

2021 Stimulus Plan

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, I'll open them with me to 2 Kings. Oh wait, I forgot. Never know whether to wear these things or not, do we? I don't know if anybody else is like me. You're sick and tired of wearing a mask.

Anybody with me? Or are y'all just still asleep? We gave you a service off. It's 1030. Come on, wake up. It was a joke, by the way. Anybody tired of wearing a mask? Looking forward to the day when we can just throw these things away and they'll be gone and we don't ever have to look at them again?

Not yet. They're getting my punchline ahead of me there. Well, here we are, the last Sunday, last Sunday of a year.

And I think most of us can certainly look forward to 2020 kind of slipping away into the history books and us moving forward.

You know, the last Sunday of any year, you know, brings a lot of emotions, a lot of different thoughts and processes in our minds. We can look back upon the past year and we can think about all the things that we experienced, all the things that we went through, some good, some bad.

[1 : 24] We can also look forward to a new year with great anticipation of the things that lie before us. Maybe there's some nervousness or fear of things that are in the new year that we're unaware of, but maybe there's some great excitement.

This year, we have the excitement that the coronavirus can maybe be put behind us, whether it be through a vaccine or whether the Lord would bring it to an end.

But we can get back to some form of normalcy, whatever that might be. I don't know that we'll ever get back to the way life ever was before, but hopefully we're going to get back to some form of normalcy in our lives.

But as we look forward in 2021, we can look forward with great anticipation of what the Lord will do and that we can walk into that future holding his hand and trusting him certainly to be with us.

But as we look back and we look at 2020 and we think of all that we've been through, do you realize a year ago, this Sunday, a year ago, we had never even heard coronavirus or COVID-19.

[2 : 32] Most of us haven't, hadn't at that point in time. And here we are a year later. But we look back and I think Fred mentioned last Sunday, it wasn't all bad, was it?

There were some good things that took place in 2020. One of the things that took place in my life is I had to learn how to use Zoom. I had never heard of Zoom before that, I don't believe.

But all of a sudden now I had to learn to use Zoom and I used it with Sunday school classes. But we also used it to do some training with individuals in Peru that we would not have been able to have done without actually traveling and going down there.

We're also getting ready to start another Bible study with Peruvians through Zoom and as well as train pastors in Peru.

And then just this week I got an invitation from a leader in Ecuador wanting us to train pastors in Ecuador. And so some of those things would have never occurred without coronavirus and COVID-19 that we've been through.

[3 : 38] Because I wouldn't have necessarily known how to have done that. And they may not have asked. They would have wanted us to come travel down there. And we can't travel and do as much as we can do obviously over the internet and Zoom.

So there's been some good things, hasn't there? But one of the best things I want to share with you now. My best thing that happened to me this year. My granddaughter was born.

Last Sunday morning at 2.55, Lori Harper Davis was born on December 20th of 2020.

Now I would put it in military time and say she was born at 2020, but she wasn't. It was 2.55 in the morning. But she's home, doing well. I said my daughter has too easy a time with babies because the first night she was home she only got up once all night.

And I think Ashley even woke her up to feed her. I'm like, what kind of babies do you have? Because my grandson, he sleeps. He'll go to bed at 8 or 9 o'clock at night and sleep until 10, 11 o'clock the next day.

[4 : 43] I'm like, I told her, I said, you're not going to get that lucky with every baby. This one will probably start getting up every two hours before long. But as we look back on the year of 2020, there's been some good things that have happened.

Some bad, and we've all had challenges that we have faced. It's been definitely a challenging year that we have dealt with. And there's going to be some lasting effects upon us individually, maybe as a community, but definitely as a nation.

There's going to be financial impacts upon our nation for years and years to come. There's going to be some maybe physical effects, mental, emotional, maybe some spiritual, educational impacts, and definitely political impacts to our nation from 2020 for a generation to come.

And there are times in our lives when circumstances arise that we have no power and no control over. Circumstances that impact our lives that we didn't do anything to deserve those circumstances.

