

## 17. My Father's Provisions

Contributed by LG Parkhurst Jr  
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And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant--these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. -- Isaiah 56:6,7

In 1955, when the Schaeffers received notice to leave Switzerland by the end of March, they experienced the feelings of refugees and unwanted foreigners. In many ways their ministry had consisted of foreigners serving foreigners, for they had ministered to teachers and students from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, India, and other parts of the world in their home and in the little English church. However, after they left, some of the Swiss who had become Christians under their influence began their own ministry in the village. For example, on the first Easter Sunday they were away, the church pianist in the village, who had been converted a few weeks earlier, conducted worship and read one of Fran's Bible studies to a group of English visitors at the church. To her surprise, she saw English visitors heading to the church that morning--the Schaeffers had left so quickly they had forgotten to take their church service advertisements out of the hotels--so rather than disappoint them she quickly prepared a service.

Later that same year, an English travel agent wrote the village and requested worship services in the church for tourists, so the council that had expelled the Schaeffers had to reconsider their actions. Then they voted and invited them back for English Christmas Eve services in December of 1955, and Fran and Edith continued to conduct Christmas Eve Services there for more than thirty years. God continued to bring foreigners to the mountains to worship Him, and He prepared some in the village to serve Him there after the Schaeffers left. God completely defeated those who had tried to remove His truth and influence.

The Schaeffers found new happiness in their house of prayer in Huemoz, and many who visited them came to know the Lord because of their unsurpassed joy and the reality God gave them. The promise God gave Edith from Isaiah 2:2,3 did not reveal all that He had planned for them, but enough for them to take the next step. As we come to Isaiah 56:6,7, we find greater detail of God's plan for them, and these verses describe L'Abri's work from the very beginning. Francis, Edith, Priscilla, Susan, and Debby made a vow and bound "themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him" in the Swiss Alps (Isaiah 56:6). The Holy Spirit led them to commit their lives to creating a "house of prayer" as they did evangelism. And when they bound themselves to serving God because He loved Him, He inspired them to demonstrate His existence by praying for God to send them the people to serve, by praying for the material and spiritual provisions they needed to serve them, by praying for God's plan for the work and the Holy Spirit's leading day by day, and by praying for God to send the workers of His choice if the work grew. By the grace of God, each one has kept this vow. And each one has been willing to make the needed personal sacrifices to help those God would send them.

To demonstrate God's reality requires more than praying for our needs to be met. It also includes making promises to God and remaining faithful. It means choosing to keep our promises no matter what the cost so His mighty power can work through us to overcome our sinful habits and help others. And what the Schaeffers began in Huemoz continues to this day, as those in L'Abri maintain the house of prayer that the Lord established.

The Schaeffers did not make their vow and covenant with God impulsively, but only after God had led them so clearly that to do otherwise would have been disobedient. They avoided the trap of dedicating themselves rashly, and then later reconsidering their vows and refusing to keep them (see Proverbs 20:25). As Job did in his afflictions, they trusted in God and proved His faithfulness, realizing that keeping their vows would make their prayers more effective; for, "You will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will fulfill your vows" (Job 22:27). As they prayed to the Lord each day, God heard them, and they fulfilled their vows as the Holy Spirit worked within them--moment by moment.

To demonstrate the importance of obeying God each day and choosing to be faithful even when it hurts, they fulfilled their "vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people" (Psalm 116:14). Edith told the L'Abri story over and over to their guests, and each time that story became an open invitation for believers and unbelievers to examine God's faithfulness in the midst of their lives. Each time she told the story, it was a renewal of their vows. To have forsaken their vows would have done far more damage than we can comprehend.

When we study the importance of making vows to the Lord, we learn another secret of their power in prayer. Edith has written, "Prayer is a moment-by-moment example of the reality of the validity of choice" As they prayed for their Father's

provisions, they chose to trust in His promise to hear them. The Bible's promises were the evidence they needed to believe and pray that He would hear as they kept their vows. The Bible sets forth the conditions that we must fulfill to have total confidence in our prayers: "Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me" (Psalm 50:14,15). They chose to fulfill their vows. They chose to thank God for His provisions, praise Him before others, and call upon Him in their troubles, and He delivered them and they honored Him--because He is faithful, and they chose to keep their vows. This pattern continued day after day. When the reality of God's presence was the most real and when the attacks of Satan were the most oppressive, they kept their vows. And when God delivered them time and again, they praised Him and demonstrated to their guests God's ability to hear and answer prayer--God created a house of prayer for all the nations.

Making vows to God because of His wonderful guidance and provision is not uncommon, especially in the Old Testament. The psalmist wrote: "I am under vows to you, O God; I will present my thank offerings to you. For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life. Then will I ever sing praise to your name and fulfill my vows day after day" (Psalm 56:12,13; 61:8). When God provided the Schaeffers a new home in the Alps, He delivered them from stumbling and inspired them to make and keep their vows. And they have continued to praise His name day after day. Breaking vows is not uncommon, and that is one reason God taught the Schaeffers to lean upon Him daily in prayer and trust Him to help them fulfill their vows in the strength He would give. Prayer

Dear Jesus, forgive me for any vows that I have broken, and keep me from making vows rashly. Empower me to serve you today in spite of the broken vows of the past. Give me a new beginning and new joys in the power of your Spirit, so I can demonstrate your faithfulness to those who will believe in you through me. Give me the ability to help others come to know you. Amen.

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