
Alright, what's up Traders Point family? How are we doing? It's good to see you. We are one church gathering in multiple locations. I want to say hello to everyone at our North campus, Downtown, West, and anyone watching online. I know we have a bunch of people hosting watch parties around the country. Welcome. Those of you at Northwest, it's good to see you.

If you have a Bible or a Bible app, and I hope you have access to one, would you please get to the Old Testament book of 1 Kings 17. That's the story we're going to walk through in a few moments.

Let me kind of set the table for us. If you're just now joining us, if you're a guest today, we've been in this series called *6 Words that Can Change Your Life*. Really the big idea behind it is that we know a word can't, in and of itself, change our life. But we know an ordinary word, like the ones we've been walking through, can help us make some space for God to come in and speak, work, and do in our lives what only he can.

So, on week number one we looked at this word *Wow*. Then we looked at *Sorry*. Last week we looked at *No*, and I have had so many people say no to me this last week. You guys are enthusiastically applying that message to your life. It's so great. I was on an airplane coming back from Dallas this past week. This guy walked by and looked at me and was like, "No." I was like, "Traders Point?"

Today I want to look at this illusive word here.

Enough

And there are a number of ways in which we can work that word into a set of questions we're all asking in our lives. There are a number of ways I've asked this question of myself. Am I enough? Is this enough? How much is enough? How do you know?

There was a researcher from Stanford who was asking people in Europe this question: How do you know when you've had enough? He was basically asking that question through the lens of how do you know how much food to eat.

People in Paris, this was their number one response:

"When I feel full."

Like, when I feel full, when I feel like I've had enough I stop eating.

When he asked the same question to people in America, different answer. It was a variation of one of these three:

When the food is gone...when my plate is empty...or when the Netflix show I'm watching while eating is over.

It kind of reminds me of the very first goldfish I ever owned. Poor fellow ate himself to death because he didn't know when he'd had enough. I dumped the whole box of fish food into the bowl, not because I was on vacation. I was like, "He'll ration it out. He'll know." He didn't know. He just ate until he died.

When my son was six years old, he went with me out to California because I was preaching at a church out there. We ate dinner at a restaurant called Claim Jumper. I don't know if any of you have ever visited one of these establishments. They have them out west. They serve ginormous portions of food.

When we got done eating, he wanted dessert. I said, "Do you want to share something?" He said, "No, I want my own," and so they brought out this brownie, and I'm not exaggerating, it was bigger than his head. And it was ice cream, whipped cream, chocolate sauce, and all that. He dug into this thing, and when he finished I snapped a picture of him. I want to show it to you. [Looking miserable, hand on his stomach] You know, your soul can look like that too.

I think all of us, in one way or another, have fallen into this trap of chasing after and pursuing what we think will be enough in our lives. I know I have. And so, what ends up happening is we finally get the job or promotion we thought would be enough. "Once I can get that title in front of my name, then I'll feel like I've arrived. I'll feel successful."

Then you get it and there is something nagging at you that is missing. Like, "We're living in the additional square footage, we're driving the nicer car, we're wearing the more expensive clothes but we're not any happier."

And so, we've achieved the thing, we've acquired the status, we've accomplished the goal and yet we're not as happy as we thought or hoped we would be. And in every possible way we caught up to and maybe we even crossed the line of what we previously thought would be enough. We get up to it, and then it's as if someone cruelly moved the line up a little bit further. And we continue to chase it.

This is what a guy named Solomon is driving down at in the book he writes in the Old Testament called Ecclesiastes. And he was one of the most successful people to ever walk the face of the planet. And Solomon would say: Listen, I've achieved it all. I've acquired it all. I've been there, done that, and I'm actually telling you this isn't it. I've achieved and accomplished everything you would think a human being could accomplish or acquire that would be enough, and it just simply isn't.

In fact, he would say it this way in chapter 5, verse 10, “Those who love money will **never** have **enough**.”

And I don’t know about you, but it’s easy for me to read a statement like that and to give myself an out. I read that and I’m like, “Well, I don’t love money. I don’t love it.” In fact, if I were to take a poll and say, “Show of hands. How many of you love money?” I doubt I’d get too many takers, even if you do love it.

