



LIKE THE WIDOW  
OF ZAREPHATH:  
**The Miracle of  
Fast Offerings**

*As we considered giving a more generous fast offering, we remembered that a person cannot give a crust to the Lord without receiving a loaf in return.*

**By Po Nien (Felipe) Chou and Petra Chou**

**M**any families throughout the world struggle financially, especially during times of economic crisis.<sup>1</sup> The impact of such a crisis was felt in our local ward several years ago, as we saw several families in need of assistance. At the beginning of that year, our bishop shared with us an invitation from our stake president to give a generous fast offering to help those in need.

Although our leaders asked us to look at our individual situations and consider if we were able to be more generous with our fast offerings, they did not specify how much we should give. However, the Spirit reminded us of the counsel given years ago by President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), First Counselor in the First Presidency. He said: “I am a firm believer that you cannot give to the Church and to the building up of the kingdom of God and be any poorer financially. . . . A person could not give a crust to the Lord without receiving a loaf in return. That’s been my experience. If the members of the Church would double their fast-offering contributions, the spirituality in the Church would double. We need to keep that in mind and be liberal in our contributions.”<sup>2</sup>

We knew it would be a sacrifice for our family to increase our fast offerings, but we considered President Romney's teaching and promise carefully. As a family, we had been blessed abundantly and we felt a strong desire to increase our fast offerings.

Moreover, we wanted our family to overcome the tendency to be selfish. Because we live in a society so focused on acquiring things and filling our own desires, we were concerned that our children might grow up selfish. But we had hope in President Spencer W. Kimball's (1895–1985) words: "Upon practicing the law of the fast, one finds a personal well-spring of power to overcome self-indulgence and selfishness."<sup>3</sup>

Within the first three months of giving a more generous fast offering, we began to see many blessings. We were able to spend less on groceries, and our gas tank seemed to stay full longer. Our children asked for fewer things, and the selfishness in our home almost disappeared.

For example, when we contributed to the local food drive, our children began encouraging us to give more. When we did our annual inventory of our food supply, we found that we actually had two years' worth of food. Additionally, in the past it would take us one month to go through a 50-pound (22.7 kg) bag of rice. Now the same bag of rice lasted us two months. It seemed like our food storage was multiplying.

We were reminded of the story of the widow of Zarephath. During a time of famine, the prophet Elijah called upon a widow, who had no means to feed him, to provide him with water and bread. Her response was, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die" (1 Kings 17:12).

The prophet promised her that "the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail. . . .

"And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days"

(1 Kings 17:14–15). Her barrel, which had enough for one last meal for her family, was multiplied to allow her family and others to eat many days. The same type of miracle—based on our own offering—was occurring in our family.

During financial difficulties, giving a generous fast offering and helping care for the needy can be difficult, particularly when we are—like the widow of Zarephath—among the needy. Giving a generous fast offering, no matter the amount, requires faith in the Lord and His promise to care for us. But the Lord fulfills His promises, and our family's experience taught us that the more we are willing to share, the more we are blessed.

As President Romney said: "Don't give just for the benefit of the poor, but give for your own welfare. Give enough so that you can give yourself into the kingdom of God through consecrating of your means and your time."<sup>4</sup> Giving a more generous fast offering helped our family find joy in caring for the poor and strength in our own spiritual welfare.

Our willingness to give a crust has brought us many loaves in return. Our willingness to give generous fast offerings more than doubled our food storage. Indeed, the Lord's power to multiply five loaves and two fishes to feed 5,000 men, besides women and children, with enough fragments to fill 12 baskets (see Matthew 14:16–21), is the same power that filled the barrel for the widow of Zarephath and multiplied our family's food storage. Still, our greatest benefit has not come in the form of multiplying food but in the decrease of selfishness and increase of spirituality in our home.

It is our witness that as we contribute generously to the fast-offering funds of the Church, including when our means are limited, the Lord will magnify our efforts and bless us beyond our understanding. ■

*The authors live in Utah, USA.*

#### NOTES

1. See, for example, Henry B. Eyring, "Is Not This the Fast That I Have Chosen?" *Ensign*, May 2015, 22–25.
2. Marion G. Romney, Welfare Agricultural Meeting, Apr. 3, 1971, 1.
3. Spencer W. Kimball, "Becoming the Pure in Heart," *Ensign*, May 1978, 80.
4. Marion G. Romney, "The Blessings of the Fast," *Ensign*, July 1982, 4.



### **FASTING: CHERISH YOUR SACRED PRIVILEGE**

“I bear witness of the miracles, both spiritual and temporal, that come to those who live the law of the fast. I bear witness of the miracles that have come to me. Truly, as Isaiah recorded, I have cried out in the fast more than once, and truly God has responded, ‘Here I am’ (Isaiah 58:9). Cherish that sacred privilege at least monthly, and be as generous as circumstances permit in your fast offering and other humanitarian, educational, and missionary contributions. I promise that God will be generous to you, and those who find relief at your hand will call your name blessed forever.”

**Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Are We Not All Beggars?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 42.**