



## LOOK TO THE ONLY UNFAILING PROVIDER TO MEET YOUR NEEDS

Never have I had so many “providers”, yet such iffy provision. I have an internet provider, a television provider, and a telephone provider, none of which reliably provide. With all of those faceless entities diluting the term “provider”, I bristle when my health care corporation refers to my doctor as a “provider” instead of a physician.

I guess my understanding of a provider is literal – that they will reliably provide, not just promise to provide. Perhaps that is because my earliest example of a provider was my reliable father.

Growing up, my siblings and I always had what we needed – food, clothing, shelter, education. We had modest family vacations and music lessons to boot. We certainly did not always get what we wanted, but we could count on the basics and a little bit more.

And yet, my good provider dad did not provide relationship. In truth, it is impossible for any human to provide everything we need. But God knows that. He made both our needs and our limitations part of his divine design, so that we ultimately turn to Him, the one and only perfect Provider.

He reveals his wise and unfailing provision throughout the Bible, and nowhere more clearly than in the story of God telling Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. It’s a staggering story.

God had fulfilled his promise to Abraham and Sarah, that they would finally have a son in their old age, to establish God’s people through a line of descendants as numerous as “the stars in the sky and as the sand that is on the seashore” (Genesis 22:17). These innumerable descendants would come through this long-awaited son, Isaac.

And yet, when Isaac was about 13, God told Abraham, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love...and offer him as a burnt offering” (Genesis 22:2). This was intended to put Abraham’s faith to the test, to see if he truly revered God more than anything else in life (Exodus 20:3; Hebrews 11:17).

Abraham passed the test, obeying God’s instructions to go to the designated mountain, and lay his beloved son on a sacrificial altar to slay him. But just as Abraham raised his knife, God told him to stop! Abraham had demonstrated his utter devotion to God, who providentially provided a sacrificial lamb instead, caught in a nearby thicket.

Abraham also demonstrated his utter trust in God’s provision, without knowing the specifics, having told his servant that “I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you” (Genesis 22:5). When that came to pass, Abraham “called that place Jehovah Jireh”, meaning, “the Lord provides” (Genesis 22:14).

This is not the way we usually think about God’s provision. We prefer to think of Him as the provider who will “give us this day our daily bread”, or “who heals all your diseases” (Matthew 6:11; Psalm 103:3). We take comfort reading that our heavenly Father “knows that you have need of all these things” (Matthew 6:31-33). But God’s fatherly provision does not mean He gives us all we ask for.

The Hebrew word “jireh” means to both see and provide. Anticipating our every need (Matthew 6:8), God invariably provides for us – not always what we want, but instead that which will draw us closer to Him, will grow our trust in Him, will give us a more profound understanding of his love and power, and will help us become more like Jesus (2 Corinthians 9:10; Galatians 3:5-6; James 1:2-4).

Our divine Provider knows and unfailingly provides for those deeper needs, as he did for Abraham. Above all, He has provided what we need most: Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, sacrificed on the cross to take away our sins and make a way back to God.

So, let the truth-filled lyrics of the hymn *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* (inspired by Lamentations 3:22-23) remind us: “All I have needed thy hand hath provided, great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.”

With love in the Lord,  
The Rev. Christine Maddux