We all know to publicly say you love money makes you sound like a jerk. “I’m not going to say that.” But here is the deal. Maybe we don’t love it, but maybe we think about it all the time. Maybe you’re like me. When the balance in my checking account drops below that line I’ve established, I’m either okay or un-okay. I start to panic and try to take control. It’s the same thing; I’m leaning against it to feel comfortable and at ease and say, “Now I’m in a position where I can relax. Now I’m in a position where I can actually share some of it.”

Solomon is like: Listen, I’ve acquired it all, and if you love it you’ll never have enough of it. And research just simply backs up what Solomon said to us thousands of years ago. Researchers asked people this question: What would be enough? What do you need to acquire in order to feel like you have enough? Here was the answer across the board:

About 25% more

And it didn’t matter their salary. It didn’t matter their tax bracket. It didn’t matter their square footage. Everybody said this. So, if you made \$30,000 per year, \$50,000, \$100,000, or more than \$500,000, everybody still said about 25 percent more, “Then I could relax a little bit, then I could feel like I have some margin.” But it never is enough. We ratchet up our lifestyles. We just tack on more and more and more and it never feels like enough.

So, can I just be honest with you? I don’t like listening to messages on this topic, let alone preach them. Here is why. It’s always like, that sort of guilt thing like, “I kind of think I know how this is going. You’re telling me I don’t want to love money, I shouldn’t think about money, and I should just trust and all that. What’s the answer here? To never think about it at all? To not ever establish a budget?”

I’ve met some people who say, “I just hate money. I don’t even think about it.” Is that the answer? That’s not the answer. Maybe I could phrase it this way: The antidote to the never-ending cycle of enough is this exciting little word right here. I know you guys are going to be super-excited about it.

Contentment

One person loves it. If you are anything like me, you read that and you’re like, “Really? That’s it?” Those of you who are visionary, hustle, goal-setters, like, “I’m going to achieve

the thing,” and somebody tells you to just be content, isn’t it kind of annoying? It kind of feels like a bit of a wet blanket.

For the longest time, when somebody would tell me to be content I felt like he was saying this. He wasn’t saying this, but I felt like he was saying, “Just settle for a mediocre life.” Right? “Just calm down a little bit.”

I don’t want the generic, I want the real thing. I don’t want Dr. Zipper, I want Dr. Pepper. I want Lucky Charms, I don’t want Marshmallow Mateys. I want to go to Disneyland, not Holiday World. And then somebody would look at me and go, “Just be content.” And it was so annoying.

And I don’t want to do that to you. It’s not what that word means. It doesn’t mean to settle. It doesn’t mean to stop having goals, stop achieving. The Bible even says, “A wise person leaves an inheritance for their children’s children.” That means you are responsible financially, you’ve saved something. It doesn’t need to be a huge amount, but you’ve been so responsible that you leave a financial blessing, not only to your kids, but to your kids’ kids.

What does this mean? Here is a better definition of contentment:

Contentment: *“to be satisfied and at ease”*

That sounds nice to me. That sounds like, “Why don’t you just take a breath?” The opposite of this is when I feel entitled. The opposite is when I feel prideful. Right after the first service I was talking to this man down front. He was so transparent with me. He said, “God has convicted me today. Every time I talk to God, I’m asking him for something. And I very rarely stop and thank him.”

This is what contentment does. Contentment starts with gratitude. Contentment starts with, “God, I’m so thankful even though I’m in a set of circumstances in which I’m leaning into you. I’m still satisfied and at ease because, God, you are enough and I know you’ll provide enough.” That’s difficult for us to get to. We don’t come by it naturally.

Listen to how Paul describes this in Philippians 4. He is writing to a group of people who were generous with him, “Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned,” and that’s the key because this doesn’t come naturally, “how to be **content** with whatever I have. I know how to live on **almost nothing** or with **everything**. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a **full** stomach or **empty**, with **plenty** or **little**.” Philippians 4:11-12 (NLT)

So here is the principle Paul has given to us. You might take out your phone, take a picture of this, write this down, because this is the message in a sentence:

Contentment is the **perspective** you choose, regardless of the **circumstances** you have.

And I'm so thankful for that because contentment isn't circumstantial. Aren't you glad for that? Because circumstances—they change all the time and you have no control over them—stock markets rise and fall, and transmissions go out. Medical bills come in.

Look at your grandparents, gravity and wrinkles, they win. That didn't go over very well. You're like, "Oh, that hurt." It's true.

