

The Shunammite Woman's Faith Is To Be Praised

by James Jennings

This sermon reflects on the praiseworthy characteristics of a mother who endured great trials of faith, highlighting her discernment, hospitality, pure motives, submissiveness, contentment, faith-filled persistence in prayer, and obedience to God's Word. It emphasizes the importance of going to the right person for needs, trusting in God's power, and being faithful in all circumstances.

Scripture: Proverbs 31:30, Hebrews 11:35, Proverbs 21:1, Luke 6:38, 1 Timothy 6:17, Hebrews 5:14, James 5:16, Genesis 18:14, Psalm 37:4

Topics: "Faithful Endurance", "Godly Characteristics of a Mother"

Description

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Transcript

Okay, this morning, I want to consider seven praiseworthy characteristics of a mother who endured three great trials that tested her faith. The first trial was that she was not a mother. At least, she didn't have a son.

It's not clear whether she had any other daughters earlier on in life. And due to her husband's age, the window to have a child, it seemed to be closed. But she was content.

That was her first trial. And thinking about Mother's Day today, I'm always reminded of how many sisters out there, Mother's Day is a difficult day because they've had infertility in their marriage and they don't have any children. That can be a hard day.

My wife's roommate, they lived together for years prior to Bethany and I getting married. They both got married around the same time. And here, Bethany and I have five children.

And her roommate friend has yet to have one. Now, they have one through adoption. Praise God.

But they could not have any of their own. That was a trial. So that's something to remember on Mother's Day.

The second trial this woman went through was the death of this very child whom she had been given. But, she had faith that the child would be raised from the dead. And the third trial was she had to uproot and relocate for seven years of her life and leave all that she knew from her homeland and go to another land.

But, she had faith, returned, and had no loss suffered. And so, in this woman, we're going to read everything the Bible has to say about her. And we're going to see in each of these trials, she passed the test by faith.

At least, that seems to be what the narration indicates is true about her. She trusted in the Lord who controlled her circumstances. And so, turn to 2 Kings 4. And what we read in this narrative part of the Old Testament Scriptures is incidents of her life that are recorded because of her interaction with Elisha.

And when you think about Elisha who followed the prophet Elijah, you should think about Hebrews 1 where it says that God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. And so, Elisha was the man of God. God was speaking through this man.

It was as if he had the very Word of God. So you don't want to think about the way she goes to him for help is to be parallel to going to a pastor now and today. But rather, it's going to the Lord.

He really represented the mouthpiece of God. And so this woman I want to look at is the Shunammite woman. We don't know her first name.

All we know is the place she came from. Kind of like saying the Canadian or the Romanian. Here we have the Shunammite woman.

So 2 Kings 4, we're going to read starting in verse 8. One day, Elisha went on to Shunamm where a wealthy woman lived who urged him to eat some food. Basically trying to force him to come over and have a meal with us. So whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there and eat food.

So a pattern is starting to form. Verse 9, 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 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.

So they made a full-out guest room for him. Verse 11, One day he came there, and he turned into the chamber and rested there. And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite.

When he had called her, she stood before him. Verse 13, 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 to you on your behalf? To the king or to the commander of the army? She answered, I dwell among my own people.

In other words, she seems very content. Verse 14, And he said, What then is to be done for her? Gehazi answered, Well, she has no son, and her husband is old. In other words, when he dies, who's going to take the estate? Who's going to carry on the family name? That was a big deal in Old Testament genealogy times.

Verse 15, He said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the doorway. So she's standing there again.

Verse 16, And he 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.

Don't mislead me. Don't lead me astray. Don't raise my hopes.

Verse 17, But the woman conceived, and she bore a son about that time the following spring. As Elisha had said to her, when the child had grown, he went out one day to his father among the reapers. And he said to his father, Oh, my head.

My head. The father said to his servant, Carry him to his mother. And when he had lifted him and brought him to his mother, the child sat on her lap till noon.

And then he died. And she went up. And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God and shut the door behind him and went out.

Then she called to her husband, who is still outside, and said, send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys that I may quickly go to the man of God and come back again. And he said, why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath. She said, all is well.

Then she saddled the donkey and she said to her servant, urge the animal on. Do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you. And so they rode on that donkey for a while.

Verse 25, So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehazi, his servant, Look, there is the Shunammite. Run at once to meet her and say to her, Is all well with you? Is all well with your husband? Is all well with the child? And she answered, all is well.

And when she came to the mountain to the man of God, she caught hold of his feet. And that's the same word for urged him to eat in the beginning. Laying hold of his feet.

