

## CHAPTER 3

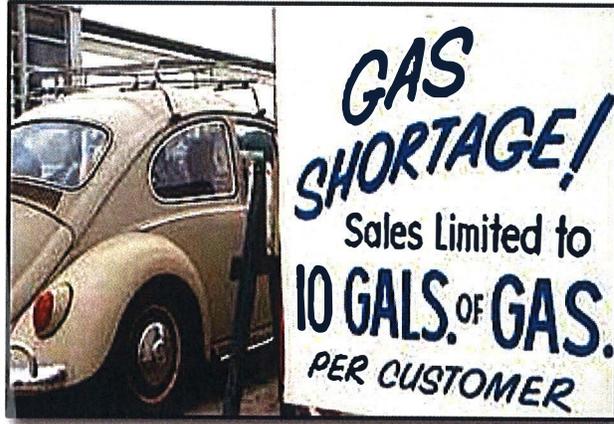
# How Can We Handle Shortages?



This illustration was taken from the book *Exploding the Energy Shortage Myth* by Eric N. Tenney, Ensign Publishing Company, 1978, p.175.

In the illustration above, it can be seen that there is no real water shortage. The lake is filled with water! The problem comes when someone must depend upon the small amount of water found in the tiny stream flowing out of the dam. In this stream there is a very real shortage of water!

Even though there may be an abundant supply (as we saw in the last chapter), if the supply never reaches the individual, there will be a shortage. Our nation may have an abundant supply of oil resources, but if the oil is not retrieved from the ground and if the refined oil does not get to the gas station, it will do nothing for our cars! California and Florida may grow millions of oranges, but until they are in our refrigerators and in our stomachs, they are of no use to us. The supermarket may be packed with an abundance of every kind of food, but if the food is too expensive to buy, there will be a food shortage on our plates. The problem is not with the lake but with the stream.



The above picture was taken in the 1970's when there was a serious gas shortage in America. Some gas stations closed down. Some gas stations limited how many gallons you could buy, as in the above picture. In some cases, people were told on what days they could buy gas and on what days they could not buy gas. There were long lines at gas stations and cars had to wait a long time before it was their turn to use the gas pump. People were afraid that they would run out of gas.

Many of the streams that are today flowing and supplying us with the good things of life may someday begin to shrink and dwindle and perhaps be cut off entirely. Your family's money supply could be cut off due to loss of employment. The weekly paycheck may no longer come. The gasoline supply could be cut off if our sources of foreign oil become scarce or if the gasoline becomes too expensive to buy. The food supply could be cut off if there is a serious famine or crop failure or if there is a problem with our transportation system (the trucks that deliver the food). Other vital supplies could be cut off during a war. Those streams that you count on today may be dry tomorrow!

If the streams we depend upon should ever run dry, here are some principles from God's Word that could be applied:

### 1) Make A Difference Between "Wants" and "Needs."

According to Philippians 4:19, does the Lord promise to supply all that the believer *wants* or all that the believer *needs*?

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What is it that a person really needs in order to live? According to what Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:8, what are the two things that are needful?

1) \_\_\_\_\_ 2) \_\_\_\_\_

Are there other things that you would consider very necessary in order to live a normal life?

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Can you think of some things that you or your family purchased during the past month which you really could have done without? Consider your possessions (for example, the things in your

room). Which of these things could you easily give away? Which of these things could you give away only with great difficulty and a feeling of great sacrifice? Which of these things would be impossible to give up? Ask yourself the same questions with respect to foods that you enjoy. What kinds of foods could you easily do without?

What great possessions did Christ have? What was His home like (Luke 9:58)? Did He enjoy the most modern means of transportation? Did He dine at the finest restaurants? Was His standard of living different than yours?

## 2) Understand the Difference Between "Luxuries" and "Necessities."

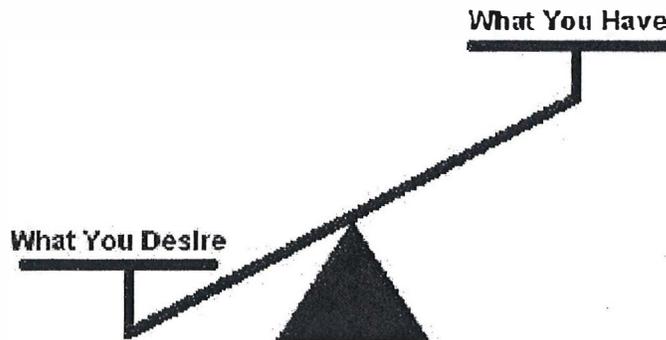
Americans, for the most part, enjoy a very high standard of living. Compared with people who live in other countries and people who lived in times past, Americans live as kings! We bathe in luxury every day. As one person has said, "The garbage disposal of most Americans eats better than do 30 percent of the people in this world." Yet, how sad that we carry a big share of the world's complaining! We have so much and appreciate it so little. God has blessed this land, but this land has forgotten to bless God. In what ways is America similar to the nation Israel (see Deuteronomy 8:7-18)?