Contentment is found in the perspective you choose, rather than the circumstances you have.

Let's look at our story from 1 Kings 17. We find two individuals and what God is trying to help reinforce in their lives. The first is a guy named Elijah, who is one of the most well-known prophets in the nation of Israel. Look at what goes down in verse 1.

"Now Elijah, who was from Tishbe in Gilead, told King Ahab, 'As surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives—the God I serve—there will be no dew or rain during the next few years until I give the word!'"

So, here is what Elijah is doing. He is picking a fight with King Ahab. He comes to him and says: Listen, there is going to be a drought that will come. God is going to withhold the rain and it will trigger a massive famine.

The reason for this is because the people have been putting their trust in the false god of Baal, who happens to be the god of rain. God is like: Are you going to put your trust in the rain? Alright, I'll withhold the rain and show you you've been leaning your ladder on the wrong thing.

And so, this makes the king angry, and Elijah's life is at stake. And God gives him a heads up. Look at verses 2-4. "Then the LORD said to Elijah, 'Go to the east and hide by Kerith Brook, near where it enters the Jordan River. Drink from the brook and eat what the ravens **bring you**, for I have commanded them to bring you food.'" 1 Kings 17:2-4 (NLT)

Now, I'm just guessing Elijah read and re-read that email just a few times. He is going: God, are you sure about this? Did I understand you correctly? This is the best plan you've come up with? I've been obedient to you and told the king there was going to come a drought, and you're actually asking me to travel in the opposite direction of the Jordan River, the primary source of water during this drought? And you tell me my meals are going to be delivered by the ravens?

Just to be clear, he is not talking about the NFL Football team, but the actual birds.

And the reason why that is so crazy, have you ever heard the expression eat-like-a-bird? Yeah. They don't eat a whole lot. So, Elijah is going: Is this going to be enough?

Sometimes God will ask something of us, or he will put us in a position that does not logically, from our perspective, seem to make a whole lot of sense. But when we look closer at it—and here is what I want you remember—God is not being cruel. He is not playing games. He is trying to calibrate your life and mine toward contentment.

Let me say that again because the phrasing of that is so important. He is trying to calibrate our lives. Paul said, "I've learned to be content." God says: We have to learn to be content. The only way you learn to be content is when you feel like you don't have enough. And you're actually choosing to trust in who God is, and what he says, and it doesn't seem like there is going to be enough water.

Contentment is the **perspective** you choose, regardless of the **circumstances** you have.

And so, God will oftentimes place these restraints in our lives that don't initially seem to make sense, but he is asking us to trust him. Let me just give you two.

*Sabbath: 6 days' worth of work is **enough***

You are probably familiar with this. You've heard it. It's basically like you take one day off a week and just rest. Now we don't treat this legalistically. In fact, in God's word it says that God created the Sabbath for man, not man for the Sabbath, meaning we're not serving it. This is not a legalistic thing. It's actually a principle that's really, really helpful and refreshing, and we need it.

Here is the calibration toward contentment:

Six days' worth of work is enough.

Now, could you work all seven days a week, 365 a year? Yeah, some of us are. And because of technology, email, and instant access, we can just be on all the time. Whether you're at home or at the office, it doesn't really matter. You're grinding, grinding, grinding and that's why we're so burned out and stressed. We overlook the principle.

Let me give you another one. The tithe. That tithe is basically, "God, I'm going to trust you with the first 10 percent of what I earn. I'm just going to acknowledge it came from you, and I'm trusting you with this.

Here is the calibration toward contentment:

*Tithe: 90% of my income is **enough***

In fact, I would even say it this way. God can do a better job, a more adequate job of providing for me and my family on 90 percent of what I earn, than what I could control and try to provide for my family and me with 100 percent. Does the math work out? No, but God actually provides more than enough. It's actually a trust thing.

God has asked you to tithe as a Christ-follower not because he needs your money, or wants your money, but because he wants your heart. And your heart actually follows your treasure. He says: What are you trusting? I want you to learn to be content.

Few of us are doing this. There is a study called American Generosity. They said this:

84% of Americans give away 0 to 1 percent of their income; 3 percent give at the level of a tithe

By the way, I've read secular financial books and almost all of them have a chapter on tithing. It's usually not connected to a religious thing. They are like: There is this thing that teaches you to be generous. It's amazing how your business and life are more fruitful when you give 10 percent away. They aren't even talking about God. They've just learned this actually works. And God is the originator of it because he knows how this operates.