And Gehazi came to push her away. But the man of God said, Leave her alone, for she is in bitter distress. And the Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me.

Then she said, Did I ask the Lord for a son? Did I not say, Do not deceive me? He said to Gehazi, Tie up my garment and take my staff in your hand and go. A staff like Moses. It was used.

It had a sense of power. Gehazi came to push her away. But the man of God said, Leave her alone, for she is in bitter distress and the Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me.

I'm sorry, did I just read back at the wrong place? Verse 30. Verse 29, If you meet anyone, do not greet him. And if anyone greets you, do not reply.

And lay my staff on the face of the child. Then the mother of the child said, As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you. So, in view of her persistence, you've got to catch this, in view of her persistence, Elisha then goes.

So he arose and followed her. Meaning, he only went because of her persistence right there. Verse 31, we're in 2 Kings 4. We just got here.

Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the face of the child. But there was no sound or sign of life. Therefore, he returned to meet him and told him, the child has not awakened.

When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying on his bed. So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them, him and the child, and prayed to the Lord. So he's praying here in private.

Verse 34, then he went up and lay on the child, just like Elijah had done in 1 Kings 17, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, his hands on his hands, and as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. Then he got up again, walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him for a second time. The child sneezed seven times.

The child opened his eyes. Then he summoned Gehazi and said, call the Shunammite. So he called her.

And when she came to him, he said, pick up your son. She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground. Then, she picked up her son and went out.

So that's the first place we hear about this Shunammite woman. We're going to read the one other place just quickly in 2 Kings 8. And then I want to point out seven things about this woman. There's more than seven, but I have around seven.

But 2 Kings 8, in verse 1. This is a shorter passage. Now, Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, Arise and depart with your household and sojourn wherever you can. For the Lord has called for a famine, and it will come upon the land for seven years.

So the woman arose and did according to the word of the man of God. She went with her household and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years. At the end of the seven years, when the woman returned from the land of the Philistines, she went to appeal to the king for her house and her land.

Now the king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God. And if you had read chapter 5, we would have found out he's a leper at this point. Saying, tell me all the great things that Elisha has done.

And while he was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life appealed to the king for her house and her land. And Gehazi said, my lord, O king, here is the woman. Meaning she got back after seven years at the exact moment to make her appeal when Gehazi was before the king talking about her very situation.

An incredible example of the providence of God in Scripture. It's amazing. It refreshed the king's mind.

It gave her favor before the king. Verse 6, and when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed an official for her saying, restore all that was hers together with all the produce of the fields from the day she left the land until now.

It's interesting, their produce. If there was a famine, why would there be all this produce to be gathered by the time she got back? Well, the word famine, it always doesn't just carry the idea of food. Maybe think of Ezekiel 5. I will send famine and wild beasts against you.

They will rob you of your children. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword upon you. I am the Lord, I have spoken.

So here the Lord has Elijah speak to her. She leaves, and her son is protected. They are protected, and they come back, and they have no loss at all.

So, Proverbs 31.30 says, charm is deceitful, beauty is vain. But a woman who fears the Lord, something's supposed to happen to her. What is that? She is to be praised.

She is to be praised. Now, we don't know anything about the Shunammite's looks. We don't know if she had the beauty of Abishag the Shunammite that we find in 1 Kings 13.

It was very beautiful. We don't know. We don't even know that much about her personality.

We don't know. I mean, you kind of get a sense of it, but we don't know. But what we do see, I believe, is her fear and obedience to the Lord, and that is something that should be praised.

And we have an admonition in Proverbs to actually praise a woman who fears the Lord. That is something that should be esteemed. In the very next verse in Proverbs, it says, let her works praise her in the gates.

Let her works praise her in the gates. There are works of this woman, the Shunammite, that should be praised in the gates. And her works were done at a time when it was very spiritually dark.

Israel was absolutely in a dark state. I mean, you remember in 1 Kings, Elijah thought he was the only one left. But the Lord said to him, no, I have a few thousand people that are still left, that are still following Me.

Go back to chapter 4. That's going to be the main place. 2 Kings 4. But He calls this woman, He says in v. 8, He calls her a wealthy woman. A wealthy woman.

Now, that may very well be commending her character, not just describing her social status. It might not just be hitting on the reality that she had financial wealth. He might actually be writing this because all these things have already happened.

They've already taken place. And some would even render the word great. Here's a great woman.

Here's a great woman. And so, in bringing this message here, three things to think about. Number one, I want to remind the men of things that you can praise your own wife for.

