

JEHOVAH JIREH

Back in 1993, Naomi and I spent 2 years living on a ship called the Doulos. During that time we travelled to over 40 ports in 25 countries. Now you would think the idea of being on a big ship and sailing around the world sounds fun and exotic. The reality was the exact opposite. It was a missions ship, which meant that it operated entirely by faith. No one on the ship was paid anything, all us were supported by the gifts we received from others. Because of that, it ran on a very tight budget. I can not tell you the number of ports that we were in where we did not know if we would have enough money to buy food for the crew, or drinking water. There were many ports where we would be waiting for a part for the ship or a crew member to come or else we would not be able to leave! It was a difficult time, but it did teach me one thing - faith. It taught me to trust in Jehovah Jireh.

One of the names that God gave us to call Him by is the name Jehovah Jireh - The Lord Will Provide. He gave this name to Abraham. We read about it in the first book of the bible;

Gen 22:7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. 9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." 13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

If there was anyone who has known God as his provider it was Abraham. When God called him to leave his country and travel far away I am sure many told him he was crazy. How would he support himself... God will provide. Though he had no children and no real chance of ever having them, God promised that Abraham would be the father of many nations... God will provide. Though asked to sacrifice his one and only son... God will provide. We see this truth repeated in the New Testament;

Php 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

That's a pretty blanket statement. Paul says that will meet ALL your needs. What does that ALL include? It includes everything. It means that God will meet us at every level of need;

a. Needs of the SPIRIT -

The greatest in single problem we face in life is sin, so our single greatest need is the need for a savior. Like Isaac we need a lamb to take our place in the fire. That need was met by God in Jesus. As John the Baptist said in John 1:29, "Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world".

Our need for a restored relationship with God is foundational. Everything else in life is built upon it. Once that need it met than all our other needs are brought into proper perspective. If God were only to give us salvation, that would be more than enough - but there is more...

b. Needs of the SOUL -

God created us to live in community with others. Unfortunately, many today live in isolation without hope. Suicide is the leading killer of youth. Things like loneliness, disappointment, doubt and fear can rob us of our hope and leave us in prisons of despair. No purpose or direction, no promise of love or lifetime commitment, no sense of pride or accomplishment.

In Jesus we have value and we have purpose. Jesus gives us hope and a community to support us when we stumble. He sent us His Spirit as a comforter to be with us always. He gives us security, knowing that even if we fail He will still love us. He knows our hearts intimately and is able to provide us with everything we need to help us grow. God is faithful to His promises.

c. Needs of the BODY -

In addition to our spiritual and heart needs we have physical needs. The need for food and water and shelter and clothes. He knows the things we need and provides them for us.

Notice that in the passage from Philippians, God never promised to supply all you WANT, just what you NEED. He promises to give us our daily bread, not our daily steak and lobster. I remember the story of a missionary who did not receive her monthly check. She had a serious stomach problem. Because she did not receive her support, she had to eat only oatmeal for a month. Later she found out that her stomach problem was very serious and that her normal diet would have killed her, but that an oatmeal diet was the best possible cure. She had what she needed, not what she wanted.

I don't believe in the health and wealth gospel. Jesus never promised us wealth if we follow him - in fact He said it would bring hardship. God says He is Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides. The problem is this. When we look around the world today, it seems obvious that not everybody's need is being met. In reality many times our needs seem to go unmet. So what is the problem? Is God lying? Is God exaggerating the point? Why is it that sometimes my needs seem to go unmet?

The Bible tells us that with every promise there is a condition. There is a premise with every promise. One of the conditions for this promise is you have to trust Him. The more you trust God, the more God is able to meet needs in your life. The less you trust God the fewer needs He is able to meet in your life. The Bible says there is a faith factor involved.

Mat 9:27-29 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" 28 When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. 29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you"

God tells us that we get to choose how much He will bless our life. It is according to your faith. You get to choose how many needs get met in your life.

We see this truth often through the bible. One area we see this is in the area of giving. The one place in the Bible where God asks us to test Him is in the area of tithing. God says that the more we give, the more will come back to us. The more we are faithful in what he has put into our hands the more he will trust us with.

Faith is an interesting thing. You do not get it by simply listening to a sermon or by talking about it in a small group or reading about it in a book. You do not get it by just thinking and hoping and wishing. Faith is like a muscle. It is only developed when we use it. The more it is used, the more you get and the more God is able to bless your life.

So how do you know if your faith is growing? How do you know if you are walking by faith or walking by sight? Let me give you 4 tests that will help you evaluate the level of faith you are walking in:

1. The Pressure Test

The pressure test asks the question, "How will I handle stress?" Will I depend on myself or will I depend on God? We talked about this when we looked at Jehovah Nissi. Will I turn to other things first or will I turn to God first?

Psalm 50:15 ... call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.

God tells us to turn to Him when we are in trouble. Let me ask you a simple question, are you doing that? Do you turn to God first when you face trials? Some people turn to alcohol or pills to face hardships. Some people go shopping. This is just avoidance.

Jer 2:13 My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water

Imagine walking through the desert. I do not have to think hard about this because I lived in a desert for 10 years! You are walking through the desert and you suddenly see an oasis with a huge sign that says "God's free unlimited, everlasting, fulfilling, living water." You just walk right on past until you see a shovel. You pick it up and start digging, hoping that eventually you will find water.

That would be crazy! However, it is exactly what we do all the time. We not only reject God's provision but then we ask Him to come and bless our well. What audacity, what a lack of faith. You get into a relationship that you know is wrong but then you ask God to come and bless it. You spend money to impress people and put yourself into debt and then ask God to bless your finances.