We didn't do anything to bring those circumstances upon ourselves. We didn't act irrationally. We didn't make bad decisions. We didn't ask for these things to come into our lives, such as coronavirus.

[6 : 09] We didn't ask for coronavirus. And none of us in here did anything to bring about coronavirus as a worldwide pandemic. But sometimes those things come into our lives and they present challenges in our lives that we have no control over that.

But at times when these circumstances of life occur such as this, it can bring about a sense of fear. It can bring about a sense of desperation or even hopelessness in our hearts.

And we're left with asking questions such as, what do I do now? How do I respond to this? How do I take care of my family? You know, how do I go on maybe when you've lost a loved one as a result? And this is why this morning I want us to take a look at a poor widow found in 2 Kings who found herself in one of these moments when life circumstances were beyond her control.

The scripture passage is 2 Kings chapter 4 verses 1 through 7. And the message of this poor widow is a practical message that answers the question that maybe all of us are asking in our lives, at least at some point in time or another, is where is the power to meet the desperate needs of human life?

[7 : 35] When we're put in the situation of circumstances of life that are bigger than us, beyond our control, where is that power for us to face those circumstances and definitely to face it representing the Lord and honoring God?

So let's look together at 2 Kings. You can look at the scripture on the board. 2 Kings chapter 4 verses 1 through 7. The wife of the prophet said, Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars.

Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars and as each is filled, put it to one side.

She left him and afterwards shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all of the jars were full, she said to her son, bring me another one.

But he replied, there is not a jar left. Then the oil stopped flowing. She went and told the man of God and he said, go sell the oil and pay your debts.

[9 : 17] You and your sons can live on what is left. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we just come to you today. And we acknowledge that we have been in circumstances and situations with this coronavirus and maybe others that are bigger than us.

And we turn to you, Lord, to work in our lives, work in our hearts, work in our minds, to help us, Lord, to have the power to face these circumstances and situations.

And not only to face these, but to face them with faith and to face them with trust and reliance upon you.

Lord, I pray that you speak to each and every one of us today through your word. And I don't know who is here, maybe struggling even more than anyone else. But I pray, Lord, that you speak your

word and your truth to our hearts and help us, Lord, to draw nearer and closer to you. And we thank you for this and praise you, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen. As we can see in just reading these seven verses that the widow faced a severe and a very urgent crisis in her life. [10:37] Her husband, who had been a prophet, he has died. And he has left her with a substantial debt that she is not able to pay.

Now, we don't know much about her husband. We don't know. And we don't know how he incurred such a debt. But one thing we can probably assume is that he didn't incur this debt due to wild living or irresponsible behavior or making bad decisions in his life.

Because it's kind of clear here in Scripture that he was a prophet and he was a very godly man. He was known by Elisha. He was respected by Elisha. By the way, Elisha is the prophet who replaced Elijah.

Elijah had been so close to God and so intimate with God that he is one of only two people that we read about in Scripture who never died. Elijah was taken in a whirlwind to heaven to be with God. He was that close to God. Sometimes in our lives, as we pray, we should pray and ask God to help us to have that type of relationship with God.

[11:49] That we would grow in that type of intimacy. And that's going to mean spending a lot of time with God. Spending time in His Word. Spending time in prayer.

Spending time meditating upon the Word. And to have that type of relationship with God would be amazing. But before he was taken into heaven, he appointed Elisha to replace him.

Which, by the way, Elisha is my favorite prophet. And some of you know why. I know Mike knows why. But I'm not going to go into that today. But if you go back to 2 Kings chapter 2 and read chapter 2, it won't take you long to figure out why Elisha is my favorite prophet.

But this man that was this widow's husband, you know, it's quite possibly that he was one of the 7,000 prophets that God had told Elijah that he had kept for himself.

And that he had never bowed down to Baal. Remember, Elijah was fleeing Jezebel. And she was, or he was fearful that he was the only one left that was honoring God.

[13:00] And God said, you know, I've kept 7,000 prophets to myself that have kept themselves pure and they've never bowed to Baal. We don't know this, but it's kind of possible that he could have been one of those prophets that remained pure and holy even when Jezebel was trying to persecute them and kill them.