Right? How can you be an encouragement to your own wife on this day, on any day? Second thing, I want to remind the wives of some things by which they should seek to imitate. And the third thing is to remind single men of certain characteristics that you should be seeking for in a spouse. In a spouse.

So, seven things I want to praise about this woman here, this Shunammite woman who we do not know her name. And so the first thing I want to praise is this. I want to give praise to her discernment.

To her discernment. And when you think about discernment, what verse comes to your mind often? Hebrews 5.14. Hebrews 5.14, it says, solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment, so a certain degree of discernment, trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. And this woman shows she's got some discernment in the spiritual realm.

Physical realm, yes. But the spiritual realm, she has some discernment, some ability to distinguish good from evil. Look at verse 9. And she said to her husband, Behold now, I know that this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way.

Notice when she makes this judgment of Elisha being a holy man of God, she's had continual exposure by having him at the dinner table, by interacting with him to recognize this is a man of God. What was happening in all those conversations? We do not know. We do not know.

But after a continual time, she saw this man is a man of proven worth. This is a man who is a man of God. And this is in contrast to the widow of Zarephath.

The widow of Zarephath also saw her son raised from the dead by Elijah. She had a miraculous provision of food. She had the sudden death of her son.

She had Elijah raise him from the dead. It was only after all of that happened that that widow said this is a man of God. The Shunammite woman is way ahead of the widow of Zarephath.

The widow of Zarephath, she made that proclamation after multiple miracles she witnessed. This woman here, she's just had continual time with this person with her family around the dinner table, and she tells her husband, Shirley, this man who continually comes through here, who we've had all this time around, he's a man of God. That speaks to her discernment here.

She's not being like Eve, getting deceived in the garden by the conversation with the devil. She's recognizing that this man, he is a man of God. And we also see her discernment and her judgment of Gehazi.

It's interesting, after her child died, and throughout all of this narrative, she puts very little weight on Gehazi. She puts very little emphasis and trust on him. Even when he took the staff to go ahead, it's like she didn't want to go with him.

She had no confidence that he would be the means by which her son would be raised from the dead. And in the very next chapter, what does Gehazi do? He lies to Naaman in order to get riches and God strikes him with leprosy. So this is a man who clearly had problems and she did not put much weight on him.

But you think about an ability to distinguish good from evil. That's a characteristic that is often not sought by women in our world. It's not something that is praised and commended.

For a woman to have discernment, to be able to hear a preaching, hear a sermon, and be able to say, you know what, this person was false and this, this, this, and that, or to say the positive, they were true and this, this, and that. Proverbs 11.21, it says, like a gold ring in a pig's snout. It's a beautiful woman without discretion.

If you've got women, outwardly, they look incredibly attractive in the eyes and the standards of the world, but they have no discretion. And the writer says it's just like seeing a pig with a gold ring in its snout. It's just not actually that attractive in the end.

And so, discernment that you get by constant practice, that's something you should be seeking to do. You should be seeking to practice discernment. Right? Honey, what do you think about this? Is this true? Is this false? This family we just had over for a meal, this visiting preacher, do you hear that comment? It sounded really too subjective.

And he didn't really back it up Scripturally. Do you have discussions like that? Practicing as a couple to increase your discernment? Second thing I want to praise her for is for her use of her wealth and her

hospitality. Her use of her wealth and her hospitality.

And as I mentioned, 8-1 says she was a wealthy woman. And then we see in that same verse, she urged him to eat some food. She laid hold of his feet is what it means.

Whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there to eat food. He would turn in there to eat food. She forced him to come over for dinner.

That's pretty hospitable. You've had that, right? Someone sees a need and they might realize that you're not as... I'll go get a hotel. Well, there's not really a hotel back then.

Marriott was not around. There wasn't a lot of opportunity. Maybe go sleep under a tree.

Here this woman is urging him. She's persistent here to come and eat and have a meal. She basically forced him to have dinner.

And then they go beyond that. Verse 10, let us make a small room on the roof with walls and just give him a piece of cardboard to sleep on. No.

Put him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp so he can read. You don't stick a prophet in a room without a lamp. You don't have a guest room and have a visiting preacher come through and it's like there's no desk to study.

I mean, does he not study then? Going above and beyond, right? Going above and beyond, using their wealth to provide a place for him. It makes you think of Proverbs 31:20. She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. So she realized this man needs a place more private for he can stop by.

He's continually coming through here. He's got a need. Honey, why don't we meet that need? And let's make a room on that corner of the house.

