Bob: Are you limited by your capacity? Jack Alexander says, if we understand who God is correctly, the right answer to that is: “No; we’re not limited.”

Jack: There’s a war around this whole area of capacity. With Satan, when he came to tempt Jesus, the first temptation was: “If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” And Jesus said, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but from every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.” The first temptation was to provide for yourself.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Thursday, June 21st. Our host is Dennis Rainey; I'm Bob Lepine. Jack Alexander says many of us have a scarcity mindset. He wants to talk to us about how we can have an abundance mindset. We’ll hear about that today. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. So, you know, I’ve never stopped to think but I think it’s probably true that, if Christians were known for what we’re going to talk about today—

Dennis: Oh, yes.

Bob: —if you were known for generosity and giving, that would change a whole lot of things; wouldn’t it?

Dennis: Think of what would happen in families if a family was made up of a bunch of broken people, who are redeemed by Jesus Christ, who tried to out-give one another, who tried to live such a life of faith that they were always on the edge of believing God for too much rather than too little.

Bob: And you’re not just talking about financial generosity; we’re talking about—

Dennis: I’m not talking, actually, about financial generosity at all. I’m just talking about being kind to people and, being in the marketplace, leaving the aroma of Christ.
Bob: If husbands were generous to wives, wives generous to their husbands, parents to their children and children back to their parents—that would make a remarkable difference; wouldn’t it?

Dennis: It would. My problem is—I’m stingy. Another way of saying that—

Bob: You want to hang on to the microphone and not pass it off here. [Laughter]

Dennis: —I’m selfish; I’m selfish. [Laughter]

But we have a friend—a new friend—here, who was recommended to us by a mutual friend, Crawford Loritts. Crawford said, “You’ve got to get Jack Alexander on FamilyLife Today because he’s got a great book called The God Guarantee.” So, Jack, here you sit. It’s all about who you know, and you knew Crawford. [Laughter] You can’t get a better endorsement than that.

Jack: Well, excited to be here.

Dennis: Glad you’re here. I want to commend his book to our listeners—it really is about what Bob was talking about. It’s about moving from scarcity, and unbelief, and fear to being a generous person. You begin the book with a story of a young lad who had enormous tragedy, early in his life. I think his name was—

Jack: Jaden Hayes.

Dennis: Yes, Jaden Hayes.

Jack: Right.

Dennis: Share that story with our listeners.

Jack: Yes; Jaden lives in Savannah, Georgia, and he lost his dad. Then a couple of years later, I think, at the age of five, he lost his mother. He said to his aunt—he said, “I’m tired of looking at all the sad faces.” He started something called the Smile Experiment. He personally set a goal to get 30,000 people to smile. He had little dinosaurs / little gifts, and his aunt would take him down to a park; and he’d give them to them and cause people to smile. Basically, it got caught up in the news cycle; and it went national and Jaden hit his record, I think, of 30,000.

Bob: The point of that story is—because he began by smiling at others, he evoked a response of smiling back from people. As we are generous, generosity is contagious; isn’t it?

Jack: What I like is the fact that he had very little—when you think about a five-year-old or six-year-old boy, who could cause people to smile all over the country. I think that it’s
a lie of the enemy that, if you don’t have money or you don’t have resource, that somehow you can’t make a difference; so that’s why I wanted to start off the book with that story.

**Bob:** He had two loaves and some fishes.

**Dennis:** We’re going to get to that in a second; [Laughter] but where I wanted to start was—you, as a little boy—because you had a similar experience and, ultimately, had to decide whether your circumstances were going to permanently define you, as a boy who became a man, or whether you were going to do something similar to this young man.

**Jack:** Yes; Dennis, my dad had leukemia. He got it when I was eight, and they made the decision not to tell me or my two older sisters. He died one night when I was nine years old. My mother was a Christian Scientist, so they really both believed that he’d be healed; so when he died, it shattered her life.

**Dennis:** That really marked your life as being one that was marked by scarcity—

**Jack:** Yes.

**Dennis:** —that’s how you define it; right?

**Jack:** Well, and then she got remarried to man she didn’t love so we could have a father. They would always fight about money and had separate bank accounts; so it wasn’t just “What are we going to do?” but “Who’s going to pay for it?” I remember just looking at this, as a young child, thinking, “Something’s not right here.”

**Bob:** So your mindset, growing up, was a mindset that: “If there are resources, we need to preserve them; we need to hang on to them. We never know how long we’ll have them,”—was that your thinking?

