



MARY SOUTHERLAND
The Stress-Buster and Women's Ministry Motivator



The Monthly Draw

Hebrews 13:5 "Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be satisfied with what you have. God has said, "I will never leave you; I will never forget you."

Can you believe the holidays are just around the corner? Stores are already filled with Christmas decorations. Television ads for the newest and best toys multiply every day. It won't be long until we are wringing our hands, wondering where the money for Christmas gifts is going to come from, a fact that must sadden the heart of God. To think that our first thoughts of His birth are wrapped in financial distress is a clear indication that we do not understand and live on the sufficiency of God.

Have you noticed that it is always more fun to pay the bills when you actually *have* money to pay them instead of holding what my husband calls "The Monthly Draw"? The Southerland Monthly Draw is held when there are more bills than money. The rules are quite simple. All of the bills are placed in a stack. Dan then rifles through the stack, drawing out one of the bills to pay. This process continues until there is no more money. The rest of the bills have to wait until more money comes in. Sound familiar?

One morning, when I walked into the study, I could immediately tell by the look on Dan's face that the "draw" was not going so well. Finances had been extremely tight for a variety of reasons. Dan and I had prayed our way through that month, knowing that the next few months would only hold more of the same. I debated whether I should stick around to offer encouragement or run for the hills. I decided to stay. "Honey, can I help?" Dan looked up at me with a weak grin and said, "Not unless you have \$900.00." Oh, boy! It was worse than I thought. Seeing the look on my face, my sweet husband quickly added, "Don't worry, honey, God always comes through." Now I must admit that at that precise moment, I would have preferred a tangible sample of God's provision. You know - something along the lines of a money tree in the back yard or an oil well in the front. I went to my desk, hoping to find a forgotten check from a speaking event or book sale. I came up empty. An examination of my check register was even more depressing. Did we really need two children? Maybe we should sell one! (Just kidding) As I racked my brain for some way to "provide", I realized that I was stepping dangerously close to enemy territory. "Lord, I want to trust you as my Provider but right now, we really need \$900.00", I informed the God of the Universe. How is *that* for a prayer of faith?

Dan did all he could do with the stack of bills and went next door to visit our neighbor while I stayed home, plotting and scheming ways to come up with \$900.00. In fact, I spent the rest of the day in what my mother called "a tizzy" because as far as I could see, there was no plot and there was no scheme remotely looming in the Southerland picture that could produce the needed amount of money. And that was the problem. I was only looking "as far as I could see".

Finally, I left the need at His feet and went on with what was left of my day. As I began to prepare dinner, I remembered that I had forgotten to check the mail and headed outside. There it was, God's perfect provision just sitting in our mailbox, waiting for me to come - an *unexpected* check for \$949.64. Dan and I became aware of our need that morning. The check was mailed several days before. God met the need before the need was evident. He always does! In Philippians 4:19, Paul reminds us that our God will "meet all our needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

I often learn the most life-changing lessons at the feet of children. Ellie is the five-year-old granddaughter of a very close friend, Gina, who is known to cheer me up by sharing an “Ellie-ism”. Not long ago, Gina was telling me about the prayer Ellie had prayed the night before at dinner. The meal was ready. Everyone in the family was seated, and Ellie volunteered to say the blessing. Every adult at the table smiled, wondering what childish offering they were about to hear. What they heard was profound truth from God as spoken through the words of a child. Head bowed, hands folded, Ellie prayed, “God is great. God is good. Let us thank Him for our food. By His hand, we all are fed. Give us, Lord our daily bread. THE END!” That just about sums it up!

Just as the shepherd meets every need of his sheep, God meets our every need. Just as the sheep totally depend upon their shepherd's care and provision, we would be wise to depend totally upon God. He is our Provider. He is our Source and in light of that reality, stress flees, leaving only peace. As the holidays approach, fix your heart on God, rely upon your Shepherd, and trust Him to meet every need in your life and rest in the fact that He is the beginning ... and the end.