I already talked to the structural engineer. We're going to be able to get a permit. Let's put a room up there.

I found this nice lamp on Craigslist. It's not going to cost too much. We've got more money than we know what to do with.

Forget the new tractor. Let's put a room in for this person. And you know what? Let's charge them rent.

No. No rent. We're going to serve this person.

We have received freely. We're going to give freely to this man. You could say she was doing what Titus 3:14 says.

Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works so as to help cases of urgent need and not be unfruitful. And that's exactly what she was doing. She was meeting a case of urgent need.

And it wasn't her husband taking initiative here. It was her. And that might play into her discernment.

I don't know. The narrative mainly mentions her, not her husband. It doesn't say a lot about the man.

Now, no doubt there were many women in the town who had an opportunity to feed a certain prophet, but she beat them all. She beat all of them to the task. But why was no one else in the city wanting to put a guest room for this man and take him in for a meal? Well, I think we have our answer in v. 13.

Look at v. 13. And He said to him, say now to her, see, you have taken all this trouble for Us. Elijah tells Gehazi, this woman has taken all this trouble, trouble for Us.

And if you look up that word, trouble, it means bewilderment and terror. How is she taking up bewilderment? How is she taking up terror by having a guy over for a meal? Well, if you forget the context of this whole section, was Elijah just going around being well-received everywhere he went? Was this a day and age where it was like it was commendable to take in someone? No, it was not. You could incur danger upon your own house just by hosting someone.

Just think years earlier, 1 Kings 19. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, killed your prophets with the sword, and even I only am left, and they seek My life to take it away. So Elijah, that's the type of day and age he was in, and there's not a lot that's changed since Elisha's come on the scene.

So you've got people out there seeking to kill a prophet. And so building a room and urging him for a meal, Elisha looks at that and says, you've gone to trouble. It wasn't just the trouble of building a room.

That doesn't cause bewilderment. It wasn't just had to cook another meal or he came spur of the moment at constant times. The trouble was we're associating with this man who people want to kill.

We could occur ourselves some danger here. But her family took risks to help one that no one else would. And why is she even mentioned in our Bibles? What even entered her into this narrative? Inviting one person over for a meal.

Right? It's incredible. If she didn't do that, we wouldn't know anything about the Shunammite woman. She would not be here.

Just one meal invite. It's amazing what that can lead to. And here she was, using her wealth, like 1 Timothy 1 says, for the rich, because there are people who are rich who are following Christ.

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, and be generous and ready to share. And they were ready to share. Another thing we see here is this.

A wealthy woman, she was not protected from the trials of barrenness. She was not protected from all of those things. She ultimately needed God to do something in her life.

It was not anything that money could buy. So that's the second thing to praise the Shunammite woman for is the use of her wealth to be hospitable. So a third thing I want to praise is her motives for why she does good.

Her motives. And this is important because you can look and say, well, this is great and all that she did, but why? Why? Why did she do this? There might be many people who want to have Elisha because he's famous stay at their house, but what's the motive behind it? What are they trying to get? Did she maybe hear about his previous giving a widow an oil lamp that never ran out and she wanted something out of this? Did she have some ulterior motive there? Look at v. 13. Chapter 4. And He said to her, say now to

her, see, you've taken all this trouble for us.

What is it to be done for you? And then He puts out something that in her eyes would be incredible that even to have a word spoken to the king and look at her answer, I dwell among my own people. Meaning this woman's response right there, it indicates something about her motive. Was she doing all these acts of kindness with some hope of being rewarded? She wasn't.

Because if she was, that was her very opportunity to be rewarded. And she didn't bite it. She didn't bite it.

And this is important. Because Luke 6, it says, if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? It's worthless. Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount.

But love your enemies and do good and lend expecting nothing in return. And your reward will be great. You lend expecting absolutely nothing in return.

And so here this woman, I think she had right pure motives based on her response right there. She was doing it with ulterior motive. That was her prime opportunity to capitalize on that.

And she did not. A fourth thing to praise her for. A fourth thing I would say is her submissiveness to her husband.

And I realize it's hard to go to a narrative place in Scripture where you don't have all the details. It can be hard sometimes. You don't want to overly interpret things or read things into what's happening.

But the passage does talk about two places where she goes to her husband. Verse 9, And she said to her husband, Behold now, I know this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way. Let us make a small room on the roof with walls and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, a lamp, so that whenever he comes to us, he can go in there.

She's running this by her husband. Now, depending on how you read that, I understand one could read it and feel like, oh, she's just telling them how it's going to be. There's no question mark there in the text.