**Jack:** I don’t think so; because, when you don’t have any resources,—

**Dennis:** —you don’t know what you’re missing.

**Jack:** —you don’t know what you’re missing.

Chip Ingram estimates that 85 percent of his radio listeners and people in his church have a scarcity mentality rooted in fear. The reason I wrote the book was: the prosperity gospel is one lie, but the scarcity mindset is another lie; so I studied the Scriptures to find out “How can we access God’s abundance?”
Dennis: I want you to unpack the word, “scarce,” because it’s—I’ve been chewing on it since I got into your book. I think you’re exactly right about most of us having a scarcity mentality, or one based upon fear; but unpack it for our listeners.

Jack: A famous speaker, Brené Brown—she calls “not enough” the post-traumatic stress disorder of today and that everybody feels like there’s not enough time; there’s not enough money; there’s not enough love; there’s not enough relationships. Definitely, this book is not a book about how to access money; it’s really to have the life that Jesus wants us all to have—an abundant life.

Dennis: So, Bob talked about a situation that Jesus Christ was facing—5,000 people, who didn’t have enough food to eat. Unpack that story and how it illustrates what you’re talking about.

Jack: Yes; well, that’s what the book is based on. There’s five instances in the New Testament of this pattern of provision that God takes. When you take the actual numbers of times they are listed—for example, the feeding of the 5,000 is in all Gospels. It’s the only miracle that’s in every Gospel except for the resurrection. When I studied this, I saw God provided spiritually, relationally, and practically. Basically, the premise of the book is that, if we really understood how God provides, then we wouldn’t be afraid.

Bob: Describe somebody who has a scarcity mindset. Draw a picture for me of what that looks like and what that means for a husband and wife, who are—they’ve got a job and three kids. They’re paying their bills and trying to live life. What does the scarcity mindset look like?

Jack: Well, Bob, I think it’s the home I grew up in. It’s like watching my mother and stepfather: “We can’t afford to go out to dinner,” “We can’t afford to take a vacation,” “We can’t afford this,” “We can’t afford this,” and like the walls come shrinking down. I remember, before they got married, my to-be stepfather took us on a trip to New York. I remember just having so much fun. Then, I was looking forward to that; and it never happened again. I remember on his birthday I would give him tickets to the Yankees and the Red Sox. I would buy them, so he could take me.

Bob: There are families, though, who would say: “We can’t afford to go out to dinner. We’re trying to manage our budget. We listen to Dave Ramsey, and we’ve got the books, and we’re trying to get out of debt; so we have to live with an accurate appraisal of what we have and what we don’t have.”

Jack: What I think, when you really know God for who He is, everything that He’s created is more. You take sand—silica is the second most common element on earth. When you separate it and purify it, it turns into silicon—when it’s subjected to extreme heat—and then it becomes silicon, which is the brains of our smartphones.
I saw that we are all raw materials and, as we allow God to make us into who He wants us to be—we cooperate with this pattern of provision—we, not only become different people, but that He provides for us in unique ways.

**Bob:** So, flesh this out for me. If we’re sitting here with a young couple—and they’ve got two kids, and they’ve got $25,000 worth of college debt, and he’s working hard to try and get them out of the hole—it’s not just financial—their life is busy; it’s full—they’re fully engaged. They’re stressed out as a result of that. They’re sitting down with you and saying: “We recognize that our life is more stressful than it needs to be. How do we get from where we are to where we ought to be?”

**Jack:** Right. I would sit down with the couple and tell them two things: “One, surround yourself with a group of four or five people, who know you and love you, and have them speak into your life—of relationships you might have, assets you might have, things that you’re good at that you might not be exercising. Help them to cast a vision for your lives, where they might see things in your lives.” It could be a person you know that you can invite to have lunch. Because, again, God is sovereign; and this book talks about, as we lean into our relationship with God and with people, God is a Master—He’s the Lord of opening doors and creating new opportunities.

The second thing I would say to them is I’d say: “Look at your lives for what I’d call capacity killers,” because the first thing that Jesus did, when He took the bread, is He looked to heaven. When He looked to heaven, there was more in those bread and fish than He knew. But Satan—there’s a war around this whole area of capacity—with Satan, when he came to tempt Jesus, the first temptation—he says, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” And Jesus said, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but from every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.” So the first temptation was to provide for yourself.

In the Lord’s Prayer, the first thing we’re to ask for is: “Give us this day our daily bread.” God is jealous to be this couple’s provider. If you’re listening on the radio, God is jealous to be your provider; but there is a lie that’s saying, “We need to provide for ourselves.”

When you look at capacity killers, and when you look at this vision of capacity that God has put into you and people you know, it changes the paradigm.

