

Giving: Unlocking Contentment

Giving, as an act of Faith

1 Kings 17:1-16

October 27, 2019 am

HDBC

Last week we started a new series on one of the most important things believers do. **Give**. It's not just about giving. It is about: discipleship; worship; faithfulness; gratitude and making a difference in our world. Giving impacts every area of our lives. We began by looking at **the tithe**. We learned . . .

Tithing is not a legalistic requirement for believers.

Tithing is a valid and good practice for giving.

Later in this series I will share a number of principles for giving that are found in the NT. These will be helpful in deciding where to give and how much to give.

However, there is an Old Testament example of giving that I think is worth our attention. It demonstrates for us that **giving**, can be **an act of faith**. Sometimes our giving is easy, or at least not stressful. We know that we can afford to give and it will not stress our finances. Then there are times when our giving requires great faith. Times when giving may put us in a position where we absolutely have to trust God to take care of us. This story is found in 1 Kings 17:1-16.

READ THE TEXT

The prophet barges into the story unannounced. This is first mention of him. His name declares his theological mission, for it means "Yahweh is my God." He claims there will be no rain until he says so. He bases this declaration on the fact that his God lives and on the notion that he serves this living God, which means his prayers will be heard.

Why choose a drought? Why emphasize that Yahweh lives? Elijah attacks Baalism at its theological center. Baal worshipers believed that their storm god made rain, unless, of course, it was the dry season and he needed to be brought back from the dead. To refute this belief Elijah states that Yahweh is the one who determines when rain falls, that Yahweh lives at all times, and that Yahweh is not afraid to challenge Baal on what his worshipers consider his home ground.

Soon, this challenge will come to a head on Mt. Carmel. **But first . . .**

What do you do when the ravens stop coming and the creek dries up? That is the question before Elijah in the text . Remember, **he told the king** there would be no rain or dew until he gave the word. God sent him into hiding and was sustaining him with bread and meat brought by **winged waiters** each morning and evening. Water from the brook Cherith. But the birds have stopped and the brook has dried up. **What now!**

Notice that God's next assignment for Elijah was to go to *poverty-stricken area called Zeraphath* to be cared for by a poor, nameless widow. **Avery Lee's statement that *There is always some absurdity in every act of faith*** certainly seems true. Elijah went from being fed by ravens to being fed by poor widow.

1. Waterless Brooks and Retired Ravens (1-9)

The creek has dried up and the ravens are no longer bringing food. Clearly, Elijah had to make a move. Something had to change. It is not unusual for God to use lean times to redirect our steps. As long has things are rocking along just fine, we seldom even consider making adjustments in our lives. Sometimes God has to shake us up a bit to get our attention. **Reduction of income, an increase in expenses, maybe the loss of a job.** Well, what do you do when that happens to you?

A. Don't Restrict the Lord to One Plan

He can do anything He wants to do, in any way that He wants to do it. Just because He meets your need in one way one time does not mean He will use the same method the next time.

Some people think God can only meet their needs in one way. He is *creative and filled with variety*. God's promise is that He will meet our need if we seek His Kingdom first. How He meets our needs is His business, not ours. Our responsibility is to simply trust Him.

B. Expect Your Faith to be Challenged

Elijah has learned to trust the birds and the brook, but now he will have to trust a poor widow from a foreign land. The provisions have ended and God has called for another radical act of faith.

Abraham went out not knowing where he was going. In some ways that would have been easier. Elijah knew where he was going, and it did not make any sense.

Zeraphaph was suburb of Sidon, modern Lebanon. God passed up all the widows in Israel and sent His prophet to this Gentile. More shocking when you realize that **Jezebel** is now looking for Elijah, and he had been sent by God to her hometown. **Her daddy was the king of this land**, and her enemy was living in his backyard.

Strange command. Maybe one of those times when Elijah could have conveniently misunderstood the voice of God, or played innocent. Miscommunications are not always accidents.

Husband and wife, new baby. Wife asks husband to change diaper. I'll do the next one. Next one he says I meant the next baby.

2. Dry Jars and Empty Bowls (10-16)

The Lord has promised Elijah that a **widow had been commissioned** to meet his needs. He finds her, only to learn she has just emptied her bowl of flour and her jars of oil. She has no more food. **The cupboard is empty.** How in the world would God meet his needs through this woman?

Note some important things about her

A. Gentile

Points to the universal reach of God's love.

B. Widow

Tough today, impossible then. No welfare.

C. Kind

When asked for a drink of water, she did not hesitate, even though Elijah was not of her people.

D. Believer

Note that she uses the personal name for God. How she had learned of Him, we do not know.

E. Woman of Faith (WOF) (MOF) (WOG) (MOG)

Notice that she is asked to do a very difficult thing. Use all that she has and give it to God's man. To do so would require a great act of faith. She was being asked to give the most precious thing she had to God. Her whole life was dependent upon that food. Give it to the Lord!

What was the catch? A promise. I will multiply it and give it back to you. Trust me now and you will find security. Give it all up to gain total assurance from God. Challenge to make a total commitment.

Man fell over cliff and caught a small tree protruding out. Hung for long time. Began calling for help. Hears voice that says, Let Go and I can help you! Who is that? This is the Lord. Let go and I can help you! Lord, is there anyone else up there?

Do not fear (13) apprehension that comes from sense of one's own weakness. Feel the situation is out of control. Nothing you can do.

She obeyed! Great to see someone with this kind of incredible faith. She laid it all on the line, and God was true to His word, as He always is. So refreshing.

Like Mary when angel appeared to her. She did not challenge his request, or try to bargain.

God Blessed! That oil and flour began to grow in those bowls and jars.

This is all about **broken dreams, and hopeless situations**. Loss of food for Elijah. Loss of food for the widow. Elijah had it made with the river bed and the ravens. The woman was fine as long as the food supply was there, but then it was about to be gone. In each case the Lord came through and brought a renewed vision of the future which was even greater than the one which had died.

Takeaways:

1. With God, No Situation is Helpless

No matter how bad it gets, remember that help could be just around the corner. Not talking about being a shallow optimist.

Teen pointing to crumpled fender and saying *Great news Dad. You haven't been pouring those insurance payments down the drain.*

2. God Multiplies Only What is Given to Him

Bank can't give me interest on money that I have not given them permission to use. 10% of 0 is still 0. Whatever you give to the Lord will be greatly used. Whatever is kept from Him, will eventually fade away.

There is an old story (probably fictional) about a man who was lost in a desert. He was about to die of thirst when he came across a small building. Struggled to the building and found that it was a pump house. He rushed to the handle and pumped it furiously. Nothing happened. Sat down in despair.

Then he saw in the corner a jar of water. With the jar was a note. The note said,

In order for the pump to work it must be primed. There is just enough water in this jar to prime the pump. If you use it ALL to prime the pump there will be water to spare. If you do not, the pump will not work.. After you have used all the water that you need from the well, please refill the jar for the next traveler.

What would he do? If he drinks the water in the jar he will be satisfied for a moment, but then have no more. If he takes a chance, acts in faith, he will have water to spare.

What will you do with your resources? Will you give them all to God and see what He can do with them? He has proven Himself faithful over and over again.