And perhaps this prophet incurred this type of debt because of Jezebel and her persecution against the prophets during that day and that time.

We really don't know how he incurred that debt. But we do know that he has died and he's left his wife with this debt. Now, in that day and time, a woman did not have the ability to go out and get a job that would have provided the type of income that she would have needed to be able to pay off this type of debt.

It was the general practice in that day and time that when a man died and left his wife a widow, that the sons, especially the oldest son, it would be his responsibility to care for and to take care of his mother.

But in this particular passage, it becomes kind of obvious that her sons must be too young to be able to do that. They're not old enough to go out and get the type of job that would provide for their mother and pay off this debt.

[14:33] They probably are of some age that the creditors are getting ready to come and take them and enslave them. So they're probably old enough that they could be of some benefit to a creditor.

But they're not old enough to take care of their mother and to pay off this type of debt. And so the creditor is now threatening that he's going to come and he's going to take these two boys and he's going to enslave them to work off this debt.

And that's the way things were done in this period of time that when you owed a debt, the creditor was in his full right to come and take them and make them work for him to work off that debt.

He had every right to do that. That was the general practice. However, he didn't have the right to enslave them. That was against the word of God for the Jews to take another Jew and to put them in slavery.

God said that he had delivered Israel from the bondage of slavery in Egypt and they were not to take them away as a slave.

[15:48] Look with me at Leviticus 25. It'll be on the screen. Leviticus 25 verses 39 through 40. If one of your countrymen becomes poor among you and sells himself to you, do not make him work as a slave.

He is to be treated as a hired worker or a temporary resident among you. He is to work for you until the year of Jubilee. So it's in the right for this creditor to take the boys as a hired servant or a worker to work that debt off.

But he was not to take them and treat them like slaves. And the year of Jubilee came every 50 years. And it was designed for, number one, the earth and the land to rest, but also for property to go back to rightful owners.

If they sold property, then at the year of Jubilee, it went back to the original owners of that. As well as if you had sold yourself as a servant or in bondage there, at the year of Jubilee, you were set free and you'd have your freedom back.

And so these boys could be taken as a servant. But they were looking forward. They could be treated like a hired servant until the debt was paid off and then they would be set free.

[17:10] Or they would work until the year of Jubilee, which we don't know at this point how soon that would be coming. But they could work to the year of Jubilee and then they would be set free as well.

But this is little consolation to a mother, isn't it? Little consolation to a mother who they're getting ready to take her two boys. She's already lost her husband.

She's a widow trying to raise two boys and now they're getting ready to take them. We can almost sense. We can almost feel the desperation that she must be feeling.

Put yourself in that position. If you're a parent, you can put yourself in that position. If you're a single parent, you can really put yourself in that position where your two children are getting ready to be taken away from you and made slaves.

You're probably more worried about them being put in slavery and treated like a slave than you are yourself. But then you also must think how she felt about being all alone at this point in time.

[18:18] Her husband, her children, everything has been stripped away from her and taken away from her. And all she has to her name at this point is a little bit of olive oil.

She has nothing else. She has no food. She has no resources. She has nothing but a little bit of olive oil left in her house.

Olive oil could have been used for cooking. We still do that today. They could have also used it for heating. Ironically, you could use the olive oil for cooking but she didn't have anything to cook.

So this lady ends up doing the only thing that she knows what to do. And that is she turns to Elisha. In a sense, she's turning to God.

But she's turning to God's prophet and asking what she was to do in this desperate situation so that her sons wouldn't be taken from her.

[19:18] And as simply as she could, she explained to Elisha exactly what was going on here. That her husband, who was a prophet with Elisha, he had died and left her with this debt and now her sons were about to be taken as slaves.

Now, instead of Elisha doing a miracle right in front of her eyes and providing for her, he does something that is a tremendous lesson for us today too in helping people.

What did he do? He didn't just provide for her but he asked her, what do you have in your house that you can help yourself?

You know, what do you have there? Well, she says, I don't have anything but a little bit of oil. But, you know, we're often confronted in the world in which we live with individuals that have a need, aren't we?