**Dennis:** I want to talk about some of those capacity killers; because you discuss this in your book and you list, I don’t know, half a dozen. Take a couple of those that you believe are the biggest. I would say, if Bill Bright, who is the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ® was here, he would say materialism is what’s really choking the faith of the church today and why it’s not making a bigger impact.

**Jack:** And Dennis, that really ties into debt; because oftentimes people are going into debt to get things that they don’t need. When you’ve got debt, all of a sudden, the
demands of the creditor can go ahead of the Lord. It can go ahead of your good night’s sleep. So debt would be one capacity killer; you’ve also got drugs; you’ve got alcohol; and you look at kids—who don’t get a good education—that’s stripping out their ability to be productive.

When you really look at—that God created everything—it’s more than you could imagine. Whether it is planets, or it’s you guys, or any of our radio listeners—there’s capacities in you that only God knows that He wants you to find out. See, the word the world loves is “potential”; because potential is: “What can Jack Alexander become?”—it’s about me. But when you become a Christian, who I am intersects with the Kingdom of God; and the Kingdom of God causes me to intersect with my weaknesses, and my issues, and my problems.

When I lean into relationships, our capacity actually increases—like I’m in the technology business; I’m not a technologist. The first technology company I got involved in—I sat down with the developers and said, “If you owned this company, what would you do?” They laid out a blueprint of a strategy that we could follow, and we did follow. If I had known a lot about technology, I would have never been humble enough.

We live in a society that is strength-oriented—like I think five million people have taken StrengthsFinder. God cares about our strengths; but look at Paul—he says, “I glory in my weaknesses because when I’m weak God is strong.” There’s a beauty to this area of weakness; and when you see how God provides, it has so much to do with our weakness and brokenness—being honest about that.

Dennis: And what I like about your approach is where you started—it’s in community. You said: “Go to four or five people, who really know you well, who are also wise people—people who are living according to the Scriptures—and ask them what they see in your life.” Now, that undoubtedly has happened with you, Jack, or you wouldn’t be providing that advice for our listeners. Who are those people, who have spoken into you, and how did that make a difference in your life?

Jack: A number of my Christian friends—like, early on, I got saved in Australia on a business trip. I was there for six months. I fell so in love with the Lord and had this vision of being a pastor / a counselor and came back and talked to some of my friends—they said: “You’d be a terrible pastor. [Laughter] You wouldn’t be a good counselor. We think you’d be a good business person.”

Dennis: I actually had a counselor tell me the same thing! [Laughter]

Jack: I think, sometimes, friends will just speak truth to you and be honest with you. I know, as a business person, I’ve gone into many businesses—again, because I’m coming from the outside, I can see realities and I can have a vision that oftentimes these CEO’s don’t have. In the book, I call it having one foot on the ground and one foot in the clouds—that, oftentimes, as people, we either have both feet in reality and we
don’t have faith or a vision of what God could do with us; or we have both feet in the clouds and then we’re not grounded in reality. We really encourage people to be in community; because in community, God’s going to create a mix of people who are both visionaries and realists.

We need both; but because we’re sinners, oftentimes, we tend to either have both feet on the ground or both feet in the clouds; and both are sort of either unstable or stuck, and they don’t have the vision and the faith.

**Bob:** You had this idea that you should be a counselor or a pastor; your friends said, “No; probably not.” Was there somebody, or were there a group of people, who helped you discover what it was that God had made you to be and unleashed your capacity?

**Jack:** It was really—this sounds overly spiritual—but it was really God, because I was an accountant. After I became a Christian, I came back to Atlanta—was awarded the biggest account in the office. Everybody who ever got that account became partner. The Chief Financial Officer of that company didn’t like me—he calls up the managing partner and says, “I want Alexander off the job.” I got humiliated in front of 700 people. I said to my wife, “I know God wants us to be humble, but does He want to humiliate us too?”

They gave me a tiny little account nobody had ever heard of, and it was my future employer; he hired me two years later. I went to work with him as a Chief Financial Officer—again, an accountant—and one day he walks in and says “Jack, let’s start a business together.” We started a business. I became a CEO; and the company grew from really the two of us to six thousand employees, involved in a services industry and a technology company.

**Bob:** People hear a success story—a business success story—but I’m looking for that kernel in you, where you said: “I was made for more than just being an accountant. God’s got something in me that I need to unleash, and unlock, and put to work.”

**Jack:** Well, this is hard to say, guys; but when you grow up without a dad—where you never have one person to go to a game, one person to give you advice, one person to say, “This is what I think you could be,”—that scarcity thinking and that fear—it ruled me. I was just totally in a survival mindset. I had no perspective over what I could be good at. Some guy, who lived in Europe, said, “Jack,”—in fact, when we started this—“I want you to be in charge of it.” He saw something in me that I didn’t see in myself.