If you read Proverbs 31, it's amazing the initiative the woman is taking in buying a field and doing all of these different things as she is submitting to her husband. And then in verse 22, Then she called to her husband and said, it says after her son has died, she's not even told him the child has died, and she called to her husband and said, Send me one of the servants, one of the donkeys, that I may quickly go to the man of God and come back again. And then he says, why? Why do you want to do this, honey? Why do you want to go to this place? Why would you go with him today? It's not the new moon.

It's not even a Sabbath. And she said, all is well. It is well.

And then she saddled the donkey. And she said to her servant, urge the animal on. So two places the woman went to her husband.

Look, a woman can go to her husband and have no submissiveness because it is a heart matter here. But here, a woman, it seems they're portraying as being far more sensitive to spiritual things than her own husband. She's running these things by her husband.

She's definitely not being quarrelsome. The text doesn't indicate she's not being fretful as Proverbs 21 says. She's not being quick-tempered.

It seems she's seeking to be submissive to her husband. And you know, many a woman like Abigail got stuck with a very ungodly husband. And Abigail had to use her discernment to make decisions in certain ways to protect the good of Nabal's property and her property, even though her husband was sitting there drunk and unable to be involved in any of that type of decision making.

You know, there's often times a wife has to live out her own faith despite her husband not being at the same spiritual place. And this woman, she's doing that. And that's commendable here.

Well, a fifth thing. I want to praise her for her level of contentment. Contentment.

I believe this woman is an example of someone who has the rare jewel of contentment. She doesn't want more than what she already has. Verse 13, he said to her, again, I'll go to the king or to the commander of the army in her response.

I mean, does this not speak of contentment? She answered, I will dwell among my own people. I mean, is he offering in what he says? Is he saying that I'll speak to the commander and get your husband some position? I'll go to the king, get him some position. Is her idea that, well, do you have any complaint you want to take before the king? I'll take that complaint before you.

Do you need access to people of power? I've got access to people of power. And here, you've shown me hospitality. I'll now give you access to these people of power that I have access to.

Do you want that? I'm good. I'm good. Whatever it is, it was implied that it was a considerably big favor.

And she's fine. I dwell among my own people. She's not looking for all this advancement, but she is content.

Contentment. That's something to praise. Discontentment.

Lots of family. It's something that trickles down to the children. The children start to imitate their parents who are discontent.

And the children become discontent. Rot your bones. A sixth thing here to praise this woman for, this mother for, is her response of faith in a sudden fiery trial and her persistence in prayer.

Her response, I believe, of faith. And we see here her persistence in laying ahold of God's Man, who is God's mouthpiece. And we can look at that as her persistence in prayer.

And one thing to think about first is what does she not do when her child dies? What does she not do? I mean, you're there sitting in the chair holding your child for a few hours. Your child dies. What was the first thing she did? Took the boy's dead body, went to the prophet's room, and left the boy's dead body on his bed.

Second thing she did. Went outside, called to her husband to get a donkey to go to Mount Carmel. And in that interaction, nothing indicates here she told her husband that her son had died.

Isn't that odd? I mean, if one of my children died, one of the first things I'd be doing is telling my wife. You know what my wife could do about my dead child? About as little as I could do about my dead child. But you know what Elijah could do about that dead child? Far more than this woman's husband could do.

She didn't fall into mass hysteria. She didn't even tell her husband. She determined to go to the very one in whom God's providence was involved in telling her she would have the son.

She went to the very one who was the prophet of God, who was the man of God. Constantly through this text, it's saying Elisha was God's man. That's who she went to.

Even though it was hours away, even though she had to travel on this donkey, on this bumpy terrain, she went to the man of God. That was the first stain on her mind apparently. The son's dead, put him on the bed, and I'm going to get to that man of God.

If you see here, what's the most surprising moment in all this narrative, at least for me, is her response to her husband after her son has died. 2 Kings 4.23 Why will you go to him today? And it is neither new moon nor Sabbath. She said, all is well.

Or it could be worded, it is well. It is well is another literal renders of that. It's well.

Or it could be like shalom, peace. Peace is upon me. Is this an example of someone asking you how you are doing and you say all is well, but you're actually lying? Are you okay? Yeah, I'm doing well.

And I find out later, oh, your child died and you didn't tell me? Is that a lie? Well, either she's lying or this is a great act of faith. That word all is well, it means I am whole, intact in prosperity and peace. I'm not worried.