So in verses 5 through 7, Elijah did as the Lord told him, "So Elijah did as the LORD told him and camped beside Kerith Brook, east of the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat each morning and evening, and he drank from the brook. But after a while the brook **dried up**, for there was no rainfall anywhere in the land."

Alright, so let's just review. God, just so we are clear. You've asked Elijah to be obedient and bring this prophecy against the false god of Baal, and he did. And then you sent him to this brook where he could get a drink, and he did. And you promised to make sure he would have enough. Now that he is here, now that he's been obedient to you, the brook is drying up.

Isn't that a kick in the teeth? I'm just wondering if there is anybody listening to this, and maybe you're standing next to the brook so-to-speak, and it looks as if it's running dry. You thought you were trusting God in this area of life. You said, "You know what? New year, new me," back in January, "I'm going to start taking a day off and I'm going to guard it." And you did. Actually, the competition won, or you lost your job, or you got behind. And you're like, "What did that get me?"

Or some of you were like, "I'm going to go ahead and trust God with the tithe." The very week you made the decision to do that, the mortgage company sent you a gift in the mail. And it was a letter and it said, "We haven't been withholding enough in your escrow account, and your mortgage payment is going to go up by \$150.00 per month. By the way, you owe us \$1,500."

You are like, “God, this is the thanks I get for being obedient to you?”

And some of you now are standing next to a brook you thought God told you to stand next to, and you’re saying, “God, I really, really hope you know what you are doing here because the water level, it’s dropping. I’m looking around, and by my own logic this doesn’t appear to be enough.” And it’s in those moments that you really find out how much you trust God. And how much you’ve actually been leaning on the way you can control your own circumstances.

When my kids were all really little, one of my favorite things to do with them was to just take them and throw them up into the air. We’re talking lots of space between me and them. What I loved about it in the early, early days is that they had the time of their life. They would laugh, smile, and giggle. They would laugh so hard snot would come out of their nose sometimes. It was that type of joy.

Here is the deal. They were totally oblivious to the inherent danger that was awaiting them. If I would have dropped them, it would have been severe injury. They were oblivious to all that. They were just having the time of their lives because they just trusted me. But then things began to change as they got older.

It got to this place where they didn’t really want to be thrown up in the air much anymore. Admittedly, it got a little weird when they became teenagers, right? I’ll give that to them. No, but actually I remember the first day ever when I took one of them and started to throw her up in the air, and she grabbed ahold of my wrist, the smile turned into a frown, and she got this concerned look on her face.

She was like, “Daddy, no, don’t do that. I don’t like that.” I would stop and look at her and say, “Why?” And she would say, “I’m afraid you’re going to drop me.” And, to my knowledge, I never dropped her. Not even once.

I would say, “Have I ever dropped you before?” She would say, “No.” And I would say, “Do you trust me?” She would say, “Yes.” I would say, “Can I throw you in the air?” And she would say, “No.”

And I think I’ve had a conversation with God like that a few times. “God, no I don’t like that. That’s out of my comfort zone. That’s out of my control. I’m cynical. You just want something from me.”

God said, “Do you trust me?”

“Well, yes.”

“Have I ever dropped you?”

“Well, define drop. I don’t know. No, no you haven’t.”

“Will you trust me in this area?”

“No. I know I should, but I don’t really want to.”

Maybe that’s where some of us are right now. This is where Elijah was. Look at verses 8 and 9,

“Then the LORD said to Elijah, ‘Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. I have instructed a **widow** there to feed you.’ So he went to Zarephath.”

So, this is an upgrade from the Ravens. This doesn’t sound too unusual to you and me because we aren’t all that familiar with the geography, but to Elijah this would have been incredibly unusual—maybe the most unusual thing God has asked him to do so far. And God has asked him to do some pretty unusual things.

Here is the reason why. God has just asked him to go to Zarephath located in Phoenicia, which was the very heart of Baalism, which if you remember got Elijah into this whole mess to begin with. He had called out the false god of Baal.

God says: I want you to go live in his hometown. That’s where somebody will feed you.

