

Eight Hundred Thirty-Three Dollars and Thirty-Three Cents

Jim Elliff

This figure, \$833.33, represents an early encouragement from God . . . “early,” as in “early in our marriage.” It certainly WAS an encouragement that helped us think about God’s ability and desire to provide everything we need for our ministry and for our lives.



Just a few years after we married, we decided we would never ask for support for our work or for our living expenses. Rather, we would look to the Lord alone for such provision without telling anyone about our needs. We wanted to demonstrate through our dependence on Him how wonderful God is and how He loves His children. We didn’t feel that we had to defend this approach as the only way to conduct ministry. Rather, we rejoiced in others as they obeyed God in the way they were led.

This decision to live life this way didn’t just come out of nowhere. There was a journey to that kind of lifestyle which we have now practiced for nearly 30 years. The amount, \$833.33, was important as a stimulus to trust him for all these subsequent years in this special way.

I was pastoring a church in Orlando, Florida. The church was easily my most difficult one, yet equally one of the most delightful in terms of relationships and formation of concepts that would stick with us for many years to come. On the hard side was the huge debt the church carried. Up to 70% to 80% of the income of the church went toward the bond payments to be paid every Friday. We always lacked enough money on Monday, but IN EVERY CASE God provided what we needed of the \$1,388 by Friday. Internally, we had little to work with. And Pam and I had decided to be the last to be paid. This meant that often we didn’t receive our salary on time. Sometimes this shortage continued for weeks while we were entertaining guests regularly who loved to eat and rest in an air conditioned home. We would still see God’s hand in paying all the bills without speaking to others about our need.

It was in this period, before God amazingly led the church to pay all the debt off including the huge impending balloon note looming over us, that we had our \$833.33 experience.

I was asked to return to the church of my earliest memories where my father had pastored, First Baptist Church of Fordyce, Arkansas, to conduct a few days of meetings for the church. Not only was I invited, but also my two brothers, my father and my grandfather, who actually lived in town. What an experience, unlike anything we had done before!

When I left, I was behind in income from the church in Orlando. The amount was sizable to us, representing far more in today’s buying power than it seems now, especially for people who didn’t have any savings. We were, precisely, \$833.33 behind. We had not mentioned our dilemma to anyone. Only the person who had direct accounting of the church funds knew how far behind the church was on our personal income.

A few days after returning to Orlando, we received a call from the pastor of the church in Fordyce. Much to our surprise he said that we were going to receive a check from the church. It was an equally divided amount with the others who preached in the meeting. My portion, he said, was \$833.33. By the time it was sent to us, someone added another \$50.00 to that figure so that we could say that the Lord met all our needs to the penny, with a special bonus added.

We were amazed at God. Think about it. Nobody really knew our need but God. The exact amount (which was unusually high for what we did in the meeting, in our estimation) was a divided portion. There was no other way to construe what had happened but to say that God who knew our need arranged for just this amount, to the penny, to come to us as a signal that He watches after the concerns of His children with love and to stimulate our faith for the future.

For us, we learned through this and other experiences like it that sometimes God responds to our needs in ways that only He can get the honor. And, it was a signpost along the way to lead us to a future ministry based on trusting God for everything we would need without solicitation.

But I see one other blessing from this experience. It is the hopeful encouragement of what \$833.33 from God might mean to you. Surely you cannot even calculate the probability of this happening by chance. Surely, you have to say, God supplied in a way that He MUST be seen as the giver. Surely you have to say that God can do this whenever He wishes. Therefore you can take hope, just like we have, that He will meet every legitimate need along the way in your life.

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