

God, Our Great Provider

(Genesis 15, 17; 1 Kings 17:7-16)

Introduction

We've been learning about God's attributes. An *attribute* is a character trait or quality about someone.

What are some of things that we've learned about God already?

- God is **great creator** —He created the whole universe! We know that there is a God because we see what He has done. We see the wonderful things which He has created.

The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. (Psalm 19:1)

- God is **holy**—He is without sin; He is perfect in every way.
- God is **just**—He always does what is right and fair.

Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders? (Exodus 15:11)

He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He! (Deuteronomy 32:4)

- God is **merciful**—He extends forgiveness to us even though we don't deserve it.

Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

- God is **love**—He always does what is best for me even when I'm not at my best.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:7-8)

- God is **all-knowing**— God knows everything—past, present, and future. He knows all about you—even what you are thinking. He knows your deepest needs and desires, and He knows how to meet them.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33)

- God is **all-powerful**—He is almighty; He has all power in heaven and earth and can do anything. There is no limit to His power.

With God all things are possible. (Matthew 19:26b)

Today we're going to focus our attention on the fact that God is our great **provider**.

Our world tells us that we ought to be self-sufficient. There are a lot of self-help books out there:

- [How to Win Friends and Influence People](#) by Dale Carnegie
- [Seven Spiritual Laws of Success](#) by Deepak Chopra
- [Feeling Good, the New Mood Therapy](#) by David Burns
- [Seven Habits of Highly Successful People](#) by Stephen Covey
- [The Art of Happiness, a Handbook for Living](#) by The Dalai Lama
- [Self-Reliance](#) by Ralph Waldo Emerson

These books tell you how to be successful and happy by depending completely on yourself. There's even a magazine called, *Self!* But no matter how rich or prosperous or well educated you get, you will never find meaning and fulfillment in life apart from God.

Without God, you are without hope. There is no true blessing in this life apart from Him.

James 1:17

Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.

Can you remember a time when God provided for you or your family in a remarkable way? How has God helped people you know? How has He helped you? (Helped me get better when I was sick. Helped me at school during a test.)

God wants you to come to a place in your life where you realize that God is your great provider.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You that nothing is too hard for You. There is no limit to the ways that You can provide for our needs. Teach us this morning to always trust that You will love and care for us, even when the situation looks hopeless to us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

Lesson

In Bible times God showed Himself to be a generous, gracious, abundant provider! One example is in the lives of Abraham and Sarah.

Abram and Sarai

God promised to make a nation out of Abraham and Sarah's offspring.

Genesis 15:5

Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, "Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!"

God told Abram that he would have descendants and through his family lineage the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would be born and the whole world would be blessed. God's promise seemed impossible. Abram was 75 years old when God made this promise to him. And his wife, Sarai, was barren. She could not have children.

Abram and Sarai wanted to help God keep His promise, but they were insufficient in themselves to make that happen.

Why did God wait so long to fulfill His promise? God didn't want them to have any doubt that He is fully capable of fulfilling His promises and accomplishing His purposes without their help.

Finally, when he was 99 years old, God spoke to him again.

Genesis 17:1-2

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai—'God Almighty.' Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. (2) I will make a covenant with you by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants."

Notice that God called Himself, "*El-Shaddai*." This name means *The All-Sufficient One*. This is a wonderful name of God that shows the tender care and compassion of God towards us. "*El*" is a Hebrew word that speaks of His power and strength. He is almighty God. And "*Shad*" is the Hebrew word for *breast*. It speaks of a nursing mother who supplies her baby all he needs. It's a picture of God as a tenderhearted, compassionate, nursing mother. Now you put that together with "*El*", the all-powerful, all-able God who is also the tender, caretaker and provider for His people. He's the one who supplies and nourishes, who satisfies all of our needs.

