

Chapter 9

God's Provisions

“My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” – Philippians 4:19

Miraculous Bread

Psalm 37:5

*I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen
the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.*

The most remarkable miracle of my life was the day God provided bread from an empty cupboard. My dad must have been on strike or laid off again because food was in short supply around our house. In the same time period Mom would give us dry milk and pretend that it was the real stuff. We always knew the difference and to this day I hate 1% or 2% milk. It reminds me of that dry milk. I remember Mom not having milk one morning so we had to have our oatmeal with water! Yuk!!! On another ominous day we didn't have any bread in the house. There was nothing to eat. Mom sat us down at breakfast and told us we were out of food.

She told us the story of George Mueller and how he prayed for food for his orphanage and God always provided. One day they had no food to feed the orphanage children. Here is his story.

Early one morning Mueller arrived in the dining hall for breakfast. The plates and cups or bowls were on the table. There was nothing on the table but empty dishes. There was no food in the larder, and no money to supply the need. The children were standing waiting for breakfast. 'Children, you know we must be in time for school,' said Mueller. Then lifting his hand he prayed, 'Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat.' According to the account, a knock was then heard at the door. The baker stood there. 'Mr Mueller, I couldn't sleep last night. Somehow I felt you didn't have bread for breakfast, and the Lord wanted me to send you some. So I got up at two o'clock and baked some fresh bread, and have brought it.' Mueller thanked the baker and praised God for His care. 'Children,' he said, 'we not only have bread, but the rare treat of fresh bread.' Almost immediately there came a second knock at the door. This time it was the milkman who announced that his milk cart had broken down outside the orphanage, and that he would like to give the children his cans of fresh milk, so that he could empty his wagon and repair it.

My mom believed God loved us and would provide for us too. That morning as we sat at the kitchen table she prayed. She asked the Lord for a miracle for her children just as He had for George Mueller's children. Then we waited. Mom fully expected a knock at the door with a supply of food for the day. No one came. She prayed again and we waited. Nothing happened, no one called and no supplies came to our house. We had already watched Mom look through all the cupboards. We all searched the kitchen with her for something to eat. There was nothing. Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard, but this time it wasn't the dog without a bone, it was the kids who were going to go hungry.

Again we prayed and waited. Three times we prayed and waited, then searched again. Finally Mom got up one more time and searched again for something to feed her children. This time to all of our amazement there was a loaf of bread tucked in a corner that had not been there before. We had all searched the cupboards. We knew there was no food there. Then there was – just one loaf of bread. That morning we had toast for breakfast. We had no margarine or butter so we used Crisco lard on our bread. But we were thankful.

I wish I could go back for a video replay of that scene. We were all astounded. Someone had heard me tell this story and asked if it was a package of "Wonder Bread." It certainly was manna from heaven.

A Brand New Computer

Psalm 37:5

*Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him;
and he shall bring it to pass.*

One of my favorite experiences of God's provision is a story that took place in Washington, Pennsylvania. I had been working on researching unreached people groups and writing profiles of those groups. Simply stated, an **unreached or least-reached people** is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group without outside assistance.

I had been doing this since 1985 while in Pitman and continued in Washington. It was then 1995. I was using an old 80's computer. It was difficult to use and had unusual sized discs for saving information. It was slow and outdated. It wasn't compatible with other computers and I could not do graphics with it. I couldn't do Internet searches so I was in need of an upgraded IBM compatible computer.

I had written and compiled over 2000 profiles of unreached people groups. I had been praying about it and telling the Lord that I had been doing this now for 10 years and I needed a better computer. I desperately needed an upgraded computer so I could complete this task. I told the Lord that if this was what He wanted me to be doing then He needed to provide a better computer. I had done my shopping for computers through the then popular *Computer Shopper magazine* and had found a computer that really would service me well. It cost about \$1,000. I didn't have \$1,000 to buy it, so I cut out a picture of the computer and put it on my prayer bulletin board. It was a very specific request for that computer.

A few months after I started praying for this, I was visiting an elderly shut-in lady from our church. When I finished praying with her and serving communion she handed me an envelope with a check for the church and said, "This is my offering and my tithe for the church." Then she had another envelope and said, "Pastor this is for you. It's not for the church. It's for you personally. God told me to give it to you." I thanked her and said goodbye. When I got home Marilyn wasn't there but I thought I should open up the envelope and see what it was. I opened up the envelope and amazingly there was a check for \$1000.

I was like a guy that won the lottery. I walked around the house shouting "Hallelujah and praise the Lord. God answered prayer!" Marilyn came home and I shared with her what God had given us and she said, "Praise the Lord I've been praying for \$1,000 for some urgent home needs we have."

I was frustrated. I had prayed for this \$1,000. This was my priority. I was doing God's work. This was not some frivolous household thing for the family. As we talked about it, thought about it, and debated it, the Lord finally told me to let it go.