And we're often left wondering, how do we help those? As Christians, we should have a heart that we want to help people that have needs but we don't want to help them in the wrong way either that causes them to enable them to continue a lifestyle of not taking care of themselves.

[20:34] And so we learn a lesson here of helping others by helping them help themselves. We help the Dream Center through this church, many others in the community and this area help them and that's their whole motto is a hand up, not a hand out of helping individuals.

But that's another lesson for another day. But that's what Elisha's doing. He asked her, what do you have in your house that you can help yourself? And all she had was a little bit of oil.

All she had was a little bit of olive oil. But one thing that we learn, not only here in 2 Kings 4, but throughout Scripture over and over, that even a little bit when put in the hands of God becomes a lot.

Even a little bit put in the hands of God is enough to meet our needs and to provide for all that we might have a need of.

Now Elisha was teaching her ultimately to put her faith and trust in God and to trust Him to meet those needs. Not to put trust in an individual.

[21 : 47] No. He didn't want her putting her faith and trust just in Elisha even though he was a prophet. He wanted her to trust God and to trust God to meet her needs.

And he told her to go out, go to all your neighbors and ask for as many empty vessels as you can find and don't just ask for a few. Ask for a lot.

Go everywhere you can and get as many vessels as you possibly can and then bring them back to your house.

It doesn't tell us that she did that but we know she did because she's got the vessels to fill up here in a moment. But when she had gone out and her sons helped her gather all the vessels, she probably asked every neighbor she could possibly ask.

She goes back to her house, she takes her two sons, she goes into her house and she closes the door so that this is not a big spectacle for everybody to see. Elisha, she's doing exactly what he had told her to do because this was going to be a miracle that God was going to do that was going to be very private between her and her sons and God.

[22 : 56] And we see Jesus do this from time to time in his ministry too because they didn't want to bring attention and focus to her or her family but to bring the attention to God and to let this be an experience between her and God to build her faith in God that God is able to meet whatever needs that she might have.

Now, once inside her house she began to pour the little bit of oil that she had into the vessels that she had gathered until they all ran out. Now, we don't know how much oil she had.

It just said she had a little bit. Common sense would tell us that a little bit of oil would not fill up all these vessels. It probably wouldn't fill up even one of them much less all of them.

And so, common sense tells us that this is ridiculous to even start doing but over and over again we see in Scripture that God defies common sense.

Over and over in Scripture God defies common sense. Common sense would tell us that a virgin couldn't have a baby. Common sense would tell us not to trust God to meet our every need but get out there and do the best we can.

[24 : 21] I grew up here and pull yourself up by your own bootstraps and get out there and get to work and take care of yourself. Common sense would tell us over and over not to trust in God but to trust in ourselves and trust in the system and trust the things of this world and get out there and do it.

But over and over again we see in the Bible where God defies common sense. I mean, He divided the Red Sea where people walked across on dry land.

He provided for the children of Israel food for 40 years. Over and over again God did amazing things. It reminds me of 1 Corinthians 1.27.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

Over and over again God calls us to step out in faith and to trust Him and to believe Him and not to believe common sense.

[25 : 30] And over and over again our faith is put to challenge. Are we going to trust God or not? You know, just this week I was talking to another Christian and it was almost like they were discouraging me from doing things that I felt like God had opened the door for.

I'll give you an example. I was telling them about the opportunities that I was going to have to train pastors in Ecuador. And I told them this individual you know, we're getting ready to start a Bible study with individuals in Peru.

We're talking about training pastors in Peru. We've already done three out of a ten course curriculum with the pastors in Peru. We're looking at doing the fourth lesson or course.

It's a 60 hour course. So if you did two hours a week you do the math that's a 30 hour course that we, a 30 week course that we would have to meet with the Peruvians.

But then we'd also have to do the same thing with Ecuador and go back and start first. So that'd be three nights out of the week that I'd be tied up two hours each night doing this. And they're like, well maybe you shouldn't do that.

