



Communion:

John 11:25-26 (NLT):
²⁵Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. ²⁶Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?"

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

Bread is broken to make His Body whole.



The Lord our
Provider

MICHAEL HINDON

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

The aim of this morning's message is to help us to understand how the Lord provides for us, and what our role in receiving His provision is. In a session such as this morning's, it is only possible to superficially scratch the surface of the subject that we are discussing - so may I encourage you to take notes or to download these notes that should be available on the Shofar website in due course - and to make a further study of what the Bible teaches around the subject.

To begin with, may I remind us all that Scripture (the Bible) is true and accurate? Anyone who argues that this is not the case is either misinformed, or has not made an honest study of the overwhelming evidence that exists to support this statement. Should you have any doubts on this score, please speak to someone on Leadership in the Church, (and/or attend Bible School! 😊), so that we can reassure you on any questions that you may have around this.

For those who would like a Scriptural foundation for my statement, here it is:



I know that each one of us is unique, and has a unique way of seeing things, but perhaps someone will be encouraged by my personal testimony on this subject - when I gave myself to the Lord, I said to Him that I chose to believe that the Bible is true and accurate, and that I chose to live in that truth - I said to Him that I could not see the point of being half-hearted about my relationship with Him - it would be a case of all or nothing for me. It was, at the time, a statement of faith; as I had no history or experience of Christianity. The Lord has faithfully blessed me over the years since then with demonstration after demonstration that where I apply the truth of Scripture to my life, the outcome is always the best that it could possibly be. Equally, where I have failed (far too often!) to apply the truth of Scripture to a situation, the outcome is not good. It is important to note that the outcome is not always immediately evident.

Having said all of that: I believe that it is necessary, as Disciples of Christ, to be sure of what we believe. That is why, in the Church, we teach and preach from the Scriptures - it is so that we can edify (or build) each other. Being sure of what we believe means that when difficult or challenging situations arise, we will not be caught out. This being so, it is important for us to recognise then that our obedience to the truth of Scripture is what will mark us out as being Disciples of Jesus Christ. And yes, there is very often a price to be paid for our commitment to the truth. But there is nothing else of eternal value! So the price that we pay pales into insignificance when we consider our eternal reward.

Which brings me to today's message: we're going to do what Paul says to Timothy, allow the God-inspired Scriptures to teach us what is right with regard to **The Lord our Provider**. In this way we will be equipped to avoid the trap of any false teachings or expectations on the subject.



The Lord our Provider

MICHAEL HINDON

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

There is a great deal of misinformation around how and what the Lord provides in the wider Church today. Many people have been snared by the enormous amount of false teaching on the subject. For example, one of these false teachings is the so-called "prosperity gospel" - I am sure that most of us have heard the term "prosperity gospel"? The basic message of this false teaching is that if we give something to someone "in the Name of the Lord" the Lord will return whatever it was to us in multiples. Because most people (if we are honest with ourselves) are looking for comfort and security in our possessions, such a message finds a ready audience. This is an example of extracting a Scripture passage from its context to serve a particular aim. My opinion is that the Lord hates it when we do this.

So, let's get to it: Has anyone else ever wondered why it is that the Lord will not act or move in a situation unless we ask Him to? In prayer? When I thought about it, I came to the conclusion that, in my opinion, it is because He has given us stewardship over the earth. In other words, He has delegated His authority over the earth to us. We all know when He did this, it is recorded in the *Genesis* account of the creation. But let's read Psalm 8 for David's take on it:



Psalm 8:1-4 (ESV):

¹O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. ²Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. ³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest



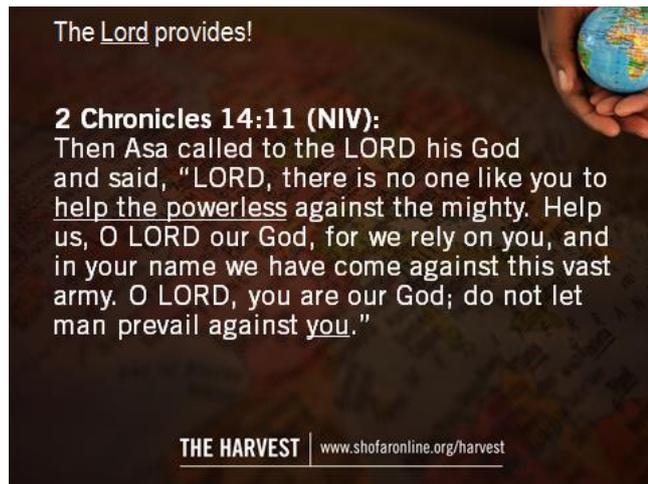
Psalm 8:5-9 (ESV):

