

## When God Provides

At times, everyone doubts God's ability to provide. This is true because we are more prone to analyze our needs in relation to **circumstances** than in relation to **God's abilities**. Other than the resurrection of Jesus, the feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle found in all four Gospel accounts (Matt. 14:14-21; Mark 6:34-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:5-13). Jesus took five loaves and two fish and fed a huge multitude of people, and in the process He demonstrated just what happens when God provides.

**When God provides, money is no object** – Jesus began the miracle with a deliberate financial challenge to the apostles: “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” (John 6:5). The apostles (especially Philip) gave an accountant's answer: “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them” (John 6:7). Jesus wanted the apostles to trust Him, not their wallets. One wonders if many of the financial challenges that Christians face today are not similarly opportunities to better see and appreciate the amazing provision of God (cf. Ps. 37:25).

**When God provides, we ought to be patient** – The sun was setting fast (cf. Mark 6:35), and the crowd was probably getting very nervous while Jesus deliberated with His apostles. Before doing anything, Jesus instructed the crowd to sit down in neat rows of hundreds and fifties (Mark 6:40). The crowd was indeed fed, but their task was to wait patiently and contentedly for God's provision (cf. Phil. 4:11, 19). It is difficult indeed to wait humbly on God, especially when the circumstances we face seem so daunting.

**When God provides, we should give thanks** – One striking point about the four records of the feeding of the 5000 is that every single account mentions that Jesus first gave thanks (Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16; John 6:11). One hallmark of faith is the willingness to gratefully acknowledge God's constant provision: “In everything give thanks” (1 Thess. 5:18). Jesus healed ten lepers and only one returned to thank Him. His haunting question should stir us to express genuine gratitude: “Where are the nine?” (Luke 17:17). Jesus shows by His example that thanksgiving is an essential part of the Christian life (cf. Col. 3:15, 17).

**When God provides, needs are fully met** – Matthew 14:20 records: “They all ate and were filled.” There was no rationing of the bread and fish. Just like the manna in the wilderness, God fully met the physical needs of these hungry people (cf. John 6:31-34). Notice carefully that there were NO other menu options, but needs were fully met. There were NO plans made for another meal the next day, but the needs of that day were fully met (cf. Matt. 6:33-34). Most spectacularly, there were NO fights or struggles among the crowd, for their needs were fully met (cf. James 4:1-4).

**When God provides, there is always more than enough** – After everyone had eaten their fill, Jesus instructed the people to collect the leftovers, and 12 baskets were taken

up (Luke 9:17). Paul says that God has an infinitely abundant storehouse of riches by which He provides for the needs of His people (cf. Phil. 4:19; Eph. 2:7, 3:20). The same God who gave us His Son (the greatest imaginable Gift) has promised to abundantly provide everything we need to become more like Him (Rom. 8:32). In our Father's house, there is always, "Bread enough, and to spare" (Luke 15:17).

Thank God for His abundant provision!

**--JB**