[26 : 45] Maybe God's not God. Maybe you shouldn't try to help everybody. Maybe it's just people wanting your help and I'm going, oh my word. I see it as doors that God is opening for this church to be involved in training pastors you know, in two countries in South America and who knows where it'll go.

You know, the person that called me said, he's been working with pastors in the mountains of Ecuador and he's been teaching them about missions but he needs somebody that can help them with more theology.

And he said these are all pastors in their 60s and 70s and they've never thought about training up the next generation of pastors behind them. They've not, that just doesn't enter their mind.

And so they've done very little if anything to train up pastors coming behind them to one day take their place. And I see it as doors opening that God can use us you know, because I've already started talking to people like Paul Welch who y'all know is a retired pastor.

He's been down with us once before to help us but to have him help us do the training as well as Paul's son some of you may know Michael is a pastor over in Marietta and pull in some other pastors to help us.

[28 : 12] And I was thinking man, the impact that Piggins First Baptist can have literally upon churches around the world is amazing of the things that we can do.

But I had this Christian that I was talking to almost discouraging me. Like don't do that. You've probably experienced that in your life as well when individuals try to discourage you from trusting the Lord and walking in faith and allowing God to use you to do things that are not possible in and of yourself you know that defies common sense.

But when this widow obeyed Elisha's word to essentially trust God then God responded to her and he took that little bit of oil that she had and began to multiply to the point where she filled up one vessel after another.

Every time a vessel was full her sons would set it aside and put another vessel there and the oil kept pouring and kept pouring and kept pouring until every one of those vessels that she had gathered was full and at that moment the oil stopped flowing because God responded to her faith and the faith that she had to go out and the number of vessels that she was able to gather and the oil flowed until they were all full.

If she had gathered more vessels I think that oil would have continued flowing until those vessels were also full as well.

[29 : 55] You see there is no end to God's resources. There is no end to God's resources and He makes those available to His children.

God can meet every one of our needs. God can meet our needs according to our faith and how we trust in Him and He will do that in our lives more than just materially too and I will talk about that in just a moment but you know not only was the oil here enough to meet this lady's debt that she owed her creditor that was going to keep her sons now from being taken into slavery but now she was also able to live on that.

Elisha tells her to go sell the oil take that money pay off your creditor and now you have enough money to live on. We don't know how long maybe until her sons were able to grow up and then get jobs and start working and taking care of her the way they did in that day and time.

But what we learn from this story in scripture and by the way this is not a parable this is a true story that really took place and what we learn from it is that we can look to God to meet our needs.

We can turn to God to meet our needs no matter what our needs we're facing. No matter what challenges that we're up against God's heart is full of compassion for his children and when we turn to him and have faith and trust in him and seek him then he will surely meet those needs.

[31 : 37] Jesus tells us you know as a good father what father if a child asked him for a loaf of bread would give him a snake. You know a good father gives their children good gifts and we can trust God as our father to take care of us and to meet our needs and to give us the things that we need.

We know that he knows our needs even more than we know our needs. He knows our needs before we know our needs and we can trust that God is going to take care of us.

What are you facing today? What challenges are you up against? You know like I said it doesn't have to be material. It doesn't have to be financial.

God cares about each of the needs. It may be physical needs in your life. It may be a whole host of things. You know we may have the need you know the basic needs of life you may be facing and up against and we can trust God to meet those needs but we may have other needs that we're facing as well such as a need for purpose.

A need for meaning. The need for significance. The need for a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. The need for conquering the trials and the temptations of life.

[33 : 01] The need for either health or the strength to bear the suffering, pain and infirmities of life. Whatever needs that we're up against and we're facing we know that God can meet those needs and he can come to us and provide for us in a way that we could not ever provide for ourselves and no resource in the world could provide for us but God can.

God has the power and the desire to meet our needs. If you're like me a lot of times we know God can do something but sometimes we get into that place where we wonder if God will do that or wants to do that.

What I want to tell you today God loves you and God wants to meet your needs. He wants to come to you and provide the things that you need in your life.

The needs not necessarily the wants and the desires of life but the needs that we have in life but can I also share with you that there's a requirement for God to do that.

in Matthew 6 33 it says seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given unto you.