Let it go. Let it go? How can I just let go of a thousand dollars that I prayed for? I went to my study and prayed. I wept. I cried out to the Lord, "This is what I've been praying for. How can it be that somebody else is going to take it away?" As I prayed I sensed the Lord say again, "Let it go." In the end I resolved to let it go to the family need. I wrote in my journal that I received \$1,000 in answer to prayer, and then I had to give it up, so God must have something better. I continued to pray. Another six months passed.

About that time I got a phone call from a young man from our church. He was in the hospital and said he wanted me to come and visit him. He wanted to tell me what happened to him that night in the hospital. I found this 26 year old business man sitting up in bed with a nice laptop. I sat down and he told me his story.

He told me that he had gotten very sick a couple of days before. They rushed him to the hospital. The doctors did all kinds of tests to find out what was wrong. The doctor had said he didn't know what he had but it looked very serious and was life threatening. The young man was facing a critical issue of life and death. That night, he said, as he was praying Jesus came into the room and talked to him about his sin. He asked the Lord to forgive him for his many sins and for not walking more closely to the Lord. Then the Lord Jesus reached out, touched him and healed him.

Then he paused and continued, "Pastor, this is why I called you. Before Jesus left my room He turned back to me and said, 'Pastor LaFountain has a need and I want you to provide it for him.'"

He looked at me and stated, "Pastor, Jesus told me you have a need. He also said it did not have anything to do with your church work. It is something to do with a ministry the Lord has given you. I need to ask you, what is that need?"

He knew nothing about my unreached people groups, but he said the Lord told him to provide whatever it is I had been praying for. I laughed and said "Well, I've been praying for a Lamborghini. We laughed together. "No, I'm serious," he said. "The Lord says I am to provide you what you need and have been praying for. I'm going to provide it whatever it costs." Reluctantly, I told him the story of my research on unreached people groups and my need for a better computer and software. As I finished that story he showed me his expensive business laptop and asked if it would do. But I answered, "No, what I need is a desktop computer so I can do color graphics, scan pictures and download images so I can get the images of unreached people groups into the files."

He asked me to leave the room while he talked to his wife. I left the room and I waited outside for five minutes until they called me back in. Smiling he said, "Pastor my wife and I have talked about this and we know that God has ordained for us to provide for you, so here's what I'm going to ask you to do. I want you to go out and find the very best computer that you can buy, the monitor, the computer, the scanner, the printer, the software, and everything that you need in that computer. Spare no expense. Money is not an issue. I will pay for it whatever it costs."

I was blown away. I went home and pored over my *Computer Shopper* magazine for another couple weeks until I found all the items I needed and ordered them. I handed the bill to him and he paid for it. I still have the receipt today. It came to \$5,500. God provided every dime.

A Prayer Cottage

2 Corinthians 9:8

God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

While we ministered in Grove City, Pennsylvania God gave me a burden for prayer. I was preparing to write a book titled, *Spending Time Alone With God*. We were teaching about prayer and practical prayer disciplines to our church. We conducted church prayer retreats where we would spend Friday evening and all of Saturday at a church camp learning about and practicing prayer. Twice a year we had anywhere from 25 to 45 people involved.

I had also been teaching my pastoral staff to spend time alone with God and led them on staff retreats for prayer and vision quests. They were to get away alone with God three times each year. I encouraged them to find a quiet retreat center where they could spend two or three days in prayer.

As we were doing these retreats Marilyn and I thought about what we'd like to do in retirement. We both wanted to have a retreat available for people that wanted to get away for 24 or 48 hours just to be alone with God.

On one of our pastoral prayer retreats we were walking around the campground as we prayed. One of my assistant pastors met an elderly woman who asked him if he knew anybody that wanted a cottage. Of course he was interested. He also wanted a prayer cottage. He said he was interested, but wanted to know what it would cost and what it looked like. She said she just wanted to give it away. She was too old to take care of the cottage and wanted someone who would use it. Then she showed it to him.

It was in bad shape, the roof caved in, there was black mold everywhere, the chipmunks, mice and other critters had invaded the cottage. It needed a huge amount of work. This woman gave her cottage to Bill and he began the process of cleaning it up.

Unfortunately, two years later Bill ended up with terminal cancer before he could finish the cottage. He called me to his bedside one day and handed me the keys to the cottage and he said, "Pastor, we both have been praying for a prayer cottage. I'm going home to be with the Lord. I am giving you the keys. I'm asking you to take the cottage and make it into prayer retreat cottage."

That is how God provided a prayer cottage for us. After I retired I was able to spend many hours working on that cottage almost rebuilding the entire cottage to make it adequate for prayer retreats. Many people have donated money to make the renovations possible. Now we have a place at a church camp that is available for anyone who would like to spend 24 to 48 hours alone with God. God is our provider.