been a couple times that I got anxious and God had to deal with me about it. Let me give you a personal story about how God taught me about this verse.

At the end of 1994, I could barely walk. I had a growth on the bottom of my left heel. I limped at the PGA Tour School finals. I barely missed my regaining my PGA Tour card, even though I was limping and could not put weight on my left foot. The day after Tour School I had surgery on my foot to remove the growth. It felt great to have the growth taken out. But, two weeks later the lump under my heel starting growing again, and was causing more pain. The surgeon operated again, cutting deeper this time to make sure that any remains of the growth were taken out. Three weeks later, the growth was back, and he had to go all the way to the bone and remove everything in the area. During all this time, I was not able to walk or run, or practice. It was a very difficult off-season and I was not able to prepare properly for the coming year.

I played my first rounds of golf at the first tournament of the year, which was in San Jose, California. I played okay and made the cut. In fact, I kept making cuts every week, which many people would be happy about. I was shooting under par every week, but I was not having high finishes. Golf is very top heavy, so you had to have high finishes to make any money, especially with a large family. As the first few months went by, I saw our savings dwindle until we got down to our last \$300.00. I was getting very anxious about our finances. With eight children and living in hotels, we had a very large income requirement. The Lord was showing me during that time that I was trusting in my own supply, rather than in Him. I knew that God was my source and my provision, but somehow, I got my eyes fixed on our resources rather than His provision. God used this passage in Matthew to reveal to me that my anxiety over our finances was the fruit of not trusting in Him for my provision. If we are worrying about our finances, we are serving the wrong master. I had to repent and place my faith in God for my finances. I had to adjust my focus. When I finally understood what the Lord had been teaching me, I called our pastor in Acworth, and told him that I had learned what the Lord wanted me to learn. Because I knew that God would provide, I boldly predicted I was going to win that week. I played very solidly the first couple of rounds. I ended up shooting a pair of 67s on the week-end and won by five shots. I knew that God was going to provide for us, and that He would finish the work that He was doing in our lives. God abundantly supplied us with our provisions for the rest of the year.

### **Conclusion and Applications**

God has given us promises so that we have everything that we need pertaining to life and godliness. This morning, we have looked at one of His promises to provide for all of our needs. The conditions to this promise are that we must we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. The past couple of weeks we have been looking at those conditions. We have looked at what it means to seek after God's kingdom. We have also looked at what it means to seek after His righteousness. God wants us as a church to prioritize seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness. He promises His provision to each of us when we do that.

If you are not seeing God's provision in your life, it would be good to do a short evaluation.

- Are you seeking first the kingdom of God?
- Are you storing up treasures in heaven or on earth? Are you honoring God with your wealth and first fruits?
- Are you singularly focused on the kingdom of God, or are you looking at both the world and the kingdom? We must be focused on the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- Are you serving God or are you serving mammon? We can only have one Master and if we are seeking first the kingdom of God, that Master will be God. We must confess Him as Lord and serve Him only.

- Are we trusting God for His provision, or are we anxious about our finances?
- Are we working to provide for our needs? God worked six days a week and rested on the seventh. The Jewish work day was twelve hours and they worked six days a week. Paul worked day and night to set an example for us to follow. God promises to provide, but He expects us to work.
- Are you on a budget? Make a budget. Spend less than you make. Develop a savings and investment plan. Be disciplined in your finances.
- Are you praying about your finances? Jesus taught His disciples to pray for their daily bread, and we should also be discussing our needs with Him in our prayer times.
- Are you seeking God's righteousness in your life? Are you renewing your mind, and is your life being transformed? God's will for our life is sanctification. He wants us to live holy lives. Are we seeking to live holy lives?

### **Closing Prayer**

Father God, thank You for the thousands of promises in Your word. You are a faithful God and we can always count on You to back up Your promises. Help us to learn more about Your promises and to use them in our lives. Help us meet the conditions of the promises, and help us to grow in our faith like Abraham did. Father, help us to seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness. If there are areas in our lives where we are not seeking You first, we ask You to show us those areas. May we repent of those things. Father, again we thank You for all Your promises, and this promise given in Matthew 6:33. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **God's Promise of Provision**

### **Introduction** (Eph 2:8-9, Mt 6:33)

1. **Understanding God's Promises** (2 Pe 1:3-4, 2 Co 1:20, Ge 9:13-15, Pr 3:3-4, 5-6, 3:9-10, Mal 1:6-8, Mal 3:8-11, Ro 4:20-21, He 11:11)
2. **Conditions of Matthew 6:33** (Mt 6:20-33, 2 Th 3:6-12, 7:21-23, 1 Jn 3:4-10, Re 2:4-5)
3. **Provisions of Matthew 7:33 Promise** (Mt 6:33, Ps 37:25, Mt 6:24-25)

### **Conclusion and Applications**