In the Greek Septuagint, it's the same phrase Jesus says when He appears to the people in John 20. He stood among His disciples and He said, peace be with you. It's the same phrase there.

Peace be with you. All is well. I mean, was it a lie? Well, think about this.

You lie to cover something up that you don't want someone to see and find because of how it makes you look. Often that's the motivation of a lie. Is this some cover up here? Is she trying to conceal something that she doesn't want her husband to find out about? Nothing here indicates that.

And it appears the husband didn't even think the child was that sick. I mean, he sent the child back by a servant, and then when she comes out, the husband didn't say, well, how's our boy doing? This is his only child. He didn't have ten.

This is his only child. This is your whole lineage right here. If he dies, you've got no son to carry on this family name, and you're not going to have any more children.

For them, a lot was at stake here. No heir would he have of his inheritance. So was her answer to avoid giving a definite answer to her husband? Did she just want to avoid that right there? It wasn't a lie.

Just avoiding it. Or was her answer actually a definite answer? Was she actually saying in faith, all is well? All is well. I'm in peace and I'm not worried.

I'm not worried. And I would tend to see this to praise her for that statement in response to the fiery trial that is knocked on her door. I would tend to see that as an act of faith.

Here she is, not gripped with hysteria. She realizes God gave her this child. She didn't even ask for the child.

So she's determined to go to the man who was involved in that child being promised. And she realizes her husband can't do anything. Her husband can't do anything for this child.

Now, does faith have grief involved? It does. Look at v. 27. She finally gets to Elijah.

When she came to the mountain, the man of God, she caught ahold of his feet. Dehazi wants to push her away. Like something's not appropriate here.

This isn't right. Get her away. But the man of God said, leave her alone, for she is in bitter distress.

So she had distress. She had distress over the fact her child had died. But her first reaction when this comes to her is to go to the one person, the man of God, who could do something about it.

And she doesn't miss a beat. Child's dead. Go up.

Put the body in the room. Go to the husband. Get the donkey.

Go. I'm going to go to him. Very persistent right here.

And she gets past Dehazi saying the same statement all is well. And she gets up to Elijah and she grabs his feet. And then Elijah sends Dehazi back.

I'm not going to go with him. I'm staying with you. I'm staying with you.

You know, grief being concealed from someone in order to ultimately reveal it to the only one who can speak to the matter, it's not being deceitful. There can be a maturity about one's ability not to hide what's going on, but to run with that burden to the one who can do something about it and not take refuge in everyone else who ultimately can't deal with the root issue. There's something commendable about this person.

And we see here her persistence, you could say, in her prayer life. She was silent basically of her grief until she caught hold of Elisha's feet. And then she put two questions to him.

Right? She finally gets to him and she says right there, v. 28, how is she going to reason with him? Then she said, did I ask my Lord for a son? Did I ask? Did I not say, do not deceive me? And Elisha, he said to Dehazi, tie up your garment. He said nothing to her. She had two questions.

You know what those two questions did? They put total responsibility on Elisha. You gave me this son. I did not ask for him.

Right? This is order and argumenting in prayer. This is very similar to Moses and many of those of old. It's like, Lord, this is Your idea to bring this about.

And Lord, I'd even told You, Lord, this is so good. This is a blessing. But Lord, don't deceive me.

Know how weak I am. If You give this to me and You take it away, it could make me struggle. And Elisha's response to her is to act.

To right away act. She was very desperate. You could think about her like Jacob saying I will not leave You, Lord, until You bless me.

You could think about Moses in Numbers 14. Moses appealed and he said, Lord, You brought up this people in Your might from among them. Lord, You've got to do something about this or they're going to say that You don't have the power to deliver the Israelites.

You've got to act. There's this real deep thinking about who can solve the problem and what am I going to appeal to Him. She gets to Him.

She doesn't say to Elisha. She has two pointed questions and that's what she says to Him. And puts total responsibility on Him.

Ordering her argument to Him to get Him to respond. And that's something the Bible actually commends us to do in prayer. Job did it.

Moses did it. Throughout the Old Testament, specifically, you see order and argument in prayer. You're appealing to God.

You're giving Him reasons to hear you. That's what she did. Her prayer life is very commendable.

And Gehazi going with his staff, it didn't work. And as I mentioned, you don't want to miss this, but in v. 30, when he left, the mother of the child said to Elisha, as the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you. So, he arose and followed her.

Meaning, if she didn't stop and persist, guess what? Elisha wasn't coming. It was just going to be Gehazi with the staff and the cloak. And guess what? Did that work? Did that heal the child? It did not work.

