

# The Abundant Life | Abundance or Scarcity

Rob Rogers      October 30, 2022

## Introduction

Imagine, that you're going to throw a party. You're the host. You send out invitations to all of your family and friends, some of them know each other, some of them don't. You've saved up for YEARS to throw this party — which is going to last five days...

You're thrilled to visit with and bless all these people you love... even the ones that don't quite fit in... and the day comes... everyone begins to arrive, you're welcoming everyone... and the party is off without a hitch...

1. **Day 1.** Party is great, everyone is happy, excited, there's a buzz in the room, everyone is having a great time. Every room is filled with games, and laughter... there's more food and drink than they know what to do with. Everyone is having a blast and by all counts, it's a success...
2. **Day 2.** The party continues... it's calmed down a bit... however... unbeknownst to you... one of your guests had a bad dream the first night, that you ran out of food. The house is out in the middle of nowhere. The next day... he starts to wonder if there's going to be enough for his family... and their friends... for tomorrow, and he begins to hide a few of your dinner rolls in his coat pockets so he has enough for tomorrow...
3. **Day 3.** Several other of your guests saw the man stuffing rolls in his pockets, and they begin to worry that there won't be enough to go around, so they create a little faction within the party and come up with a scheme to steal the main course that evening, lock themselves in one of your bedrooms... have their fill, and save more for themselves for the next day and maybe even the day after...
4. **Day 4.** At this point, the party is no longer a party... but a war zone... and everyone is fending for themselves, taking and hoarding whatever they want, far more than they actually need... and pretty soon, there's no food for the guests that were simply there to enjoy time together and some good food...
5. **Day 5.** The factions take what they've stored up and leave the party. They've not only ruined the party... but they've completely destroyed their relationship with you and everyone else around them...

**This is exactly what human beings have done with God's generosity.**

In fact... **the entire story line of the Bible is a story of giving and taking.** Of a generous God, a generous host, and what people do with God's abundant generosity...

***In the very beginning***... an unbelievably powerful and generous God creates the cosmos and everything within in. On the earth He puts a beautiful garden for His creation to enjoy... Adam and Eve walk in this abundance with God in the cool of the day. There's a canopy of shade under the trees... an endless variety of fruit trees... and vegetables in the garden... beautiful animals grazing... probably a lazy river flowing through the garden... maybe some cliffs and waterfalls! A lake or 2 or 10... it is absolute paradise! No allergies... no sickness, disease or suffering. And they're naked and no one cares! And God says, *"Is this not*

awesome!!!? Enjoy it! I made this for you! Bon Appetit! Enjoy! All of this is for you! Everything I have is yours — **but there's one tree... just don't eat from that one... But everything else... Have a BALL!**"

And everything was as it was designed to be... and here comes the serpent... scheming and slithering his way **to plant one single idea in the mind of humans** — that we have wrestled with ever since...

### Genesis 3:1

"Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

- In other words, "God can't be trusted. He's holding out on you... He's not generous... His generosity has limits, but mine... oh trust me and I'll open your eyes... Just eat from the one tree..."

### Genesis 3:4-5

You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your **eyes will be opened**, and you will be **like God**, knowing good and evil.

- "How dare He forbid you from eating of any tree! You're entitled to it... after all, God doesn't want you to experience an abundant life... but I do... God isn't generous... but I am... He doesn't really love you... but I do..."

And as soon as Eve TAKES and eats... and the moment Adam takes and eats... their whole lives turn inward... they become painfully aware of themselves... their nakedness. They are filled with shame, embarrassment, and a black hole of self-obsession is birthed inside of them! *In one single instant, self-absorption and self-aggrandizement infiltrates their entire being.*

And what we realize in hindsight is that as God instructed Adam and Eve not to eat from just that one tree... what He was telling them is **"I want you to enjoy all of my creation! Everything about it! Have your fill! Just don't eat from the one tree that will keep you from being a GENEROUS person."**

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## The First Lie

**The very first lie... is that God cannot be trusted.** That He's not generous! That His provision is not abundant! That He's holding out on you... and the moment you begin to believe it... your life is saturated with fear, worry, anxiety, and suspicion that maybe God doesn't have your best interest at heart, and YOU need to look out for number one. As a result, we become just like the people that brought division and destruction into the party... that hoarded for themselves at the expense of everyone else.

**When Jesus comes on the scene**, He's constantly pointing us back to the reality that His Father is so unbelievably generous and kind... that He's provided abundantly more than we could ask or imagine — and even in moments when it doesn't quite feel like it... or we can't see how it's going to work out... we can ALWAYS ALWAYS trust Him.

### Luke 12:22-34

And He said to His disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. <sup>23</sup> For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. <sup>24</sup> **Consider the ravens:** they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! <sup>25</sup> And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? <sup>26</sup> If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? <sup>27</sup> **Consider the lilies**, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>28</sup> But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He

clothe you, O you of little faith! <sup>29</sup> And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. <sup>30</sup> For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. <sup>31</sup> Instead, **seek His kingdom**, and these things will be added to you.