Finally, 25 years after He gave Abram and Sarai this promise, God (the *El-Shaddai*) gave them a son. God waited until Abram and Sarai were so old that everyone knew they couldn't possibly have a baby. He waited for the situation to become impossible. Then God said, "Now I'm going to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond anything that you could have ever imagined." (Ephesians 3:20)

God is never in a hurry, and He's never late. He's always right on time.

God will meet you in the midst of impossible situations, too. He wants us to know that He is the All-Sufficient One, *El-Shaddai*, who is the almighty and tender caretaker. He wants us to go to Him to find satisfaction for all our needs, just like a nursing baby goes to his mother!

Philippians 4:19

And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus. (NLT)

He wants us to know how desperately we need Him. Only He can supply all our needs.

Elijah and the Widow

Another example of God being a great provider is in the life of Elijah.

God had asked the children of Israel to worship Him—the only true God. But in the time of King Ahab, the Israelites forgot all about following God's commandments and they were worshiping false gods. They even built altars to these idols!

God sent a message to the people through the prophet Elijah that there would be no rain in the land until He caused it to fall.

1 Kings 17:1

Now Elijah, who was from Tishbe in Gilead, told King Ahab, "As surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives—the God I serve—there will be no dew or rain during the next few years until I give the word!"

When there is no rain, they call it a *drought*. It was a very serious thing in those days. A drought causes a famine, a time when there isn't enough food to eat. The crops would not grow without rain; people wouldn't have enough water to drink or food to eat and many would die.

The shortage of food and water would affect Elijah, too. So, God told Elijah to get out of town.

1 Kings 17:2-3

Then the Lord said to Elijah, "go to the east and hide by Kerith Brook, near where it enters the Jordan River."

God provided both protection and food for Elijah in a miraculous way. He told Elijah to hide from Ahab and Jezebel by the brook called Cherith. The brook provided Elijah with water, and then God sent bread and meat by special delivery birds.

1 Kings 17:4

Drink from the brook and eat what the ravens bring you, for I have commanded them to bring you food.

God is a great provider who can meet your needs in miraculous ways. What are some needs that you or I might have? (Food, clothing, a place to live.) When you have a need, what do you do? Do you worry? Do you look to others, such as your parents or friends to meet your needs? Maybe you try to meet your own needs.

Remember that God wants you to look to Him first to provide for your needs. He is your Heavenly Father who knows and cares for you more than anyone else could. He longs for you to call upon Him in your times of need.

Elijah had some very important needs, but he knew that God would provide. And God miraculously fed Elijah by sending ravens with meat and bread! And I'm sure Elijah was very thankful for God's provision.

Then God allowed the brook Cherith to dry up.

1 Kings 17:7

But after a while the brook dried up, for there was no rainfall anywhere in the land.

Did God forget about Elijah? Would Elijah start to doubt God's love and care for him? God knew just what Elijah needed and He had a plan to take care of him.

God told Elijah to go to a place called Zarephath where a widow lady would provide for him. (A widow is a woman whose husband has died and she is now a single mother.) Even though Elijah knew that most widows were very poor and would not have any extra food to give strangers, Elijah obeyed the Lord.

1 Kings 17:10-11

So he went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow gathering sticks, and he asked her. "Would you please bring me a little water in a cup?" (11) As she was going to get it, he called to her, "Bring me a bite of bread, too."

This woman must have thought Elijah was crazy. Didn't he know there was a drought going on? How could this poor woman help Elijah when she didn't even have enough for her and her son to eat?

1 Kings 17:12

But she said, "I swear by the Lord your God that I don't have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die."

And then Elijah tells her not to worry.

1 Kings 17:13-14

But Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid! Go ahead and do just what you've said, but make a little bread for me first. Then use what's left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son. (14) For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!"

If you had been this woman, what would you have done?

It may sound selfish of Elijah to ask the woman for food and water in a time of drought. Here she was at the point of starvation. But He knew that if she was willing to give the bread to him first, God would bless her in many other ways. This was a test of faith for this woman. But Elijah assured her that God would provide.