That’s the equivalent of you and me getting on our Colts jerseys, painting our faces blue, getting the crazy hats and crazy fan stuff, going to the New England Patriot’s stadium, walking in, finding their most passionate fans, and asking them to buy us a hot do. That would be the equivalent of what God is asking Elijah to do.

And he mentions this widow here. He says: There is a widow living there, and she is going to feed you. I would automatically think, “She must be loaded. Like her late husband’s life insurance policy must have been pretty significant. She must have more than enough in order to give to Elijah.”

But that’s not the case. As we’re going to find out, she is actually in more of a desperate situation than Elijah is. Not only does she have to look after herself, but she’s got a young son and she has no job, no options, and no more resources left. She is actually really, really desperate. And God says: Go find her. I’ll provide through her enough for the both of you.

But they’re going to have to learn to trust. “As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow gathering sticks, and he asked her, ‘Would you please bring me a little water in a cup?’ As she was going to get it, he called to her, ‘Bring me a bite of bread, too.’” That’s just funny to me. It’s like Elijah has to learn some social skills here. He is like: Could you bring me a little water? And as she is going to get it: Oh, bring me a little bit of bread too. It’s like him stretched out on the couch watching ESPN: “Hey, while you’re in the kitchen, could you make me a hoagie sandwich?”

And she is not going to respond to this too kindly. Look at the language in this. “But she said, ‘I swear by the LORD **your God** that I don’t have a **single piece** of bread in the house. And I have only a **handful** of flour left in the jar and a **little** cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a **few** sticks to cook this **last** meal, and then my son and I will **die**.’” 1 Kings 17:10-12 (NLT)

So, she is having a bad day. She is a little emotional. There is nothing about her language that says she thinks she has enough, let alone more than enough. Everything is reduced. She just has a little flour, she is picking up a few sticks. This is just one last meal. She is in a desperate, desperate spot.

Here is the question I have, if you haven’t already asked it of yourself. Why her? Why would God send Elijah to this town and say: Find the widow who is in desperate need? She’ll give you some. I bet there were a lot of people there who had more than enough. Obviously, there were some very wealthy business people who had some extra margin they could have provided for Elijah. Why her?

I don’t know if I have all the answers to that, but let me take a stab at it. I think the reason why God chose her was to make the point to you and me today that at some point in all of our lives, we will be in her position. At some point in our lives, and maybe you’re there right now, we’re going to be the ones using all the reductionist language. We’re going to be the ones who feel like we have way too much month left at the end of the money. We’re going to be the ones who feel like it’s our savings account that’s drying up, it’s our 401K that’s tanking, it’s our job that’s been eliminated.

In those moments we’re going to be tempted to say, “Contentment doesn’t apply to me. Generosity doesn’t apply to me right now because I’m in desperate, desperate need. God understands and actually, he’ll work through someone else. Someone else will step up and meet the need. I’ll be generous when I have enough.” And it almost never works that way.

A few years ago, my wife and I went on a date. We went into a movie theater and were watching a movie. It was a packed out theater. We’re sitting in the back, and people are all around us. We’re kind of packed into the back.

About half way through the movie the sound goes out. And, what was just a few seconds turned into a couple of minutes. We’re missing significant pieces of dialog in the movie. And I’m getting irritated. I’m sitting there thinking to myself, “Someone should do something. Someone should get out of their seat, go find the management, and tell them what is going on.”

Here’s what I did next. I started picking people out in the theater who were in a far better position to go and talk to management. “There’s that guy. He appears to be all by himself. He is on the aisle, right down in front. He’s not going to bother anybody by

getting up. Why doesn't he get up? He should do something. What about that lady over there? She looks like she would get stuff done. She should go."

Right then my wife was like, "You should really go do something." I was like, "Okay I should really go do something." Here's where I went next. I got up. I started crawling over people. "Excuse me, I'm just going to save the day." I thought people would like pat me on the back and say, "Way to go. Look at that leader." Nobody said anything. They were just annoyed that I was climbing over them. I got down to the door, and the sound came on. That's how it works.

I think oftentimes its easy for us, especially in a setting like this, to look around and say, "Other people are stepping up. Other people will meet the need." I don't know what anyone gives around here, but I do know about 20 percent of us give 80 percent of the budget. That's actually true across the board in any church you go to.