⁵Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, ⁷all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ⁸the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. ⁹O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

You and I are not powerless - we may well feel impotent and powerless in the face of many of the challenges that we, and our country, face. But the truth is that IN CHRIST we are enormously powerful and influential. You and I can change the face of history simply by engaging with the Lord in prayer - and by acting in obedient response to what we hear from the Lord. Just look at verse 2 again - "Out of the mouths of babies and infants!"

What we'll read next is a wonderful example of how this principle works: it is a part of the record of how the Lord overcame the enemy when King Asa asked for His help.



Note that Asa was so determined in his prayer that he knew that the Lord would fight for them - "do not let man prevail against You." Which reminds me of David's defeat of Goliath and the Philistine army - David understood that Goliath was defying the Lord when he mocked the Israelite army and their God.

There are countless examples of the truth of the principle of the necessity of prayer in the Lord acting: how many of us have heard accounts of people in a different culture and country who have been confronted by the Lord Jesus Christ in a dream or vision? And of how that has caused them to become His Disciples? I am firmly of the opinion that it is because of the prayers of faithful Saints who have asked the Lord for the salvation of the people of those places.

Examples recorded for us in the Scriptures would include Elijah and the rain. Daniel and the 70 years of exile. Jesus at the resurrection of Lazarus. They prayed, even though they knew that it was the will of the Lord, He had said that it would happen. You and I cannot state that the Lord has made a promise, so we can simply wait for Him to make it happen - we are His agents, or stewards, of the earth - the realm within which we now live. Without our action, the Lord will not move...



In the context of what has just been said, it is clear that the Lord expects us to work with Him - and this is how we do it: We pray and we act in obedience to the principles of Scripture and to what the Lord says to us. (NB: What He says to us will ALWAYS be consistent with Scripture!)

Now we'll make it more personal:



So Piper is saying that God is glorified when He answers our prayer. In our daily lives we need Christ! I can testify of the many practical ways that He has helped me in the challenges of my personal life, and of the challenges in my business career too...

I could keep you here for hours with testimonies, but one example would be where my wife, Diana underwent surgery to her spine a few years ago... [Operation cost 75% more than quote, promise that He would restore, etc.] Another would be where I used to drive around 100 000km per year at one stage - and the Lord provided safety for me...

We have to remember that it is the Lord who provides what we need - not our career, or the government, or the Church...

The Lord provides!

James 4:10 (NIV):
Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he
will lift you up.

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

The Greek word that is translated to "humble" means "to make low". So to be humble means that I am prepared to submit to the Lord in everything - to place His will above my own. That is what best pleases Him! To understand the Lord, and how we are to live as Disciples of Christ, we need to humble ourselves and learn His expectations of us.

By now you are probably thinking that I have lost the plot - that I am talking about prayer instead of the Lord our Provider. But with the Lord's provision for us it is much the same as with prayer - we are His agents - or stewards, to use the Biblical term. With regard to His provision, we exercise authority - but the most important question is whether we do it in obedience to Him and to His principles, or not? Now to look at the principles around His provision, let's read the following passage:

Mk 4:26-29 (NLT):

