

## **YOU WILL EMBRACE A SON**

II Kings 4: 8-17 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Twenty miles northwest of Abel-meholah, Elisha's hometown, was a town known to all Israel as the home of the beautiful young virgin woman named Abishag, who nursed King David in the very last days of his life. That town was Shunem. Shunem lays in north Israel in the Valley of Esdraelon. This is perhaps the richest ground in all the land of Israel. The soil was fertile, well cultivated, and it stretched on and on as far as the eye could see, the spread of these fertile fields. Jewish tour guides tell their visitors to Israel that this valley is the breadbasket of Israel. Going on from Shunen northwest to Mt. Carmel, about 25 miles, Elisha would often go up to where God defeated the prophets of Baal and God sent fire to consume the sacrifice there under the prophet Elijah. Most commentators believe that there were at least 4 great schools of the prophets, starting at Gilgal, then Jericho, then Bethel, and finally at Mt. Carmel. If that is the case, as it seems to have been, Elisha, much like a circuit riding preacher, was a circuit going seminary professor, lecturing often at Gilgal, Jericho, Bethel and Mt. Carmel. The prophet Elisha must have been a very strong man, with much endurance, to travel the distances between Gilgal and Mt. Carmel. From Gilgal to Jericho was 2 miles, from Jericho to Bethel was 12 miles, all going northwest. Then from Bethel straight north to Shunem was 50 miles, and going on northwest, to Mt. Carmel, was 25 miles. Add it up and the trip was about 89-90 miles—or 180 miles round trip.

So, it happened, in the sovereignty of God, a wealthy Shunamite woman living in Shunem, would see Elisha passing through their town, and she invited him to her home where she and her elderly husband lived. She cooked well, and Elisha turned in there going to and from Mt. Carmel. After eating many meals with this Shunamite couple, God laid it on the heart of this wealthy Shunamite woman to speak to her husband about building a prophet's chamber for Elisha so he could have a home away from home to stay when his route took him through Shunem. The account is a glorious account about the blessings of giving hospitality to people of God. Yet there is so much more in this text. Study it with me today and let's discover what happens when we make room for God and for His people in our own homes. I found seven discoveries that will bless your heart and mine if we follow the example of this Shunamite woman. What are these seven discoveries?

### **MAKING ROOM FOR GOD AND HIS PEOPLE IS THE ROAD TO GODLY GROWTH IN GRACE AND FAITH.** (I.)

Notice verses 9-10a. "And she said to her husband, 'Behold now, I know that this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way. Let us make a small room on the roof with walls...'" Beloved, most of us have very cluttered and busy lives. We are sometimes much too busy for God and for serving His special people he brings our way. When

mission trips go out, I urge all the short-term missionaries to be very flexible, or before their trip is over, good and godly missionaries can get bent out of shape. To have room for God and others, and to have room to open our homes to God's people is one of the signs that we are believers who are growing in grace and in faith. Now it is easy for all of us to erect barriers to making room for God and for His people, but the biggest drawback and limit each of us will encounter is ourselves. There are few believers these days who want to be hospitable. The New Testament is filled with commands for each of us to be hospitable as this Shunamite woman was. Romans 12: 13 is strong. "Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." Elders and their wives are to be hospitable. I Timothy 3: 2-5 is also clear. "Therefore, an overseer/elder must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church." Titus 1: 8 is a replica of I Timothy 3: 2-5. Peter adds in I Peter 4: 9, "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." Are you open to making room for God and for His people in your own home? Secondly,

**MAKING ROOM FOR GOD AND HIS PEOPLE BEGINS WITH FOLLOWING GOD'S ORDER IN THE HOME.** (II.) Notice verse 10. "Let us

make a small room on the roof with walls, and put there for him, a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that whenever he comes to us, he can go in there." This woman lived in a glorious home. Imagining her home reminds me of the old feudal castles in England where massive beams spanned the grand halls and on those beams were the inscription—"This house shall be preserved and never shall decay, where Almighty God is worshipped day by day." This was a godly home and this woman was a godly, respectful wife. This Shunamite woman's actions were baptized in respect and submission to her husband. Notice she spoke to her husband about her ideas immediately, for building a prophet's chamber for Elisha. This Shunamite woman had no little secrets she kept from her husband. No, she would need the skills of her husband, his agreement with her idea, and his leadership in embarking on this project. Her desire was for them as a couple to build an extension on their home on the second floor, in a walled room that was furnished. Talk about hospitality and making room for God and His people. This was going beyond the second mile. This was climbing the mountain of making room for God. This woman wanted Elisha to have a place he could go to easily, and not have to go through the house—a walled in place of his own, a home away from home where he would sense and feel he could stay, sleep, study, and strengthen his soul for the next leg of the journey. So, they made room for the prophet, and this family enjoyed the favor of God.