**Dennis:** You started to get emotional, reliving what it was like, as a young man, to have not had that male voice imprinting your soul, your mind, your personhood, as a young man, who was a leader but didn’t know it.

**Jack:** Well, and God’s been great. I have three sons and five grandkids, and four of them are boys. I mentor four boys, without dads, who lost their fathers like I did. I think a
lot of people don’t know what it’s like to hear the word, “father,” and a total blank screen comes up in your mind.

I know that there’s people [listening to] this broadcast who have had abusive fathers or hurtful fathers, and that is even worse than my situation. But again, when people try to find capacity in their life, they say, “Jack, where do I start?” I say: “Where have you been hurt the most? Where have you been broken?” And again, the world says, “Go to strength”; and I say, “Go to weakness; because in that weakness, that’s where God can be strong.”

I tell you—when these four boys that I mentor—one of them became captain of his high school or college golf team. They had a father/son weekend. He says “Jack, can you come up and spend the weekend with me?” [Emotion in voice] A healing takes place when you lean into where you’ve been hurt the most.

**Dennis:** In your book, you go back to the feeding of the five thousand. You just very simply, but I thought profoundly, simplified what Jesus did. You just described what He did in your life. Here are the words you used—you said:

> Jesus took the bread. He takes; He sees the capacity; He sees the possibility in the person; and He takes them and then He decides to bless them. And that’s the second thing that Jesus did. He took the bread and He blessed it. He looked to God.

And that’s what you’re saying: “For when I am weak, then He is strong in my life.”

Then third, He breaks the bread.

And that also is what you were talking about that occurred in your life—out of weakness/out of brokenness. There isn’t a listener, who is listening to us right now, who—whether he knows it or she knows it or not—is very broken.

We are all very broken. And then finally, you said:

> Jesus gives to a group of people. He takes; He blesses; He breaks; He gives—and that is the message of the gospel.

**Bob:** I think there are probably a lot of people, who are thinking: “I don’t know what my capacity is. I’m so aware of my deficiencies that I can’t see any capacity, because they’re covered up with deficiencies.”

**Dennis:** And Bob, there’s where Jack really started this whole conversation in the beginning—is it’s with community. Find some people, who know you, and give them the freedom to speak into your life. In isolation, you’re never going to find out who you are;
in fact, isolation is the enemy’s strategy. If he can keep you from people, he can convince you of anything.

**Bob:** Maybe, in community, you can go through Jack’s book—all of you together—and talk about these principles. The book is called *The God Guarantee: Finding Freedom from the Fear of Not Having Enough*. We’ve got copies of the book in our FamilyLife® Resource Center. You can order it from us, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or call 1-800-FL-TODAY to order. Again, the title of the book is *The God Guarantee* by Jack Alexander. Order online at FamilyLifeToday.com, or call 1-800-358-6329—that’s 1-800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.”

You know, one of the things we’re encouraging families to do this summer is to spend some time thinking about issues like generosity. Our team has put together a downloadable four-week devotional with some ideas for family activities as well as interaction together around four different themes: developing healthy communication, learning kindness, service, and gratitude—godly character qualities that all of us can be growing together in. In fact, the downloadable series is called the *Growing Together* devotional series. It’s available to any of you who’d like to download it and spend some intentional time this summer, as a family, thinking on these themes. You can download it from our website, FamilyLifeToday.com. Just look for the link when you go to the website, and it’s a free download.

These kinds of resources are a part of our mission, here, at FamilyLife. We want to effectively develop godly marriages and families, who change the world, one home at a time. We’re grateful for our Legacy Partners and those of you who contribute, from time to time, to help make, not only this radio program possible and all of the ways it’s being heard now around the world, but also resources like the *Growing Together* devotion series. Again, you can download it for free when you go to FamilyLifeToday.com.

If you are one of those, who has been a long-time listener to *FamilyLife Today*, and you’ve never made a donation, we’d love to have you pitch in and help support the work that we’re doing, here, at FamilyLife. It’s easy to do: you can donate online at FamilyLifeToday.com, or call 1-800-FL-TODAY to make your donation.

Now, tomorrow, we’re going to talk about the story of the loaves and the fishes—a familiar story for many of us. We want to hear how that story informs our thinking about things like scarcity and abundance. Jack Alexander is going to be back with us tomorrow. We hope you can be back as well.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

*FamilyLife Today* is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas; a Cru® Ministry.
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