[34 : 21] What are these things it says will be given to you? Well if you go back and read Matthew chapter 6 you'll see he's telling you don't worry about what you're going to eat. Don't worry about what you're going to wear.

Don't worry about where you're going to live. He's talking about meeting the needs of your life and I think that even though that chapter doesn't say it but God meets other needs in our lives as well like I just mentioned a need for purpose a need for significance a need for meaning.

You know if we seek God and live for God I want to tell you right now he's going to give you purpose. He's going to give you meaning. He's going to give you significance in your life that you would never find anywhere else.

But God has to become the priority in which we are seeking in our lives. Seek ye first the kingdom of God.

Don't worry about all these other things. God knows what we need. He will provide what we need in life if he becomes the priority of our life.

[35 : 33] life. Unfortunately most of us have our needs met don't we? Most of our needs are already met and so we're not satisfied with just having the needs of life.

We want beyond that and that's where we fail to trust God so often because we want more. We know God will provide our needs but we want more than that.

Can I tell you too sometimes when we make God our priority and we want him more than we want anything else and we're seeking after him.

We're seeking to serve him. Our wants and our desires will change and we will want the things that God wants and he will provide that too.

You know one time when I was in seminary it was my very first semester in seminary I had Gerald Borchard for New Testament. And I'll still remember and hopefully I will never forget a question he asked us.

[36 : 32] He said do you hunger for God the way a hungry man desires food? Have you ever gone a day without eating?

Have you ever gone a meal? Do you know how hungry you were and what would you do to get some food to eat?

When I was a teenager and in college my friends and I used to go hunting a lot we'd get up early on a Saturday or maybe a Christmas break and we'd take off and where I lived you could walk all day long and not come to the end of land.

And we would go and we weren't smart enough to think about taking food with us or water or anything else. We'd just go walk and we'd stay gone all day long. And come back in after dark.

A lot of times supper was already over and gone and all that's left are scraps. But when you come in and you haven't eaten all day long you come in and you just start grabbing whatever's there and just pouring it down because we haven't had anything to eat.

[37 : 41] You ever been that hungry? You ever been that hungry for God? Have you ever desired God so much that He is your priority and He's all you're focused on and you're seeking Him and you're living for Him and you're studying His Word and you're spending time with Him because He becomes your priority in life and then God will meet all of your other needs.

We don't have to spend time worrying about all these other things in life. We don't have to worry about politics. We don't have to worry about the coronavirus and vaccines and all that kind of stuff. Focus on the Lord. Live for God. Seek God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all of your might. And He knows our needs and He'll provide those needs for us in a way that we could never imagine.

You know, Ephesians 3.20, it tells us that God will do far more than we can ask for or we can imagine. You know, I have a pretty vivid imagination and I can imagine a lot of things God could do and I can ask for a whole lot of things too.

But Ephesians 3.20 says God can do more than what we even ask for. He can do more than we can even imagine God will do in our lives when we seek Him first and put Him as the priority of our lives.

[39 : 20] I hope that as we go into a new year, 2021, that a relationship with Jesus Christ, that intimate, personal relationship like Elijah had, I hope that becomes our goal, our desire, our hunger and we take our eyes off of all this other stuff going on and we just focus on the Lord.

You know, the greatest need that mankind has ever known is the need to be forgiven of our sins and God has provided that as well. Christmas was just the beginning of that story of Jesus coming into the earth, Christmas that we just celebrated.

That's just the beginning of the story and we all know the rest of the story. But God provided a way for our sins to be forgiven and how we can have a relationship with Him.

We can be reborn and we can be children of God and we can look forward to the future and we can look forward to eternity. Maybe today you've never asked Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior. Maybe today is that day unto salvation when you want to confess you're a sinner and ask Christ to forgive you of your sin and to enter your life to be your Lord and Savior.

[40 : 48] We're going to have a moment when Liddell comes and plays. I just want to ask you to have an attitude of prayer where you just pray and ask God to be with you and speak to you and respond during this time however the Lord is leading you.