<sup>32</sup> “**Fear not, little flock**, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup> Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a **treasure in the heavens that does not fail**, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup> For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The context of this passage begins with a man who is fearful and worried about provision for himself... specifically about money. He comes to Jesus and commands Jesus to tell his brother to split his inheritance with him. It didn’t work out to well for him, because in typical Jesus fashion, He turns it into a teaching opportunity for his followers. The man wants money... and Jesus exposes that the reason he wants the money is because he’s anxious! He does not trust in the abundance that God provides.

Jesus doesn’t look at the man and yell, “**STOP IT!**” One pastor wrote that Jesus is not a sergeant here, he’s a surgeon.

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## Abundant living

And what Jesus is exposing here is the belief that if you have more provision... if you have more money... you’ll be less worried and anxious about your life. Jesus essentially tells us that the anxious fear that riddles the human heart has nothing to do with your treasure — and everything to do with your trust. He’s saying:

### The abundant life is not about treasure — its’ about trust!

- Abundant living has nothing to do **with provision**, and everything to do with **the Provider**.
  - If you believe God is stingy and withholding good from you... you’ll be fearful and riddled with anxiety... and you’ll become stingy and withholding.
  - If you believe God is limitless, good, and overwhelmingly generous... you’ll become a contented and at peaceful person. As a result, you’ll be good and overwhelmingly generous.
    - Adam and Eve had all the provision they could ever hope for... but they threw it all away: why? Because doubt in God’s goodness and generosity began to creep into their souls.
    - We live in a culture that bombards those within in it that we cannot trust God to provide for us, and we must fend for yourselves!

*A social order bent on producing wealth as an end in itself cannot avoid the creation of a people whose souls are superficial and whose daily life is captured by sentimentalities.<sup>1</sup>  
~ Stanley Haurwas*

**ILLUSTRATION:** In the late 90’s there was an article published in the New York Times preparing baby boomers for the passing of their parents... and that the opening of their wills (and therefore their wealth) was just around the corner. The article cited case after case, horror stories of families that were incredibly close to one another being torn to pieces over the inheritance they thought they were due. The subsequent arguments and divisiveness over money poisoned and eventually destroyed those families.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Hauerwas. *Hannah’s Child* (SCM Press, Feb 11, 2013) p. 237

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/01/us/01boomers.html>

***It's all born from this idea that there isn't enough to go around.***

- This doesn't mean you don't work hard... but it means that you recognize that God is the one gave you the intellect, education, opportunities, and skillsets that enable you to earn your provision.

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## **Showing Gratitude**

**APPLICATION:** We're so egotistical in American culture... we think that we as individuals are responsible for our success. While you as an individual have a role to play... have you thought about what opportunities were available to you that weren't available to others? Or what relationships along the way helped you to become who you are? Where someone took a risk on you, and it totally could have backfired, but you ended up being a worthy investment?

I think a regularly and healthy discipline in the life of a believer is **regularly thanking** those that made relational or provisional investments in you when you were younger.

- **EX 1.** A professor, a mentor, a relative, a pastor, a boss, whoever... because in doing so, you're recognizing that any success you have in life is not just the result of YOUR OWN EFFORT, but in the sacrifices and investments of others that God provided for you on the journey.
- **EX 2.** Or even in those who obey the scripture through the practice of tithing... that is an act of trust. Over the years, Misty and I really could have used that 10% for a whole bunch of other urgent things... living paycheck to paycheck... we felt the tension... not knowing how we were going to pay our bills. But from the beginning of our marriage, we agreed that this was without question, a matter of obedience to, and ultimately trust in a God of abundance — and God has always provided... often times in wildly surprising ways.
  - **Q:** Could we have used that 10% for something else? Something urgent? Absolutely... but again, we had to decide, are we going to trust in ourselves and withhold from God what already belongs to Him... or would we trust in God as our provider... regardless of how bleak our circumstances looked?

***The life of Jesus reveals to us a God who brings order out of chaos, gardens out of a wasteland, beauty from ashes, abundance from nothing.***

*We live in a culture of scarcity, but we believe in a God of abundance. We must constantly ask ourselves, "Am I living out what I say I believe. Do I really believe that God will care for me even more than the ravens or the lilies of the field? Do I really believe that if I trust in the abundance of God and live with a radical generosity that God will take care of me, of my family because sometimes it feels like there isn't enough to go around?"*

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## **Can I Really Trust God?**

**Can I really trust God? Yes.  
Do I trust God? Sometimes.**

This is what Jesus is exposing in this passage and in us.

The abundant life is not about acquisitions or possessions.  
It's not about bigger bank accounts and storehouses.