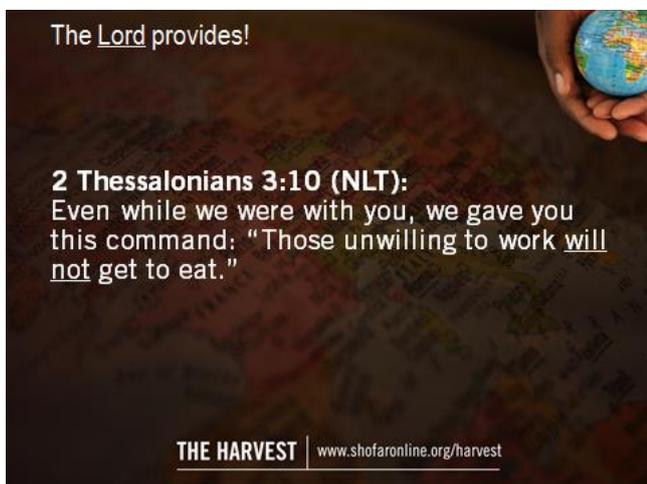
²⁶Jesus also said, "The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. ²⁸The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. ²⁹And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come."

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

I think that most of us understand how this works - unless a seed is planted, it can never germinate and grow into a new seed-bearing plant or tree. Every one of us is a product of a similar miracle - a seed within your mother was fertilised by your father - but it was the Lord who caused you to grow. So for us to expect the Lord to provide for us, we need to plant a seed of faith - simply put, we need to prayerfully trust Him - and apply the principles that He lays down in Scripture.



This is consistent with the sow and harvest principle. If no seed is sown, there will simply be no harvest. So if we do not obey the Lord's principles around provision, we will NOT experience His best provision - we will lack.



Just sitting around and saying that the Lord will provide will not result in food on the table! He expects us to work! In other words, we cannot be passive about the Lord's provision - we need to engage with Him and respond to His requirements of us.

Now, before we go any further with this, can the Lord provide for us? Does He have the material and other resources that are needed?

The first three of the following extracts all quote the Lord speaking, the fourth is the Apostle Paul:

The Lord provides!

Job 41:11 (NLT):

Who has given me anything that I need to pay back? Everything under heaven is mine.

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

The Lord provides!

Ps 50:10-12 (NLT):

¹⁰For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹I know every bird on the mountains, and all the animals of the field are mine. ¹²If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for all the world is mine and everything in it.

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

The Lord provides!

Is 66:2 (NLT):

My hands have made both heaven and earth; they and everything in them are mine. I, the LORD, have spoken! "I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word."

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

The Lord provides!

Romans 11:33-36 (NLT):

³³Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! ³⁴For who can know the LORD's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? ³⁵And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? ³⁶For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

I hope that these few verses convince or remind you of the truth that the Lord is able and willing to provide everything that we need.

Now what are the obstacles to the Lord's providing for us? Before we read some more Scripture, let's define the word "contentment".

The Lord provides!

Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of the noun "contentment":

the state of being happy and satisfied : the state of being content

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

So contentment is a state of mind - we decide to be happy and satisfied with our lives, and with what we have.

The Lord provides!

1 Timothy 6:5-8 (NLT):

⁵These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy. ⁶Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. ⁷After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. ⁸So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

The Lord provides!

1 Timothy 6:9-10 (NLT):

⁹But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

Remember that when something revolves around me it is lust? Is lust not opposed to love? Which is all about other people and their needs?

The Lord provides!

Hebrews 13:5-6 (NLT):

⁵Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." ⁶So we can say with confidence, "The LORD is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?"

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

So our giving is only as risky as our faith in the Lord (our Provider)!

The giving of tithes, offerings and alms helps us to remember that (as we have read already) everything is the Lord's. It is also faithful to the concept of sowing and reaping a harvest.

Briefly, to explain these three terms: Tithes are where we take one tenth of our gross income and give it to our local Church - this is used to pay staff salaries, rental, etc. so that the congregation can operate. (As an aside, imagine if every Disciple of Christ were to be faithful in this basic discipline - it would be possible to support one person at the same standard of living for every ten in the congregation - imagine the impact on our community if there were that many people available to reach out to, and serve, the people of our town and area in a full-time capacity!)

Offerings are another category of our regular giving (over and above tithing), and are an entirely voluntary expression of worship that express our gratitude to the Lord for what He has done for us.

Alms are a third category of our giving, and are where we support the "widows and orphans" or other needy people financially or in other material ways. Priority should be given to the local Church members when the alms are distributed by the leadership.

