

THE BIG IDEA: We'll never see the provision of God without first making a decision for God.

The Take-Off

Something historic happened on June 30, 1859, and a huge crowd of 25,000 (huge in that time) gathered to see it. That was the day that the famous French tightrope walker, Jean-Francois Gravelet (known later - and more famously - as Charles Blondin), became the first person to walk across Niagara Falls on a tightrope. He covered over 1,300 feet on a 2-inch rope in a little over 17 minutes.

At one point, he even laid down on the rope to rest!

Blondin would eventually cross the Niagara 300 times and walk more than 10,000 miles on his rope. He gave his final performance at the age of 73 and died a year later from diabetes.

He was capable, and one could argue that anyone he carried on his back (and he carried his manager and his son often) was safe.

But that first day, when he offered to carry a volunteer, no one stepped up.

Now, before we continue with that story and what we can learn from it, allow me a moment to backtrack a bit and explain why this message could be the hardest of the series for all of us.

Week 1 - Jesus said "it is finished" because he did the work that we could never have done. Our satisfaction comes from resting in that work - in the hammock.

Week 2 - Compared to the universe, who is man that God is mindful of us? We're small, but we're seen and we're safe.

Our satisfaction comes from knowing that to God, we were worth finding and fighting for. We can rest in that.

But here's the deal - that "rest" is a little theoretical, isn't it? I mean, it's real, but it's hard to actually see someone resting in those things. The rest is critical, but a little invisible - like the foundation of a house or building.

But today's FACT? This is as practical and as visible as they come, and to make sure you get that connection, let's finish the story of Charles Blondin and the 25,000 gathered to watch him make history.

When he asked for a volunteer and no one came forward, he clearly distinguished the make up of the crowd.

25,000 people were entertained by him, but 0 people had faith in him.

Could that be true of you? Of me? Could we be those who are entertained by God but aren't trusting in him?

Mull over that question while we take a peek at a story in the Bible about a man who trusted God with his most precious resource.

It's found in Genesis 22.

1. A man, a son, and a knife

- a. This story involves Abraham, who is actually Abram from the story we read last week about Hagar
- b. The promise that God had given Abram about descendants too numerous to count began to be fulfilled when his son, Isaac, was born, and that's when God changed his name from Abram to Abraham.
- c. Everything is going great until Abraham's quiet time with God one morning, and that's when things got a little weird
- d. God asked Abraham to give up his son
- e. I know there are times when parents get frustrated and say things to their children like "I'm going to kill you!" but God literally asks Abraham to do that.
- f. Spoiler alert (and just so you don't fret until we get to it) - Isaac doesn't die. I don't want us to get hung up on the obvious questions like, "Wait, what?" about God's method here.
- g. What I want us to see is how this story is DRIPPING WITH TRUST!
- h. First, look at the trust of Isaac:
 - most SS lessons make him look like a little boy, but he was more likely a young adult
 - he was weaned in 21:8, Abraham stayed in the land a long time (21:34) and then this happened "some time later" (22:1)
 - he was old enough to walk for 3 days carrying wood, so that means he was old enough and strong enough to overpower his father, but he didn't.
 - he trusted his father
- i. Just like Isaac put his trust in Abraham, Abraham put his trust in God
 - he obeyed, and kept obeying each morning over 3 days
 - he trusted God to allow Isaac to come back with him (22:5)
 - he followed through on the sacrifice enough that an angel believed he was really going to do it (22:12)

2. Abraham gets a ram, God gets a name, Isaac gets a life

- a. How did all that trust pay off?
- b. Well, Abraham got a ram (no, not a Dodge truck), God got a name and Isaac got to live
- c. Win-win-win
- d. Just like Hagar named God in the passage from last week (Genesis 16:13), Abraham names God here
- e. The name - used only here in all of Scripture - is Jehovah Jireh, and Gen. 22:14 reveals the meaning: "The Lord Will Provide"

3. When God says he will, don't say you might

- a. Did you catch that? The Lord WILL provide. Not might. WILL.
- b. And if this story - and God's name - isn't enough, Paul drives it home in Philippians 4:19: "And my God WILL supply ALL your needs..."
- c. I love the way Rick Warren breaks this verse down:
 - He will - no doubt, no question, no wondering
 - Supply ALL - not some, not a majority - all
 - Your needs - not your GREEDS!
 - According to HIS riches - it's not based on YOUR assets, but on HIS resources
 - In Christ Jesus - you've got to be in the hammock, there's got to be trust in God as your provider
- d. This is where we struggle, because the ONLY way to show God that we trust him as our provider is to be generous with what he's provided.
- e. Most of us struggle with a poverty mentality - a belief that we'll always only have so much and so we'd better protect it at all costs! It leads to a closed hand.
- f. But when we believe that we're provided for by a God with an endless supply of resources, we tend to become more and more generous. It leads to an open hand.

The Landing

The obvious question, then, is what do we do if we aren't seeing God's provision?

Well, according to what we've read this morning, the answer may be in our unwillingness to trust him with our resources - our time, treasures and talents.

Here's how I see it, and I've tried to capture it in today's Big Idea: **We'll never see the provision of God without first making a decision for God.**

Said another way, we tend to want the WILL of God on our MAYBE.

He's Jehovah Jireh - so much so that Abraham gave him that name - but he provided what Abraham needed after Abraham gave what he had.

There was no MAYBE about it for Abraham.

Our part is to make a decision - Proverbs 3:9-10 - HONOR God FIRST and he'll make your resources LAST

Malachi - TEST God in your giving and he'll give you a TESTIMONY of generosity!

Nodding our heads in agreement with this and not actually giving makes us like the 25,000 who were entertained by Blondin but didn't trust in him.

Let's trust him as our provider to do what the Bible says and actually put him to the test.

Decide to honor him first with what is already his.

Poverty says, "My pie is only so big."

Generosity says, "The pie was never mine to begin with."

Opening our hands allows us to give, and puts us in the perfect position to receive more to steward.

2 Cor. 9:11 - You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

You and I can trust that!