

When the Money Runs Out: Six Lessons from John Stam

Kole Farney

Financial stress is to the mind as nausea is to the stomach—uncomfortable and impossible to ignore. If you are a Christian, it can be even worse because you know that you're supposed to trust God, and yet you instinctively worry, "What am I going to do?" "We're not going to make it!"



You've been there: the bills are due and the bank is empty. Where can you turn? Friends and family might be eager to assist, but what if they are experiencing the same hardship? What if the whole financial system buckles and there is no one who can help?

John Stam was a missionary to China who was martyred, along with his wife, in 1934. His father ran a local mission called Star Hope Mission. It was completely supported by volunteers and took no collections. While at Moody Bible Institute, John himself also adopted this rule, asking only God for his provisions. When the mission was strained financially, John wrote this letter of encouragement to his Dad, detailing six lessons he had learned while trusting God to provide for all his needs.¹

I would not mention what I am going to tell you now, if the Mission were not in the position it is: but I do want to give praise to God for the way He has led me during the past year. About twelve months ago, when I began to come to an end of the money I had taken to the Institute, I told the Lord that if I am to go to China I must know Him as the answerer of prayer here in the homeland. And the Lord has wonderfully shown Himself to me as Jehovah-jireh, and that right here in Chicago. Sometime, perhaps just before I leave for China, I may tell you some of these experiences. If I did not know before that God works today, just as of old, I know it now. May I mention some of the lessons I have had to learn?

First, that it is all of grace. God does not reward us with what we need, because of our faithfulness. We are unprofitable servants at the very, very best.

Second, that it is useless to get down and pray unless we have searched the Word and let it search us (Ps 139:23-24), even our thoughts toward others, our motives and desires. Once I had to wait three days for urgently needed help, to learn this lesson.

Third, that it is not our faith we must depend on, but God's faithfulness—our faith being only the hand held out to receive His faithfulness.

Fourth, that if the answer does not seem to come, there may be something in me that causes God to delay *in very faithfulness*. His faithfulness causes Him *not* to answer me, in such a case; He cannot encourage His servant in a wrong attitude by answering his prayers, can He?

Fifth, that faith must be intelligently based upon the revealed will of God. Not because I have supreme conviction that I need something or other, but because I find it is His will, I can pray with confidence.

Sixth, that I am not to expect the Lord to answer in just the way I suggest, or think best. Means and manner and everything must be left to the will of God. We keep on looking to our usual or possible sources of supply, forgetting that our real source of supply is the Lord, and that He can use anyone, anywhere, with equal ease and freedom.

How I do thank Him for this past year! I would not have had it otherwise, for all the ease of a bank balance. How could I ever have learned to trust the Lord, even a little, if everything had gone smoothly? How could He have checked me up, had I not been entirely dependent upon Him? Of course He knows what we need! We can have blessed peace and rest without anything at all to depend on but His promises. . . .The Book has become a new book to me, this last year.

Oh, how blessed I have found the promise, Matt 6:33! "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." That's a business contract with two parties, God and ourselves. How poor would be our stay, if it were only the supplies in sight, or the people who usually send the money! But, the Living God—can He forget His own work? It is not our work; it is His. His interest in it exceeds ours a thousand fold. As long as we are in His will, He cannot forget us. Could Mother forget her boys? Try as either you or Mother might, you could not forget us.

Dear Dad, what a blessed thing it is that God thinks it worthwhile to test us! Workmen only spend time and trouble on materials they can make something out of. God will perfect that which concerns us, Hallelujah!

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¹ Letter taken from: Mrs. Howard Taylor. *To Die is Gain: The Triumph of John and Betty Stam*. Westminster Literature Resources, 2004. p 45-47.