

THE SUPPLY WITHIN

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ENOUGH FOOD TO FEED A FAMILY. A home in which to live. Money to pay the bills. Health to sustain. Ideas to inspire and guide. Whatever the circumstance, everyone looks for some form of supply every single day.

Frequently, what one needs may seem far removed, something one must seek and obtain outside of oneself. This approach makes life a continual process of acquisition. But is this really the nature and process of supply?

When I was growing up, a dear family friend, a woman of deep spiritual insight, used to encourage us in our yearnings by saying, "Include what you need in your being." I must admit that at that time, I didn't have a clue what she meant.

She frequently told a story about a woman who lived a very long time ago in what is now the Middle East.¹ Because the woman's husband had died, leaving her with a lot of debt, creditors planned to take her two sons as payment and sell them into slavery. You can imagine the anguish this woman must have felt at the prospect of losing her entire family. So she appealed to the prophet Elisha for help, and he asked her a very probing question: "What do you have in your house?" She told him that all she had was a small jar of oil.

Elisha encouraged the woman to borrow as many containers as she could from her neighbors. As she did, the oil multiplied to fill the containers provided. Consequently, the woman was able to sell the oil, pay her debt, and live off the leftover money. (It's interesting to note that one ancient source suggests that this woman's husband was the prophet Obadiah, who had initially incurred the debt because he saved the lives of many prophets and then had to borrow money to feed them.) The most useful point that stood out to me about this story was the question, "What do you have in your house?"

As the years have gone by, I've learned to ask that question whenever I need something. I've come to resist the temptation to feel that what I need lies somewhere outside my "house," or—as Mary Baker Eddy defined it—my consciousness.² Inevitably, whatever the need is, the supply has always been found within my being, not outside of it. One useful definition of the word *being* is "conscious awareness." This definition has helped me to see that my friend's counsel to "include what you need in your being" means recognizing that the supply for whatever need we have already exists within our being, our conscious awareness. In other words, like the woman who knew she had a jar of oil, there is always something we're already conscious of that can be multiplied to meet our need.

It's useful to realize that in this Bible story, *oil* symbolizes something more substantial than just a precious liquid. Oil was often used in the Bible to represent charity or consecration. Clearly, if this woman's husband was Obadiah, this couple was consecrated and devoted in their love of God—they had sacrificed all they had to support others who were similarly devoted. These qualities of thought, which were already a part of their lives, could be multiplied. And that's true for everyone.

EVERY NEED
SUPPLIED

No matter what the demand, each individual has something of substance that can multiply. And when we realize that this substance is an idea, we don't need to be searching around for material objects we might have in our possession; we can listen for the ideas that will lead to a recognition of what we already have to meet the demand. Obviously you can't multiply nothing, so it's important to realize that expansion of sup-

within me was what God, Mind, was including in me and could be multiplied. A phrase from a hymn that I'd learned by heart kept coming to me: "My prayer, some daily good to do / To Thine, for Thee . . ."⁴

I realized that what my thinking included was that prayer, and that prayer could multiply. My desire to be of service, to express daily good to others for the glorification of God, could be multiplied. I prayed with

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ply begins with the recognition of what already is present within consciousness.

What makes one aware or conscious of what one already has? It's not a process of mere mental gymnastics. Understanding that there is a divine intelligence, or Mind, that is conscious of all it creates is the starting point of expanded awareness. Mary Baker Eddy, who discovered Christian Science, explored in great depth the nature of God through her study of the Bible and in her healing works. She came to realize how vital it is to see God as Mind, manifesting itself as divine intelligence and being conscious of all it creates.

Explaining this ability of Mind to be conscious and to multiply, she wrote: "Infinite Mind creates and governs all, from the mental molecule to infinity. . . . Creation is ever appearing, and must ever continue to appear from the nature of its inexhaustible source. Mortal sense inverts this appearing and calls ideas material. Thus misinterpreted, the divine idea seems to fall to the level of a human or material belief, called mortal man. But the seed is in itself, only as the divine Mind is All and reproduces all—as Mind is the multiplier, and Mind's infinite idea, man and the universe, is the product."³

The "seed within itself" is another affirmation that God provides within each person what is needful and helpful to fulfillment and satisfaction. Looking within the depths of this divine Mind, we will find Mind revealing to us what we already have.

When I was starting out in my career, I very much wanted to help others understand and realize God in their lives. I wanted to be a part of a ministry that could change the world. While my intentions were good, I had absolutely no funds saved up and no demand from others to be of such use. But those words I had heard as a child kept coming to me: "Include it in your being." I told myself that whatever I had

that idea every day. Within a very short time, I received a check in the mail from a totally unknown and unexpected source that covered my first month's expenses. And that prayer has never stopped providing. It was literally like that jar of oil—it just kept on providing. Every single cent, every opportunity that has ever come my way, has come from that "seed within itself."

Another interesting note about that story in the Bible: The production of the oil was only limited by the number of containers available to hold it. Perhaps that becomes an object lesson in this idea of supply coming from within—always provide the containers that allow for continual multiplication of good. For me, those "containers" are best seen as the states of thought that promote good: gratitude, expectancy, unselfishness, self-immolation. From this perspective, one can see that the only limitation to Mind's infinite supply would be a shortage of such containers, a poverty of thinking.

The Bible constantly assures us that God's goodness continually follows us, seeks us out, if we are determined to live "in the house," the consciousness, "of the Lord for ever."⁵ There are no greater riches than those already included in our being—our conscious awareness of the good God is providing.

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¹ See II Kings 4:1-7. ² See *Science and Health*, p. 578. ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 507-508. ⁴ Mary Baker Eddy, *Christian Science Hymnal*, No. 253. ⁵ See Ps., chap. 23 and *Science and Health*, p. 578.