Each of these categories will typically be administered by the local Church - this means that the giving is anonymous and risk-free to the giver, who needs to trust the Lord to guide the Church leadership on how to distribute and manage the funds received. For those who are worried about this aspect - pray for your leaders, which, of course; we should all be doing anyway!

It is clear from our study today that if we neglect these basic types of giving, we run the risk of living outside the Lord's promise to provide for us. As with every promise made by the Lord, His promise to provide for us is conditional - we need to understand and comply with this if we expect Him to look after our needs.

It is very important for us to understand that we do not give tithes, offerings and alms in order to get something back - we do it because we love the Lord (Who saved us) and are obedient to Him - and because we love His Bride (the Church).



The Lord provides!

Luke 19:26 (NLT):
"‘Yes,’ the king replied, ‘and to those who use well what they are given, even more will be given. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away.’"

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

The context of this verse is the parable of the talents. The warning is clear - each of us has been appointed to steward what the Lord has entrusted to us wisely. Failure to do so is disastrous.

The Lord provides!

Matthew 19:29 (Message):

And not only you, but anyone who sacrifices home, family, fields – whatever - because of me will get it all back a hundred times over, not to mention the considerable bonus of eternal life.

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

This is the verse that is misused by so many who propagate the so-called "prosperity gospel". But notice that Jesus says "because of me", in other words, it is where we make a sacrifice in obedience to His will that the promise is fulfilled.

Speaking about this verse, John Piper has the following to say:

The Lord provides!

"Jesus promises to work for and be for you so much that you will not be able to speak of having sacrificed anything. Jesus says, "No one ever sacrifices anything for me that I do not pay back a hundredfold — yes, in one sense even in this life, not to mention eternal life in the age to come."

John Piper

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

Jesus is SO for us!

Just for fun, let's look at an unusual example of His provision:

Matthew 17:24-26 (NLT):

²⁴On their arrival in Capernaum, the collectors of the Temple tax came to Peter and asked him, "Doesn't your teacher pay the Temple tax?" ²⁵"Yes, he does," Peter replied. Then he went into the house. But before he had a chance to speak, Jesus asked him, "What do you think, Peter? Do kings tax their own people or the people they have conquered?" ²⁶"They tax the people they have conquered," Peter replied. "Well, then," Jesus said, "the citizens are free!

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

Matthew 17:27 (NLT):

²⁷However, we don't want to offend them, so go down to the lake and throw in a line. Open the mouth of the first fish you catch, and you will find a large silver coin. Take it and pay the tax for both of us."

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

The Lord will provide - sometimes in the most surprising way! Do not limit the Lord's provision by your limited expectation. Learn about Him and how His provision works so that your expectation is in line with His will. Remember too, that the timing is entirely in His hands!

For example: Even though the Israelites were outside the Lord's will for them when they spent 40 years in the wilderness before the new generation (plus Joshua and Caleb) entered the promised land, He preserved them by providing food and clothing that did not wear out - in other words, He supplied what they needed to survive. Simply put, in my opinion, He did this for the sake of the next generation who would enter the promised land. The Israelites desired the comfort of what they had had in Egypt, not the excitement and challenge of the fulfilment of the promises that the Lord had made. The basic reason for this is that they did not know or trust the Lord, in spite of the fact that He had so powerfully and manifestly revealed His heart towards them in miracles of protection and provision.

One of the aspects that we need to come to terms with is the fact that the Lord will provide what we need. Not necessarily what we want. And yes, it really is true that He exceeds any reasonable expectation that we may have, even here on the earth - but that is entirely His prerogative! Let's you and I be sure that we are within the will of the Lord so that we do not fall into the place that the Israelites did in the wilderness - of simply marking time while a new generation is raised up to fulfil His purposes on the earth.

In conclusion:



The Lord is our Provider.

We need to apply His standards to the way that we live so that we may receive His provision for us.

We need to obey the Scriptural standard with regard to tithes, offerings and alms if we expect the Lord to provide for us materially.

THE HARVEST | www.shofaronline.org/harvest

I think that maybe if you or I think that we have missed it in this regard, we should apologise to the Lord, and resolve to follow His standard. I am certain that He will joyfully restore us as we do so!