So you even get before the Lord and you're appealing your reasons, and you have to think even more as you wrestle with Him in prayer for whatever it is that you're asking Him for in prayer. And she was persistent there. And Elisha went.

And you know, Hebrews 11, it speaks of Elisha. It speaks of this man of God. It says, for time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel, and the prophets.

Then it goes on to describe many things the prophets saw happen by their hands. And one of them, it says, is women received by the rising again their dead. That isn't just speaking about this woman's faith.

That primarily is talking about the prophets. They saw those raised from the dead. And so, Elisha, you want to commend him for his faith, his trust here in the Lord.

Well, the seventh, the last thing to praise her for is her obedience to God's Word no matter the cost. And we see that in chapter 8, which we read in the beginning. By faith, she leaves her land trusting the Lord.

Trusting the Lord. It says in chapter 8, the phrase to really stand out, verse 2, "...so the woman arose and did according to the word of the Man of God." Right? She had a word. You've got to leave for seven years.

There's a famine. All this is going to come upon the land. Was she like Lot's wife? Did she, on her way out, look back and turn to a pillar of salt? No.

Was she like Lot's son-in-laws who were thinking, oh, Lot's making a joke with us. This city isn't going to really get judged. No, she wasn't like them.

You know why? Because she feared God. She feared the very Man of God who spoke the Word of God and she took it serious. She didn't look at that passage of Scripture and try to reason it away and minimize the reality of obeying it, but she obeyed what the Word said.

So there you have it. A discerning, kind-hearted, hospitable, even at the risk of unbelievers harming them. Think about Sodom and Gomorrah.

What happened to those who took in the angels there? They ran into some problems. The whole city was beaten on the door. Wanted to do horrible things to them.

She was hospitable, even at the risk of unbelievers harming them. Submissive, rightly motivated, content, faith-filled, praying, obedient woman. And she is to be praised.

We should praise God for this woman who we know a little about. She was not apparently lacking in discernment. Was not harsh and unfriendly.

Was not rebellious. Was not selfishly motivated for her own gain. She was not full of discontentment, always wanting the next big item.

She was not full of unbelief, just falling into a pit of hysteria and total agony without going to the Lord in prayer. She was not prayerless, lukewarm. She obeyed the Lord.

And the world would tell her she had a right to be really upset because of what had happened, and the world would tell her God has wronged you. She went to the Lord with that argument, right? Lord, did I tell you not to deceive me? She went to Elisha with that. She took arguments to that man of God.

This is a woman who had no child, was barren, yet faithfully serving the Lord and content. And then once she had a child and lost the child, she went to the Lord, and then after all of this, she's got to go and leave the land for seven years and go and live with the Philistines? Hmm. So, a few things.

What does this tell us about the Lord? Well, one, it tells us the Lord delights to give us good things even when we do not ask. I don't think that's wrong to pull that out of here. I mean, think about Abraham.

Isaac was given because he was a promised child. You think about Manoah. He was given a child to take the Nazarite vow and save the Philistines, or kill the Philistines, save Israel from them, Samson.

Elkanah's wife Hina was given her womb opened. Why? To have Samuel a prophet. Why did God open this woman's womb? What did her boy go and do? What did he do? I mean, the Lord must have had a massive purpose for the boy, right? No, that's nowhere in our Bible.

God's purpose was not for the boy. It was for the mother. You see, it was God's kindness towards the mother.

No matter what ever became of the son, God showed kindness towards this woman. And this wasn't even something she had asked. I mean, people want to say she had some suppressed desire of still wanting a child.

Look, I don't know what was going on in her heart. But if her husband was in old age, she was probably taking objective facts and realizing I'm not going to get pregnant anymore. It's not going to happen.

And yet she did. The hand of God. This also shows us the absolute power of God.

This shows us the providence of God. It's remarkable 2 Kings 8, what happened. You're gone for seven years.

You literally get into town. You're making your appeal to get your land back. And the very time you're going to go before the king, it just so happens Gehazi's there talking about you before the king.

Coincidence? No. Providence. Proverbs 21.1 The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord.

He turns wherever he will. It looks like you're having to sacrifice something by leaving the land for seven years. She came back, and it wasn't just she got her land back, but all the crops she would have had during that time, they were given back to her too.

You see, God cares about us. He's not going to leave the righteous begging for bread. Another thing, what does this tell us about the Lord? He's obviously the One behind what is given to us and taken from us.

I mean, the reason she did not have a child was the Lord. The reason she had a child was the Lord. The reason a child got taken was the Lord, and the reason the child got given back was the Lord.