**A Hydra Spyder, Just What Every Man Needs!**

Yes, what we think are necessities are by many people in this world considered luxuries! The streams which have fed us have overflowed their banks! We have grown so accustomed to an overflow that we are completely unprepared to face an underflow!

## 3) Beware Of Covetousness (Luke 12:15).



Covetousness may be defined as that "desire to have more." What I have is not enough. I must have MORE! What is the opposite of covetousness (Hebrews 13:5)?

\_\_\_\_\_ What one possession does the believer have which makes it possible for him to always be content (Hebrews 13:5)? \_\_\_\_\_



Those who are never satisfied unless they have MORE, will have great difficulty adjusting to a decrease in the size of the stream! They do not want to live with LESS. They have never learned the secret which the Apostle Paul discovered in Philippians 4:12. Paul says that he learned how to have very little and how to have more than enough:

*When Paul was brought low...  
 When Paul overflowed and abounded...  
 In any and in all circumstances...  
 When his plate was full...  
 When his plate was empty...  
 When he was overflowing with blessings...  
 When he was in great need...  
**Paul was content and satisfied!***

Paul's joy was not in the stream. His joy was in the One who could make the stream overflow or make the stream dry up (Philippians 4:4)! Therefore Paul could say, "not that I speak in respect of \_\_\_\_\_ (shortages): for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be \_\_\_\_\_" (Philippians 4:11).

#### 4) Draw Upon the Limitless Supply of God.

How do the following passages of Scripture illustrate God's wonderful ability to **supply** what is needed in times of great shortage:

1. The Children of Israel in the Desert Wilderness (Nehemiah 9:21; Deut. 2:7)
2. A Banquet in the Desert (Numbers 11:18-32; especially verses 21-23)
3. The Poor Widow (1 Kings 17:8-16)
4. The 5000 Hungry Ones (Matthew 14:15-21)
5. Penniless Peter (Matthew 17:24-27)

Does God have a problem providing food? Does God have a problem providing money? Does God have a problem providing anything?

There have been great famines in the past (Genesis 41:53-57; Acts 11:28) and there shall be great famines in the future (Matthew 24:7; Revelation 6:5-6). These things greatly affect men, but God never changes and God is never disturbed or worried. Difficult days do not change or affect God's amazing ability to provide and supply. God's streams of mercy never run dry!

How can I connect myself to God's streams? How can I make sure that I will never **want** (lack what I need, suffer from shortages)?

Shepherds supply all the needs of their sheep. That is their job! To avoid suffering from **shortages**, I need to have a personal relationship with the Shepherd so that I can truly say, "The \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ Shepherd, I shall not \_\_\_\_\_" (be in need, be short of life's necessities)—see Psalm 23:1. If the LORD is your Shepherd, what else do you need (compare Hebrews 13:5)?

According to Psalm 34:9, to avoid suffering from shortages, what must I do?

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According to Psalm 34:10, to avoid suffering from shortages, what must I do?

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If the Lord is **not** your Shepherd, then you must realize that the greatest shortage facing man is described in Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned and come \_\_\_\_\_ of the glory of God." You have a **shortage of righteousness!** Your small stream of good works and good deeds is not enough to satisfy a righteous and holy God. But there is good news! When it comes to righteousness, **there is no shortage with God** (Romans 3:22,24; 2 Corinthians 5:21)!

#### 5) Be a Testimony to Others!

The world does not know how to handle shortages! When the unsaved are forced to wait in long gas lines, there suddenly develops another terrible shortage: **a shortage of patience!** They get upset; they complain; they worry; they fume and fuss; they curse, etc. What a wonderful opportunity for the child of God to be different! What an occasion to show others that in the middle of the crisis our God is able to supply our needs, even if our need is to learn to patiently endure the shortage with a thankful heart!

We want to show others that our joy does not depend on little or much. Our joy does not depend on things! Our joy depends on the LIVING GOD who sends forth a full and flowing stream of **grace**, the most needed thing in the world. (**Grace** is that blessing and favor of God which we do not deserve at all but which God is able to pour out to us because of Christ!) See 2 Corinthians 9:8 (God's abundant and abounding stream!).

In John 1:16 the words "grace for grace" mean "grace instead of grace, grace in place of grace." Just think of the waves of the ocean as they come into shore, one wave after another. One wave comes in and then it is replaced by another, wave upon wave upon wave. So it is with God's superabundant and super abounding grace! There is an unending supply.



#### HE GIVETH MORE GRACE

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,  
 He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;  
 To added affliction He addeth His Mercy  
 To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

His Love has no limit; His grace has no measure;  
 His power no boundary known unto men;  
 For out of His infinite riches in Jesus  
 He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

—ANNIE JOHNSON FLINT