Abraham did this. He was promised that he would be the father of many nations, but when it seemed that his wife could not have a baby he went out and dug his own well and then asked God to bless it.

Some of you are doing this right now. You are under financial pressure because of this pandemic and the first thing you cut out of your budget is your tithe. Then you ask God to bless your finances because of your great faith? It is a broken cistern.

This is a test! God is finding out who you are going to trust when you are under stress. Will you turn to Him, or will you simply rely upon your own resources? Perhaps the greatest single problem with the North American church today is the fact that they trust their own resources more than they trust God. That is the pressure test.

2. The People Test

God often uses people in our lives to test, stretch and develop our faith. This test could really be summed up like this, 'how will I handle disappointment'? Life is often disappointing. Things don't turn out the way we planned them.

Why do we always get disappointed by people in life? You get disappointed by people when you expect them to meet a need in your life that only God Himself is meant to meet. When you turn to a boyfriend or a girlfriend or a father or a mother or a husband or a wife or a friend and you expect them to meet all your needs, you're setting yourself up for massive disappointment. God never intended that for anybody! When they inevitably let you down, you think, "What's wrong with them?" However, the problem is not them, it is you. It is your own expectations.

The problem is not the people in your life. The problem is that you are not trusting God to be your provider. There is only one savior. Only one. When you expect other people to do what only Jesus can do for you, then you are setting yourself up for disappointment.

Isa 2:22 Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?

Stop trusting in sinful finite human beings and start trusting in a perfect and infinite God.

Jer 17:7 "... blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. 8 He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

If you trust in God you will never be disappointed. That is what the bible promises us:

Isa 49:23 ... Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in me will not be disappointed.

This is the people test. Are you going to trust God or are you going to rely on people to meet your needs? I know that if I was to call up Naomi right now, she could give her testimony concerning this. When we first got married, she quickly learned that I was not going to meet all her needs, and that I was not meant to. There is the pressure test and the people test;

3. The Persistence Test

Life is shaped by the commitments we make. Our character is developed through commitments. The problem we have is that most people are half committed to dozens of things instead of being totally committed to the one or two things in their life. Things that matter for now and eternity.

You will never master playing the piano unless you make a commitment to doing so. It will require dedication and constant practice to learn. Life is like that. Are you a person who folds under pressure? Do you throw yourself into a project but then as soon as things get difficult you run away and start something else?

You may be listening to this today and your marriage is being tested. When you got married it was until death do us part, but right now all you can think about is giving up and running away. Are you going to keep going or are you going to give up and quit?

Some of you may be having your personal integrity tested right now. You know the right thing to do but everyone around you is taking short cuts and doing the convenient thing, the popular thing, the thing that our warped society says is right but which God says is wrong. Are you going to keep going or are you going to give up and just do what everyone else is doing?

Ecc 5:4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow.

Who is a fool? The person who does not fulfil their vow. What commitments have you made to God that you have failed to follow through on? Is it reading the bible or tithing or getting baptized or becoming a member or joining a small group. This is a test of your character and your faith.

Do you want to be a weak person or do you want to be a wise person? This is a test. It is a test of the kind of character you are going to develop. Will you trust God to provide you the strength to endure the trials or will you give up because you are doing in on your own?

There is the pressure test, people test and persistence test;

4. The Priorities Test

This is perhaps the most important test of all. Who will be first in my life and what will be the focus of my life? Is your life built upon the foundation of Jehovah Jireh, or is it built upon something else?

Mat 6:31-33 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

We all have areas of legitimate need in our lives. We have financial needs, emotional needs, relational needs, physical needs and spiritual needs. These needs are legitimate and they are real. God has promised to meet every one of those needs *if* you put Him first in your life.

So let me ask, practically speaking, is God first in your life. Are you really trusting in Jehovah Jirah? In terms of your time, treasure and talents, is God first in your life. If I look at your calendar and your checkbook would I clearly see that Jesus is your number one priority? Are you spending more money on entertainment than you are giving to the church?

How are you doing? In terms of the pressure test, how are you going to handle stress? Will you turn to Jehovah Jireh first or just rely upon your own resources? How about the people test? Are you disappointed by the people around you because you are trusting in people instead of God to meet your needs? How about the persistence test? Are you keeping your commitments? Are you willing to trust God and hang on even when everyone around you is giving up? How about the priorities test? What is first in your life, and does your time, treasure and talents bear witness to that? How is your faith?

Isa 30:15 This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength ...

Are you resting in God's provision? Are you trusting by faith? Salvation and strength are available to each one of us this day. Jehovah Jireh has everything we need, but it is only through faith that we will receive it.

It was a blessing to see these baptisms today. In being baptized these people have boldly declared that they want to place Jesus first in their lives.

As a church we often have a special anniversary project that we announce in October. This year we would like to challenge everyone to give above and beyond their normal tithes. Last fall we completed our new addition, and it has been a blessing. Though this pandemic has meant that we are not fully using it, we know that God had called us to expand our facilities for a reason. With the addition has come a new mortgage. We are challenging people this year to give \$200,000 towards this new mortgage.

Today is our Annual General Meeting as a church. In the past year God has been faithful. He has provided through the people of this church everything we have needed. Even with the pandemic and only a handful of people coming out for worship, we still ended our financial year in good shape. We invite all member of the church to join us through Zoom at 12:45 today for the Fall Members Meeting. If you go to the church website and look under Events you will see the Fall Members Meeting post. On it you will find the details for joining the Zoom meeting as well as a link to download the ministry reports and financial statements.