God can provide for all your needs, too. There is no need too great or too hard for God to supply. God has all power, all wisdom, and He loves you! He is well able to supply all your needs. God does not promise to supply *everything* we want. But our *needs* will never go unmet if we trust in God.

Sometimes God doesn't give us what we ask for because he wants our faith to grow. Perhaps he wants us to learn how to have patience. He loves you and will always do what is best for you. When you have a need, talk to God about it; and then trust that He will give you what is best.

Elijah didn't know how God would feed him and the widow and her son, but he trusted God's promise to provide.

And as the widow obeyed Elijah, God miraculously provided for all their needs.

1 Kings 17:15

So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her son continued to eat for many days.

Every day until God sent rain again there was enough oil and flour to make bread for all of them! God showed His great power and love by supplying food for them, even when there was no rain!

God's provision of flour and oil never failed during the drought. And He will never fail to provide for you, too.

God cared for Elijah and protected him from King Ahab. God had promised to provide what Elijah needed, and God always keeps His promise!

George Muller's Story

Another example of God's miraculous provision during modern times is the story of a man named George Muller.

Mr. Muller and his wife had an Orphanage. By 1870, he had over 2,000 children living in five homes. It was very expensive for him to support all these children. But he never asked anyone for financial support. He trusted completely in God's great provision.

One time he and the children and his wife were sitting at the dining table and they didn't have a single scrap of food to eat. So, they prayed and asked God to supply all their needs. And, as they were praying, there was suddenly a huge crash and commotion outside in the street. A bread truck had broken down and the driver gave all the bread to the kids at the Orphanage.

We can trust God to meet all of our needs. God promises to hear and answer our prayers. He can give us wisdom to help us know what to do and He gives us people to care for us. El-Shaddai is the One who supplies, who nourishes, who satisfies all our needs.

[Teacher, ask for prayer requests....]

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that You have promised to meet our every need. Help us to trust You and never doubt that You will always love and care for us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Activity Corner

Cooking Option

We're going to make some bread like the widow might have made for Elijah and her family. Students wash hands and then prepare the recipe.

Materials:

- Ingredients for the recipe below
- Cooking utensils, hot plate or electric frying pan
- Napkins

Procedure:

Recipe:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| • 1 ½ cups flour | • 3 Tablespoons honey |
| • 3 Tablespoons oil | • 3 Tablespoons water |
| • Dash of salt | • Oil for frying pan |
1. Stir ingredients together.
 2. Roll dough into small balls and flatten like tortillas, approximately 3 inches in diameter.

3. Pour a small amount of oil in the pan to prevent sticking.
4. Cook bread over medium heat, turning to brown both sides.

Each student tastes the bread when it has cooled.

As students wait for their bread to cook, engage them in conversation using some of the Review Questions below.

Game Center

Use the following review questions in a time of discussion or a game of your choice:

1. Name two of God's Attributes. (Creative, eternal, everywhere, all-powerful, almighty, love, faithful, unchangeable, provider)
2. What does *El-Shaddai* mean? (The all-Sufficient One.)
3. What promise did God make to Abraham and Sarah? (They would have descendants)
4. How long did they have to wait for God to fulfill His promise? (25 years.)
5. Why did God wait so long to fulfill His promise? (He waited for the situation to become impossible so that they would know without a doubt that it was a miracle of God.)
6. How did God show His great provision to Elijah when the drought came? (God led Elijah to a brook from which he could drink and he sent ravens with bread and meat.)
7. How did God show His great provision to Elijah and the widow? (He gave them a never-ending supply of flour and oil.)

8. Even though Elijah and the widow didn't know how God would supply their needs, what did they have? (Faith that God would supply their needs.)
9. How did God show His great provision to George Muller? (A bread truck crashed in front of the Orphanage.)
10. How has God supplied your greatest need? (He died on the cross and has forgiven us of our sins.)

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