And it's easy for us to step back and say, "God knows my heart. I'll give when I'm in a position to." Here's what Paul says, going back to Philippians 4. He says: Here is the key. Here is the key to finding contentment, "I can do everything through Christ." That's the key. Because you're not doing this in your own power. You're not doing this under your own ability. You're not doing this because it comes natural to you. He says, "I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength," that he is the one who actually helps me do it.

So, when I begin to take God at his word, and I begin to take a Sabbath here is what I am doing. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. Because other people are running. Other people are upgrading, and other people are spending. But I'm going to take a day and cool the jets. And I'm going to invite God into my cycle of work and rest.

Here is what the tithe does. The tithe says I'm going to actually invite God into my cycle of earning and distributing. "God, I'm actually going to operate through the strength you provide rather than my own."

And Paul says: Listen, this is the key to learning to be content. I love Paul's ability to be content because the dude was just unshakable. When you look at his life and ministry, he had all these enemies who basically threatened him. They would come to him.

One time his enemies said: Paul, we're going to throw you into prison. And Paul looked at them and said: Great. I'll just look at that as an opportunity to encourage the guards, maybe lead a few of them to Jesus.

They were like: Okay Paul, in that case we're going to kill you. He was like: Great. "To die is gain."

They said: Well, we'll torture you before we kill you. Paul was like: Okay. I don't consider the sufferings of this present age worth being compared to the glory that will be revealed in me.

Well, we're just going to let you live.

Great. "To live is Christ."

And they're just like: Paul, we can't shake you, man. Because contentment is the perspective you choose regardless of the circumstances you have.

If you're anything like me, I'm waiting for the circumstances to change, but I don't have the perspective. And God says: No. The perspective comes first. This is what God was trying to teach the widow. The widow thought: If I have enough bread, then I'll share. But it has never been about the bread.

Listen. It has never been about the bread. It's about the God of bread. So, in verses 13-14 Elijah said this to her, and I think he nailed something here, "But Elijah said to her, **'Don't be afraid!'**"

That's it. I don't think anybody here is greedy. I think we're just afraid, afraid of what might happen, afraid if we don't have enough. We're afraid of being in need, and that is totally natural.

"Go ahead and do just what you've said, but make a little bread for me **first.**"

Now I don't know about you, but if I were Elijah I would have said, "Hey, why don't you make a meal for you and your son? Why don't you guys eat, get everything you need, and whatever is left over I'll have it." That's not what he says. I don't think Elijah is being selfish. He is trying to teach a principle.

He says, "Then use what's left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: **There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers** until the time when the LORD sends rain and the crops grow again!" 1 Kings 17:13-14 (NLT)

This is a promise for you, and for me. It's a promise.

A couple things here: This is not health and wealth. This is not name it and claim it. He says: Every time you go to the flour jar, it seems like you're going to be scraping the bottom but you're just going to keep scooping out flour. God will provide just enough. And every time you go to the olive oil, he'll provide just enough because you trusted in him instead of trying to trust in your own ability to control it.

Elijah nails something here that the Bible teaches us. He says: Why don't you give to me first? And this is the concept known in God's word as first fruits. It's found in Proverbs 3 and it is the idea that God gets the first of what I earn. It's a way for me to trust him.

Because here is how I want to operate. I want to be generous. I do. But if it's left up to me, here is what I do. I get my paycheck. I pay all the bills and then say, "How much can I set aside to use for entertainment, eating out, all that? And then, God, I'll give you the leftovers." And God says: Actually, I want you to flip all that around. I want you to trust me and watch me provide the flour and watch me provide the olive oil.

Let me give you three passages that speak to this. The first is Deuteronomy 14 and it explains to us why tithing is so important. "Bring this tithe to the **designated place** of worship... Doing this will **teach you** always to fear the Lord your God." Deuteronomy 14:23 (NLT)

This calibrates contentment into your life. And fear of the Lord is not horror movie fear. This is not, "I'm afraid of what God might do to me," this is "I'm learning to trust in him." God's word separates generosity into three terms: tithes, offerings, and alms. It isn't just one thing we spread out. A tithe is something you give to our local church, the place where you are on mission and where you are being spiritually fed. And offering is anything outside of that.

