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2 Kings 4:1-17

*"Wowed by God"*

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At this point in time Israel was a divided kingdom, which had two territories, two kings, and two capital cities. They were also a nation whose people had a divided heart, in that they sometimes turned to God and at other times they participated in idol worship. Remarkably, God chose to send various prophets to confront the ungodly kings and to exhort the people of Israel to repent and turn to him. One of the most famous prophets was Elijah, who was the focus of our study last week. In this study we learn about Elisha, Elijah's protégé and successor, and two of the miracles he performed.

### Historical Background

1. Elisha, who was about 15 years old, is first introduced in [1 Kings 19:19-21](#), when he was anointed to eventually succeed Elijah as the Prophet of Israel.
2. Elisha was Elijah's disciple for 10 years, and he succeeded Elijah when he was 25 years old.
3. Elisha performed twice as many miracles as Elijah, and more than anyone in the Bible, except Jesus.
4. Elisha was bald, according to [2 Kings 2:23-25](#): *"From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some youths came out of the town and jeered at him. 'Go on up, you baldhead!' they said. 'Go on up, you baldhead!' He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths. And he went on to Mount Carmel and from there returned to Samaria."*

## Elisha's Chapter Four Miracles

5. Pastor Gary said he believes the first two miracles in this chapter are juxtaposed for specific reasons.
  - a. Both stories involve women and their sons.
  - b. One woman was a widow, and one woman was married.
  - c. One woman was poor, and the other was wealthy.
  - d. One woman had almost nothing, and the other had almost everything.
  - e. One woman was desperate, and the other thought she was okay.
  - f. Both women loved God.
  - g. Both women received a miracle from God.
6. Life occurs somewhere between the experience of these two women, who represent what we might call “the bookends of life.”
7. It's interesting to note that one woman asked for a miracle and received it, and the other didn't ask for a miracle, nevertheless, God did something miraculous for her, too!
8. It is important for us to remember that God just doesn't 'show up' when we are desperate; he is also the God who surprises us when we least expect it.
9. In whatever way God ministers to us, we need to turn to him and exclaim, “Wow, God!”

## The Widow's Miracle

10. This grieving widow was in a desperate situation.
  - a. She had lost her husband.
  - b. She couldn't pay her bills.
  - c. She was about to lose her sons to creditors.
11. Her situation was not a punishment from God.
  - a. Her husband “*revered the Lord.*”
  - b. Her husband was a member of the “*company of the prophets.*”
  - c. They were a godly family.

## Desperate Situations Are Not Always The Result Of Our Sin Or Disobedience

12. Desperate situations can be the result of sin or disobedience, because we open ourselves up to hardship when we disobey God.
13. There are times, and this account is one of them, when people are living for and loving the Lord, and doing the best they can, yet they still have to cope with the hardships of life.
14. **2 Kings 4:2** - *“Elisha replied to her, ‘How can I help you? What do you have in your house?’ ‘Your servant has nothing there at all,’ she said, ‘except a little oil.’ ”*
  - a. KJV (King James Version) indicates it was a pot of oil.
  - b. NKJV (New King James Version) indicates it was a jar of oil.
  - c. The Hebrew word used here describes a small flask.
15. When we say, “God, I only have a little hope, a little offering, a little trust, a little love, a little education, or a little experience, we need to remember that a little goes a long way with God!

## God Will Multiply The “Little” We Surrender To Him

16. **2 Kings 4:3** - *“Elisha said, ‘Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don’t ask for just a few.’ ”*
17. Doing what Elisha directed required humility, faith, and action on her part.

## Faith Is Not Just Believing Something

### Faith Is Also Doing Something

18. Faith is not just a noun; it’s a verb!
19. Elisha could have simply prayed or waved his hand and a pile of money would have appeared on this woman’s kitchen table or God could have put it on someone’s heart to pay off her debt.
20. God could have brought along a wealthy man (e.g. Boaz for Ruth) who married the woman and adopted her sons.
21. The truth is that God could have taken care of her in a multitude of ways, but sometimes he calls us to action.

22. It's been said that faith is like a muscle that needs to be exercised.
23. The first thing she was told to do was to ask her neighbors for empty jars, which was both a humbling and somewhat embarrassing experience.
24. The miracle God was about to do for her was one that also stretched her in the areas of faith and humility.
25. God also stretched her neighbors to be involved with her, and because God has a special place in his heart for widows and orphans, he wants us to share in helping, however, people won't know about the need unless it's shared.
26. **Psalm 68:5** - *"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling."*
27. **James 1:27** - *"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."*
28. **Galatians 6:2** - *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."*
29. There is a limit to how much others should help us.
30. **2 Kings 4:4** - *"Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side."*
31. She was instructed to *"pour oil into all the jars,"* which means she had to do something, because no one, including Elisha, was to cheat her out of her own personal encounter with God, which often comes through the struggle.
32. If you remove the struggle, then you remove the encounter with God, and a closer walk with God is often borne out of going through adversity, instead of going around it.

Sometimes You Might Need To Shut Out Some People Who Mean Well  
And Just Get Alone With God

33. Jesus expelled the spectators and the hired mourners from Jairus' house, and he only permitted Peter, James, John, and the parents to be there when he went raised Jairus' daughter from the dead.

34. In particular, the skeptics, the critics, and the faithless, need to be removed, so you can get alone with God.

The Miracle Stopped Because There Was A Shortage Of Human Supply  
Not Because There Was A Shortage of Heavenly Supply

35. She poured oil from the little flask into all the jars she had, and the flask never ran out, until all the jars she had were filled.

36. The miracle stopped because there weren't any empty jars, not because there wasn't enough oil, because there is never a shortage with God.

