



# The Ministry of Elisha

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## Lesson 2: The Lord Provides

### *Introduction*

*In **Psalm 145**, King David wrote of the Lord's providence, saying, "The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing." Indeed, God makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on both the righteous and the wicked. He gives to us our daily bread. He provides for "every living thing."*

*Though he usually does this by such natural means, occasionally the Lord takes care of his own by miraculous measures. In the portion of God's Word that we will cover in this lesson, we will see how the Lord, through his servant Elisha, miraculously provided for his people.*

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### *The Widow's Oil*

*The first miracle was one involving a widow whose husband had died a short time before. He had been a member of the "company of the prophets."*

**Read** *2 Kings 4:1-7 to find out how the Lord provided for her through Elisha.*

- What potential problem did the widow face?
- What did Elisha propose as a solution to the problem?

### **Learn**

- The Mosaic law allowed for such a practice. Read **Exodus 21:1-3**.
- Whose responsibility was it normally to see to the welfare of those widowed and orphaned? Read **Exodus 22:22-24**
- Read **Galatians 3:13-14; 4:4-5**. How does this account illustrate the Biblical principal of redemption?

### **Take to Heart**

- What are some of the "quiet" ways in which God provides for us? Which promises of God in scripture are particularly meaningful to you when facing financial uncertainties with serious implications?

## ***The Shunamite and Her Son***

*In ancient Israel, a woman whose husband and sons were all dead, often found life quite difficult. While such a tragedy came with many tears, the husband and wife who had no children at all were oftentimes looked upon with even more pity than the widow whose children all died before her.*

*As you read the next section, you will hear about a childless couple for whom the Lord provided.*

### **Read 2 Kings 4:8-17**

- What did the Shunammite woman ask her husband to do for Elisha and why?
- What did Elisha offer to do for the well-to-do woman who provided for him?
- What did Gehazi, Elisha's servant, suggest, since the woman asked for nothing?

### **Learn**

- Did she believe Elisha, and if she did, why say what she said to God's servant?

*The Lord provided her with a son, even as Elisha had said. What a wonderful blessing. But their life would not be without sorrow. In the following verses we see how the Lord tested her faith, and confirmed it.*

**Read 2 Kings 4:18-28** to see how God brought Elisha back into the Shunammite woman's life as a reminder of God's mercy and grace.

- What happened to the woman's son?
- Why answer both her husband and Gehazi with the word "shalom" (everything's all right)?

*Having heard her words of distress, Elisha instructed his servant Gehazi to prepare himself to run ahead to see to the condition of the child.*

**2 Kings 4:29-37:** *Take note of the way in which Elisha shows that the power to revive the child is not found in himself or his possessions, but only in the almighty Lord to whom he prays.*

- What happened when Gehazi did as Elisha told him, laying the staff on the boy's face?
- What was the first thing that Elisha did once he reached the place where the dead boy lay?

### **Learn**

- Why would Elisha instruct Gehazi to run ahead, but greet no one along the way? (cmp. **Lk. 10:1-4**)
- Do you think that the Shunammite woman believed that Elisha's course of action would work?

### **Take to Heart**

- What truths (many!) can we draw from this section of Scripture concerning:
  - attitudes towards God's representatives he sends into our midst (called workers)?
  - attitudes toward the gift of life?
  - God's testing of faith?
  - Other?

## ***Death in the Pot***

*Having begun on his yearly visit to the schools of the prophets, Elisha came to Gilgal, where the Lord worked through him to provide a meal that could have otherwise made sick and even taken the life of those who ate it.*

### **Read 2 Kings 4:38-41.**

- Why was the stew that was to be served to the men made from wild gourds?
- What ingredient did Elisha call for, and what could it possibly do to remedy the taste?

### **Learn**

- Whenever we read the word "famine" in the Old Testament, we should take notice. Consider what **Deuteronomy 28:15-24** has to say on the topic.

## ***The Feeding of a Hundred***

*In the final portion of 2 Kings 4, we see how once again the Lord, working through his servant, miraculously provided for his people. It was no feeding of the five-thousand men -- not to mention women and children -- from five barley loaves and two small fish. But it was a miracle nonetheless.*

### **Read 2 Kings 4:42-44.**

- How can we see in this section that not everyone in Israel had turned away from the Lord?
- What did Elisha instruct his servant to do with the bread given to him?

### **Learn**

- Baal-Shalishah is nearly 35 miles from Gilgal. What statement does this make about the man's faith?
- Any other details that jump out at you that highlight the man's faith in action?

### **Take to Heart**

- The two miracles in this final section of 2 Kings 4 both deal with earthly, bodily needs. How are the miracles similar? In what ways are they different?

## **CONCLUSION**

All the miracles in this section of Elisha's ministry dealt with earthly, physical blessings and needs. Think about what Jesus taught us to pray: "**Give us today our daily bread.**"

Discussion starters:

- What challenges do we / you face in recognizing how God's hand provides everything?
- America's "Protestant work ethic" lauds independence, industriousness, productivity, and even frugality. Evaluate the worth of these in light of this lesson on God's providential care.