I love what it says in 2 Corinthians about giving. "Don't give **reluctantly** or in response to **pressure**," which by the way is why we don't do offering bags and offering plates. I don't want you to get the wrong idea. Too many people do. I don't want you to give reluctantly or under pressure. "For God loves a person who gives **cheerfully**." And that word cheerfully means hilarious. It's a laugh-til-your-sides-hurt kind of laughter kind of laughter. "And God will **generously** provide all **you need**. Then you will **always** have everything you need and **plenty** left over to **share** with others." 2 Corinthians 9:7-8 (NLT)

And then one more passage. Many of you have heard this in Malachi 3. "Bring all the tithes into the **storehouse** so there will be **enough** food in my Temple. If you do, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, I will open the windows of heaven **for you**. I will pour out a blessing **so great** that you won't have **enough** room to take it in!" And then God starts talking a little smack. "Try it! Put me to the test!" Malachi 3:10 (NLT)

Did you know that's the only place in Scripture where God challenges us to test him? Because he knows our resources are his chief competition for the throne of our hearts. And he's not happy about it. So he calls it out and says: Just trust me in this.

You see, this is why tithing is not the same thing as paying your taxes. God doesn't need your money, nor does he want your money. But the government does. The government doesn't say, "Test us in this. Just try paying your taxes and see if your life doesn't work out better. See if you are happier and more productive."

There is not a place on the form every April when you are paying your taxes, where they say, "Just a little survey here. How is your heart with this? Are you giving cheerfully? Because we don't want you to give reluctantly or under pressure." They don't care. They just want your money.

God doesn't want your money. God wants something for you and he wants to calibrate your heart and mine toward contentment. Let me finish out the passage with verses 15-16, "So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her family continued to eat for **many days**. There was always **enough** flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the LORD had **promised** through Elijah."

And here is the reason why:

Contentment is the **perspective** you choose, regardless of the **circumstances** you have.

So, can I just ask you what step you need to take to begin to apply that truth to your life today? In what area are you too tempted to try to control some things?

Can I just tell you this is the number one issue for me? My wife actually has the gift of contentment, she's always at peace around this. I don't know how many times she's said to me, "God will provide. God will take care of us. I'm not worried."

I'm the one trying to figure this out. And maybe some of you can join me in beginning to put our trust in the God of flour jars and olive oil. I would simply say, "Don't wait until you think you have enough. That line keeps moving up. Why don't you get on this adventure with me today? And I would even say that your spiritual growth will explode when you begin to let God into this area of your life.

And maybe it's not even this area; it's the area of your life you're trying to control the most. Whatever that is, could you just let go? I know it is super scary.

There is a book called *Sabbatical Journeys* written by a guy named Henri Nouwen. He talks about some friends of his who are trapeze artists. He says there is a unique relationship between the flyer and the catcher. And those names are pretty self-explanatory. The catcher is the one who stays connected to the rope or handle. He is flying through the air. The flyer is the one who lets go.

I have never been a trapeze artist before. I know that is surprising, you're probably shocked by looking at me. I've never done this. I would imagine flying through the air with nothing to hold onto is terrifying. And my temptation would be to flail my arms and legs around. My temptation would be to try to catch the catcher.

Henri Nouwen said, "That is the worst thing you can do." He said, "There have been more accidents with trapeze artists when the flyer freaks out and tries to catch the

catcher. It messes up the rhythm.” He says, “Here is what the flyer needs to do. The flyer needs to stay perfectly still, hold out his or her arms, and trust the catcher will catch him.”

And maybe that’s how some of you are today. In whatever way God is speaking to you, and how ever he wants to apply the truth of what you heard here from his word in your life, maybe today your simple prayer can be this, “God, I trust you. I really do. Help me to trust you. I’m just going to reach out my hands and trust you will catch me.” He will always be enough. In fact, he delights in providing more than enough. Let’s do that together.

Father, we come to you right now and I pray both individually and as a church, that we would be reminded that contentment is the perspective we choose and not the circumstances we have. Because circumstances are unpredictable and they change on us.

God, I pray that you would help us to let go of whatever that thing is we are trying to control. God, give us the faith to stop trying to catch the catcher. Give us the faith to just reach out our hands and trust you will catch us at the right time. Build our faith through it, God. Do what only you can. We don’t want to miss out on the promise you have given, the promise you gave to Elijah and the widow that is applicable and reachable for us today.

God, I pray that just in these remaining moments we have together that we could be still and you would meet us right where we are. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.