**According to Jesus, entering into the abundant life is 100% a matter of trust.**

**Trust in a God who promises to be with you, and care and provide for you in every situation that you face. That belief alone empowers you to live within a kingdom that is free from anxiety, fear, scarcity — and is absolutely overflowing with provision that is all around you, all the time. Trusting in your provider.**

*“Okay, well Rob, the ravens... sometimes we’ll see them get run over by a car. What about that raven? Or the lilies... they’re beautiful sure... but they’re only around for a short time... that’s not very reassuring. Jesus’ perspective seems to be a bit idealistic or even naïve to me.”*

**Good point... if the point was about the ravens and the lilies.  
The point is about scarcity vs. abundance. About anxiety, vs. trust.**

### **Luke 12:24**

Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!

- In other words, are ravens anxiously storing up food for themselves for fear that there won't be enough tomorrow? No, they do not. They work hard, and they scavenge and eat what God provides for them. And every day, there is enough.

### **Luke 12:27**

Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

- It's about how they're adorned. Do the lilies fret about what they look like? Do they work really hard to be more attractive than other lilies? Is it a lily competition? Lilies don't work... they just are what God created them to be, and God provides the rain and sunlight they need — and it's enough.

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## **Seek His Kingdom**

### **Luke 12:29**

And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. <sup>30</sup> For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. <sup>31</sup> Instead, **seek His kingdom**, and these things will be added to you.

*A few weeks back we talked about God flipping this world's value system on its head... He's back at it!*

- The world says, “There's not enough.” **God says, “There's more than enough”**
- The world says, “Take.” **God says, “Give.”**
- The world says, “Store up earthly treasure.” **God says, “Store up heavenly riches that will never fade.”**
- The world says, “Seek comfort.” God says, “Seek the kingdom.”
- The world says, “Give in order to get.” **God says, “We get in order to give.”**
- The world says, “It all belongs to you.” **God says, “I am the Author and Creator of all things, and it all belongs to Me. So seek first my Kingdom and needs will be met, every anxiety will be cured, every fear will be quenched. I dare you to live according to My plan, My**

**ways, My values, My Kingdom, and I will open your eyes and YOU WILL SEE what kind of God I really am!”**

**VISION:**

If every follower of Jesus understood God’s promise of abundant provision, not only would your soul be satisfied in God, and you would be content in every circumstance — but the Church, the family of God’s people, would be so attractive to a wildly discontented, divided, and distorted world.

*Revival would begin to break out in communities all over the world. Every need would be met, every starving child would be fed, every missionary equipped, sent, and supported, every Kingdom outpost planted, and the abundant life that only Jesus brings would saturate our own lives and the lives of those closest to us.*

God created us to live under His abundance. Ever since we’ve abandoned Him, He’s been on a mission to restore the paradise that we’ve broken. To undo the curse of the Garden.

**How?** By inviting God’s people to trust in the goodness of the King and the abundance of His Kingdom, to resist scarcity, and to live generously toward friend and foe alike. Because it is only when **the words of the church** and **the actions of her people** align, will the world begin to look up and take notice. The church is God’s Plan A to invite the world into the Abundant Life that can only be found in Jesus! ***But it begins right here. Will you, people of God, trust in the God of abundance?***

*The power of the future lies not in the hands of those who believe in scarcity but of those who trust God's abundance.<sup>3</sup>  
~ Walter Brueggemann*

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## **He Gave**

This is why the most famous verse in the Bible says that God so loved the world that He **“GAVE.”**

There is no greater proof of God’s abundant provision for human beings than the fact that God gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but receive eternal life, abundant life, life to the full!

**There is no clearer evidence of God’s radical generosity toward humanity than on the Cross.**

Jesus Christ emptied Himself so that you could be enveloped in the abundant provision of heaven. When you live trusting in His abundance, living life with a radical generosity, you empty yourself, He fills you again. He gave His life away for you, and when you give yours away for Him, He fills you with His life again and again and again.

Our God is an endless source. Despite what the world may say, He is not short on resources, and He is not oblivious or uncaring about our need.

**There is nothing that you need that He can’t give. He’s a God of abundant, radical, overwhelming, absolutely ridiculous generosity toward those who trust in Him.**

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Brueggemann. *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope* (Fortress Press, 2000) p. 71

The more you see the generosity of this all-powerful God who loves you, knows every little intimate detail about you, cares more than you can ever imagine — it enables you to walk, moment by moment, with a trusting assurance that God's got you covered.

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## Discussion Questions

1. What has mankind done with God's generosity?
2. How does "the first lie" impact our lives today?
3. What do you glean from the parable of the raven and the lilies?
4. Discuss: The abundant life is not about treasure — it's about trust.
5. What opportunities were available to you that weren't available to others?  
What relationships along the way helped you to become who you are?  
Have you expressed gratitude to those who taught or gave to you?
6. Can I really trust God? DO I really trust God?
7. Discuss: It is only when the words of the church AND the actions of her people align, will the world begin to look up and take notice.

## NOTES