Sometimes we are all too comfortable with “good,” when God wants to take us to greatness! Paul Scanlon wrote, “Many are so grateful for good that they stay where they are, not realizing good is only the base camp on the mountain of greatness.” Mt. Everest, the tallest peak in the world, has four base camps that are strategically placed so that climbers can get better adapted and acclimated to the mountain's treacherous climates due to the lack of oxygen as the climber ascends. When a climber has adapted to their surroundings and environment at a base camp, those seeking the summit will move on to the next base camp until, hopefully, they are ready to move on to the fifth stage of the climb: the summit of Mt. Everest (29,029 feet above sea level). Some climbers fail to adapt, run out of time or resources, or the weather deteriorates, before the final ascent to the summit. For them, their highest achieved base camp becomes their ceiling, instead of the summit. We do this in our Christian life. We find something good in our lives, and we say—this is good enough. Why go higher? It reminds me of Peter on the Mt. of Transfiguration. (Mark 9:5, Matthew 17:4, Luke 9:33), in the presence of Jesus, Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus when He was transfigured. Peter seeing how awesome it was, said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."! This must be the summit! This looks to me as though it's as good as it could be! Let's camp out here for a while and bask in the glory of Your presence. God the Father reminded Peter this transfiguration was not the summit, but only the base camp for Jesus on the road to Mt. Calvary where He would die for us all.

Beloved, showing hospitality can begin to help us climb the road to growth in grace and faith. Like Peter, we may host a wonderful overnight of bed and breakfast for some missionaries or for a Pastor and his wife, or we may have invited a family or a group of people to live with us for a few days. It may feel like the summit to us—as good as it can be, but showing hospitality is usually one of God's basecamps on the road to growth in grace. For Jesus, the transfiguration was just a pause or a Selah in his setting His face as a flint to go to the cross. The transfiguration was a pause of encouragement from Moses and Elijah as Jesus began His journey to the cross. Peter had a great idea of showing hospitality on that mountain—making three dwelling places there for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Yet, just as children, a wife, or a husband can get out of order, Peter was out of order. We read God the Father's correcting Peter from the cloud in Matthew 17: 5, saying, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.” This wealthy Shunamite woman knew well her place in her home. She knew her husband would listen to her, but she also knew the road to making room for God and for Elisha, began with making room in her heart for her own husband. Thirdly,

**MAKING ROOM FOR GOD AND HIS PEOPLE MEANS KNOWING WHO A HOLY MAN OF GOD IS AND KNOWING HOW BEST TO SERVE HIM.**

(III.) Notice again at verses 9-10. We read first, “And she said to her husband, I know/perceive that this is a holy man of God.” The Hebrew word for know or perceive is **yada**. It means to know by observing, reflecting, thinking, and experiencing. This woman did not say Elisha was a man of God, but she perceived him to be a holy man of God. What a tribute this was to Elisha! She knew by observing that Elisha kept company with God Almighty. What do people see when they observe and reflect on our lives? Can they see Jesus in our lives? Do you remember what the Jewish leaders said of Peter and John after Pentecost? Acts 4: 13 uses a similar word for know or perceive. We read, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.”

Making room for a man or a woman of God in our home is making room for the possible again. This woman didn’t know what was ahead for her, but she was open to the possibilities that come when we are hospitable. This woman was open to blessings up ahead. She knew in her soul that possibilities come with hosting and being hospitable to a holy man of God. Being hospitable opens the doors to anticipation, expectation, and possibilities we would never otherwise dream of. Are you inviting possibilities into your life and into your home? Are you being faithful in the small things? Are you open to hosting and hospitality? The Bible tells us in II Chronicles 16: 9, “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro, throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward Him.”

For this man and his wife, inviting Elisha into their home was making room for God’s miracles. Why? The reason was—Everywhere Elisha went, miracles happened. Making room for good company was filling the heart of this dear woman. She wanted privacy for Elisha, a room on the roof with walls. She wanted a furnished sacred place. She wanted a bed for Elisha, a table to eat at, a stool or couch to sit on, and a candlestick or lampstand to study by. The stool is more than it implies. The Hebrew for stool is **kisseh**. A kisseh is sofa type of seat or a large chair of some dignity. This man and this woman were not into buying and selling houses. Flipping houses was not their call, but their call was to furnish a prophet’s chamber for this holy man of God. They had no idea what would come of it, but I see in their provisions for Elisha, a deep desire to reach out in love to him to meet his needs while gone from home. In doing this for others, Jesus says, we do it unto Him. (Mt. 25: 31-40) This couple went out of their way to accommodate Elisha--to establish their home in Shunem as Elisha’s frequent flyer bed and breakfast. 4thly,

**MAKING ROOM FOR GOD AND HIS PEOPLE MEANS KNOWING HOW TO ACCOMMODATE SOMEONE SO THAT THEY FEEL AT HOME.**

(IV.) Notice the plan this couple had worked. Notice verse 11. We read, “One day he came there, and he turned into the chamber and rested there.” This woman’s

thoughtful accommodations show us she knew how to make this little roof house Elisha's own. Sometimes we struggle doing acts of service because we think it has to be a great sacrificial act. What kind of service is God looking for from us? Reread Matt. 25:31-40. If a neighbor is sick and needs a hot meal, don't sound a trumpet. You don't have to tell anyone else; just take them a hot meal. If we know a poor family and the kids need shoes, a winter coat, or socks, just go buy some clothes for them. If we know someone is going through tough times, be there for them. Go visit them. Go sit a spell. Talk at length with them. Making room for God and others can be one of the most fulfilling calls God will ever give to you. Peter Wagner says you can tell if you have a special gift of hospitality. He says, "It's not the person who has their house spotless and spends hours preparing the meal, so everything is just right. It is rather the one who is more concerned about you, than how their house looks. It really doesn't matter if the cushions are exactly straight, or if the cake is a day old to serve it. With true hospitality, guests may feel like they can get up and get their own second cup of coffee without asking." Fifthly,

