

The Woman Who Built a Prophet's Chamber

2 Kings 4:8-17

2 Kings 4:8-17 – *“Now it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where there was a well-to-do woman, and she persuaded him to eat some food. So it was, as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food. And she said to her husband, ‘Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly. Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there.’”*

And it happened one day that he came there, and he turned in to the upper room and lay down there. Then he said to Gehazi his servant, ‘Call this Shunammite woman.’ When he had called her, she stood before him. And he said to him, ‘Say now to her, ‘Look, you have been concerned for us with all this care. What can I do for you? Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?’” She answered, “I dwell among my own people.” So he said, “What then is to be done for her?” And Gehazi answered, “Actually, she has no son, and her husband is old.” So he said, “Call her.” When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. Then he said, “About this time next year you shall embrace a son.” And she said, “No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!” But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her.”

Background Notes

The village of Shunem was located in the northern kingdom of Israel. Shunem was in the vicinity of the prophet Elisha's travels, and the woman noticed Elisha as he regularly passed their house.

This woman was a prominent, or notable, or well-to-do woman (v8). Apparently she was well known in the area, possibly because of her many good deeds touching the lives of many people. And she was not too busy to help Elisha, the servant of God. She not only provided food for him when he was in the vicinity, but she also persuaded her husband to build an addition on their home for Elisha - an “upper room.” Their house would have had a flat roof with a staircase on the outside, so that this upper room would have been a nice apartment for Elisha, where he could come and go at will.

As a result of this kindness, Elisha predicted that God would bless them with a son. This blessing seemed too good to be true! They had not been able to have any children, and the husband was now getting older. The woman would have given anything to have a child, especially in that culture, but she was afraid to get her hopes up. But sure enough, in fulfillment of Elisha's prediction, *“the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her.”* (v17)

Doctrinal Points

1. God rewards those who care for the needs of others.

This woman was a busy woman, but she was not too busy to care for the needs of God's servant, Elisha. The woman was spiritually sensitive to the Elisha's needs. *"Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there"*(v10). I want you to notice: she planned to provide a bed, a table, a chair, and a lampstand. Not just a bed for rest - this woman was sensitive to the *all* the needs of God's servant Elisha.

You may think that it's not important that all these items would be mentioned. But let me tell you - if you're traveling away from home to teach or preach, a table and a chair are extremely important! Have you ever tried to write a sermon sitting on a bed, because there's no chair or table in the room? Not easy! And yet I've been to camps or conference centers to give a week's ministry, and all I have is a bed and a dresser. What would you do in a case like that? There are clipboards. Or you move the dresser up to the bed and try to use the dresser as a desk. Or you go somewhere else in the camp to prepare your ministry. What a blessing it is to open the door of my room and see a desk, a chair, and a lamp! Thank you, Lord, for the spiritual sensitivity of these people!

Well, this woman was sensitive to the needs of God's servant Elisha. She provided not only a bed - but also a table, chair and a lamp! This kind woman cared for the needs of God's servant, and as a result, she was blessed and rewarded.

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus taught the truth that God rewards those who care for the needs of His servants. Matthew 25:33-40 is in the context of the "Sheep and Goats judgment," that will take place when the Lord returns to set up His kingdom on earth. The sheep are the believers who come out of all the nations at that time. As we read this, notice how the Lord rewards them, and what is the basis of their reward. *"And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'"*

These believers will be **rewarded on the basis of their care for God's servants**. That will be the evidence of their faith.

God rewards those who care for the needs of His servants. It's a great truth that is taught throughout the Bible, and it is certainly seen in this story of the woman of Shunem. God rewards those who care for the needs of His servants.

2. God's servants should never take the goodness of God's people for granted.

Notice that Elisha did not take the woman's kindness for granted. He asked his servant, Gehazi, to call her, and when she came he asked her, *"Look, you have been concerned for us with all this care. What can I do for you? Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?"* (v13). You may be thinking, "Wait a minute, how could Elisha do that? I thought King Jehoram was a wicked king. I thought Elisha wasn't on good terms with the king." That's true, but you have to remember in chapter 3 that Elisha had come to the rescue of King Jehoram and the army when they were dying of thirst in the wilderness. Elisha saved the day! So he did have some influence with the king and the commander of the army.

Although the woman said she didn't need any of that, the point here is that Elisha, as the servant of God, was very thankful for the all the kindness that the woman and her husband had shown to him, and wanted to thank her in some tangible way.

He didn't take their kindness for granted! He didn't say, "I deserve it! After all, I'm a servant of God!" And he didn't say, "It's is her privilege to give to me, because I'm one of God's servants." No, God's servants should appreciate and be thankful for kindness that is shown them. God's servants should never presume upon the goodness of God's people.

Practical Applications

1. Are you content with your status?

Look again at verse 13. When Elisha asked, *"What I can do for you; should I speak to the king or the commander of the army?"* the woman replied, *"I dwell among my people."* What she meant was, "I'm content. I don't need status of help from the king. I don't need to travel. I'm content with my home here among my people, and I don't need to be elevated above my people." The woman was content with her status. Can you say that you're content with your status – or are you always looking for more?

Notice that the woman didn't add, "If only God would have given me children." No, she was a godly woman who had learned the secret of adjusting to God's sovereign ways. She had learned to be content with her status in life.

It's not easy to understand why God gives plenty of money to some folks but not to others. Or a great job to one person and a loss of a job to another. Or children to some folks but not to others. We can't understand God's ways. But the question here is, are you content with your status? Are you content with what God has provided for you?

I have a long-time friend, a man who is about my age. He's a Christian, but he's never been content. He's always looking for something more, or something different - and his dissatisfaction with life has been very hard on his wife, his family, and

others as well. He doesn't have any time for Christian service because he's just never content, long-term. Are you content with your status?

2. Have you ever built a prophet's chamber?

The woman of Shunem was content with her status, and therefore she was free to be concerned and sensitive to the needs of others. As a result, she and her husband built a room for the prophet Elisha.

Have you ever built a prophet's chamber? What I mean is, have you ever done more than just give money? Sometimes giving money can be easy - but building a "prophet's chamber" means you have to take time to look around for needs, you have to be sensitive to the needs, you have to be tuned in to the needs that are out there - and then you have to take the time and energy and ingenuity to meet that need. And not just with money! Have you ever built a prophet's chamber?

I know a group of women in a church who get together once a month and select a woman who is a foreign missionary. They find out all they can about the woman and her needs, including her clothing sizes. They provide the funds to purchase items to meet her needs, and mail the necessities to her. These women have been doing this every month for well over twenty years! That's "building a prophet's chamber"!

Have you ever built a prophet's chamber? In other words, have you done more than just give money? Look around to see what the needs are, and then go and meet that need - whether it's the need of the Lord's servant somewhere, or the need of someone who is right around the corner.

Let's do more than just give money. Let's build a "prophet's chamber"! Have you ever built a prophet's chamber?