37. Her needs were not only met, but were exceeded, because she was able to sell the extra oil to pay her debts, and with the money left over she had enough to provide for the needs of her family.

38. This is a story that started with death, adversity, sorrow, poverty, and anxiety, but ended with hope, comfort, peace, provision, and encouragement.

The Married Woman's Miracles

39. If you were to say, "My life and circumstances are not as desperate as this woman's, and the fact is that I'm doing fine, I have no complaints, and I don't really need anything," then the miracle Elisha did in the town of Shunem should be of particular interest to you!

40. As an itinerant prophet, Elisha traveled from place to place, and when he arrived in Shunem, there was a woman who asked him to stay for a meal.

41. The Shunammite woman, who was married and wealthy, had an obvious gift of hospitality, so Elisha agreed to stay.

42. The woman and her husband agreed to build an addition to their home so Elisha could stay with them whenever he was in town.

43. **2 Kings 4:11-13** - *"One day when Elisha came, he went up to his room and lay down there. He said to his servant Gehazi, 'Call the Shunammite.' So he called her, and she stood before him. Elisha said to him, 'Tell her, "You have gone to all this trouble for us. Now what can be done for you? Can we speak on*

*your behalf to the king or the commander of the army?" She replied, 'I have a home among my own people.' "*

44. Basically, she was saying: "I'm fine. I've got a nice home and I live among my people; I have my family and my friends. I'm good!"
45. Elisha knew that she had no son and her husband was old.
46. **2 Kings 4:15-16** - *"Then Elisha said, 'Call her.' So he called her, and she stood in the doorway. 'About this time next year,' Elisha said, 'you will hold a son in your arms.' 'No, my lord,' she objected. 'Don't mislead your servant, O man of God!' "*
47. She reacted as you might expect, by saying: "Don't play with my emotions and get my hopes up for nothing!"
48. She, like many of us, may have never asked God for something because she were afraid to get her hopes up only to be disappointed, or she may have just stopped asking God.
49. Pastor Gary said, "Faith involves risk, and God is worth the risk!"
50. In a year's time, just like Elisha said, she gave birth to a son, and she received the miracle she didn't even ask for.
51. As the story unfolds, we read that when her son was about five or six years old, he was out in the field helping his father when he suddenly complained of a terrible headache.
52. A servant in the field rushed him to his mother, who held him on her lap until noon, when the boy died.
  - a. Some Bible scholars believe he may have died from a brain aneurysm or heat stroke.
53. After her son died, the woman traveled 20 miles by donkey to find Elisha at Mt. Carmel.
54. **2 Kings 4:28-37** - *" 'Did I ask you for a son, my lord?' she said. 'Didn't I tell you, 'Don't raise my hopes'? Elisha said to Gehazi, 'Tuck your cloak into your belt, take my staff in your hand and run. If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not answer. Lay my staff on the boy's face.' But the child's mother said, 'As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave*

*you.’ So he got up and followed her. Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the boy’s face, but there was no sound or response. So Gehazi went back to meet Elisha and told him, ‘The boy has not awakened.’ When Elisha reached the house, there was the boy lying dead on his couch. He went in, shut the door on the two of them and prayed to the Lord. Then he got on the bed and lay upon the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. As he stretched himself out upon him, the boy’s body grew warm. Elisha turned away and walked back and forth in the room and then got on the bed and stretched out upon him once more. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. Elisha summoned Gehazi and said, ‘Call the Shunammite.’ And he did. When she came, he said, ‘Take your son.’ She came in, fell at his feet and bowed to the ground. Then she took her son and went out.”*

55. God “Wowed” this woman with a second miracle!
56. In addition to this young boy, there are other instances of a person or persons mentioned in the Bible who were raised from the dead.
- a. [1 Kings 17:17-22](#) - The son of the widow of Zarepath
  - b. [2 Kings 13:20-21](#) - A man whose body touched Elisha’s bones
  - c. [Matthew 27:50-53](#) - Many saints rose from the dead
  - d. [Matthew 28:5-8](#); [Mark 16:6](#); [Luke 24:5-6](#) - Jesus
  - e. [Luke 7:11-15](#) - The son of the widow of Nain
  - f. [Luke 8:41-42, 49-55](#) - Jairus’ daughter
  - g. [John 11: 1-44](#) - Lazarus
  - h. [Acts 9:36-41](#) - Dorcas
  - i. [Acts 20:9-10](#) - Eutychus

#### Trust God Again

#### He May Want To Do Something For You That You Are Too Afraid To Ask

57. Pastor Gary said, “There may be hurt in taking risks, but there is no hope if you don’t.”
58. [Romans 5:3-5](#) - “... we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

## Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [2 Kings 4:1-17](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's statement: "God just doesn't 'show up' when we are desperate; he is also the God who surprises us when we least expect it."
4. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they've had when they've been "Wowed by God."
5. Why do you think people are prone to think difficult times and hardships are always a punishment from God?
6. How have you seen the Lord take the your little hope, little offering, little trust, little love, little education, or little experience and make it go a long way?
7. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's statements: "Faith is not just a noun; it's a verb," and "Faith is like a muscle that needs to be exercised."
8. Read and discuss #25 through #28 above, and focus on ways the Lord may be calling the people in your group to be part of what God wants to do for others.
9. How have your struggles brought you into a closer walk with the Lord?
10. What does it mean to remove all the skeptics, faithless, and mockers so you can get alone with God?
11. Have you ever refrained from asking or stopped asking God for something because you were afraid to get your hopes up for nothing?
12. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's statement: "Faith involves risk, and God is worth the risk!"
13. Read and discuss [Romans 5:3-5](#).
14. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).