### **MAKING ROOM FOR GOD AND HIS PEOPLE REVEALS A HEART OF CONTENTMENT THAT NEEDS NO REIMBURSEMENT.** (V.)

Notice verse 12-13. "And Elisha said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunamite." When Gehazi called her, she stood before Elisha. And he said to Gehazi, "Say now to her, 'See, you have taken all this trouble for us; what is to be done for you? Would you have a word spoken on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?'" She answered, "I dwell among my own people." People that open themselves up to God and others aren't secretly looking for perks. Elisha intimated that he may have some pull with the king and the army commander to put in a good word for this woman. This woman couldn't be talked into coveting. Her answer was, "I dwell among my own people." What does that mean? It meant, "Thanks, but no thanks. I appreciate your offer, but I have this good home God has provided for me through the diligence of my husband. I have this nice home. All my needs are provided for. Elisha, I really don't need anything." Be alert to the fact that this woman gave out of her abundance and she didn't give to get. For her, the blessing of giving was sufficient, for this Shunamite woman to be satisfied with her life. This woman's godly life was visible in her home. Major W. F. Bratt used to say, "Holiness begins at home and sanctification at the sink." This woman had substance. She was well-healed. She shared from her substance with this holy man of God. She was generous and seemed to lack for nothing. She was holy and hospitable. Sixthly,

### **MAKING ROOM FOR GOD AND HIS PEOPLE OPENS THE DOOR FOR GOD TO SUPPLY OUR UNSPOKEN HEART DESIRES.** (VI.)

Notice Elisha's words to Gehazi, in verses 14-16. "What then is to be done for her?" Gehazi answered, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is old." Elisha said, "Call her." And when he had called her, she stood in the doorway. And Elisha said,

“At this season, about this time, next year, you shall embrace a son.” And she said, “No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your servant.” Resting peacefully in his prophet’s chamber, v. 11, Elisha felt so thankful to God for this Shunamite’s hospitality. He knew no way to repay her, but Elisha wanted somehow to express his gratefulness. At first there seemed nothing for Elisha to do, but give Elisha credit, he was willing to ask his own servant Gehazi for ideas. Gehazi perhaps had conversed with this couple at times when Elisha was resting and sleeping. Perhaps he once ventured to ask them if their children were grown and gone from home. Then it would have come out. “We have desired and hoped and prayed for children, but we love God, and He has not seen fit to answer our prayer. We are childless.” Perhaps this Shunamite ventured to tell Gehazi that her husband was old, and it was now out of the picture. Hearing Elisha’s question, Gehazi did have a thought—a wild thought, a thought that may have even seemed to him far-fetched, and untimely, as well due to their ages. Elisha was motivated by love, and he lived in faith. For him, there was nothing God could not do, so he told Gehazi. Go get her. Perhaps, after coming to the upstairs door to answer Elisha’s question about what he could do for her, she must have gone back downstairs. When Elisha had Gehazi call the woman again, she had no earthly idea what God was about to do. She was content and that’s how she had lived her barren life before God.

Yet at the words of Elijah, every bone in that Shunamite’s body must have begun to tremble. God was awakening an unspoken need she dared never pray again lest she make her husband feel inadequate since he was old, or lest she awaken buried dreams she had put to bed long ago. What did Elisha say? “At this season, about this time next year, you shall embrace a son!” It was too much for this loving, giving woman of God. She fired back at Elisha, “No, my lord. O man of God; do not lie to your servant.” This Shunamite knew that when needs were great, God had provided in the past. She knew when her pain was deep, God provided her with a man of God who loved her deeply, despite her barrenness. But where did this come from—her unspoken and deepest heart need that had long been buried? “Do not lie to me, O man of God. Beloved, this morning, God knows each of our deepest buried and laid to rest heart hopes that have long since died. Would He venture to supply what seems impossible? O yes, He can, and He loves to meet unspoken needs with His marvelous grace of our loving Lord. Seventhly and lastly,

**MAKING ROOM FOR GOD AND FOR HIS PEOPLE IS THE END OF BARRENNESS, BOTH SPIRITUAL AND SOMETIMES EVEN PHYSICAL.**

(VII.) Notice verse 17. Despite the Shunamite’s initial doubt and unbelief, we read, “But the woman conceived, and she bore a son about that time the following spring, as Elisha had said to her.” By making room for God and His people, this Shunamite woman made room for her miracle. In 1878, an unknown writer wrote a beautiful song I will close with. “Have You Any Room For Jesus? – Page 302.