God's in control here. And yet, she's fully responsible to wrestle with the Lord in prayer. If she didn't go to Elisha and she just resolved her child was dead, he wouldn't have been raised from the dead.

She could have called the funeral. I'm not trying to encourage us to wait to bury people when they die and pray over them for days, but if she would have went to the funeral home and not went to Elisha, her son would be in the grave. He never would have come back.

Another thing about the Lord, the Lord has power even to raise the dead, and we need that power because we all have dead children here today, and the dead children are not physically dead. They have a greater sickness and a greater illness and it's one of spiritual death. And we need to be laying a hold of the feet of the Lord and crying out to Him to save our children.

Whether it's back there right now in the 10 a.m., whether it's at VBS that's coming up, whether it's in your family devotional time, we need to be desperate. Lord, You opened the womb. You gave me these children.

You gave them. Even if it wasn't the womb opened, it was providence and adoption in that way. God ordered it.

You didn't go force those children into your life. That was God. Lord, You gave them to me.

They're dead. Please, raise them to spiritual life. Another thing, an application.

See the doors that hospitality can open? It's incredible. I mean, if she had never shown consistent hospitality to this person, the son never would have come about. She probably never would have got her land back, right? But here she urged her husband, urged Elisha to come and have a meal.

They built this room. I mean, it's amazing the doors hospitality can open. The Bible says some even entertain angels unaware.

Another thing to ask yourself, are you going to the right person for your needs? Right? Kind of the reality of... His name is slipping my mind. His feet were crippled. Yeah, Asa.

Are you going to the Lord? Are you going to the doctors? Where are you going? Do you really believe the Lord can use the doctors? But the Lord could also do something. God is a God who still heals today. He has the power to raise a boy from the dead.

He's mighty. Well, the last thing, this somewhat made me... One other thing here. This woman, it doesn't say her age, but it says her husband was old.

Right? And I don't think it's focusing on she was young and he was old. I think the reality is meaning he was old and near to death and would die and they don't have a son. There's no heir to inherit.

So I would assume it wasn't like she was young either. But here she had all these years going on in her life and she's just being faithful, content, serving the Lord, and then all this stuff happens later on in her life. At least in her husband's life.

All this stuff happened. Everything in her life was preparing her for discerning a right moment of hospitality, to respond to the trial by faith, to discern Gehazi. Boy, if she would have went back with him and left Elijah there, her son would be dead.

I think that's safe to say. She was being built up. And here, this one segment of her life is all we know.

God builds people up. He does things in your life. And then He gives you one segment where different things are happening and it might be recorded here of that happening.

And it made me think about two women. I'll close. One who used her wealth and many of you know of her, Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huddington.

She left a mark on the evangelical awakening of the 18th century. For more than 40 years, she was involved in the cause of Christ. She was a very wealthy woman.

It's said of her, she contributed sacrificially to the construction of 64 chapels, the opening of many other places of worship. The driving passion of Selina's life, according to the author, was a zeal for the salvation of her servants, her acquaintances, her family, and the noble. That's a woman who used her wealth throughout her whole life.

It's amazing what God did with her. And the second one, most don't know about her, but it's Miss Lavinia Bartlett. She labored at the church Charles Spurgeon was a part of.

As a little child, she was called the preaching, praying girl. At 12 years of age, she started teaching children's Sunday school in the classes. She would also walk out to a local village to evangelize.

In her 20s, she had a business she started that took much of her time and prevented those labors. She employed several hundred young women to sew hats for newborn children. Then at 30 years of age, she got married and moved to London and had two sons.

Her son writes about her, my mother with all her desire for the spiritual welfare of others realized home came first. She seemed more than ever concerned for her children's salvation, for which she wrestled in prayer night and day. The desire was, if possible, more intensified by the sudden removal of our father by

the terrible disease cholera.

As she grew older, she also developed a serious heart ailment which led to her confinement for several years. As Faith Cook writes, it seemed that Miss Bartlett's service for God was nearing the end. So she thought she was going to die.

She had a heart problem. She was in her 50s. This is in the 1800s.

They don't have all the health advances they have now. But Faith Cook says it was actually only the beginning. Her and her now adult sons started attending the church Charles Spurgeon was at.

In the summer of 1859, she's now 53 years old, a teacher of the New Park Street Chapel women's class was leaving for a month for the benefit of her health and asked Lavinia to take over while she was gone. She expressed her willingness to do so, but feared that in her state of health, the work would be too fatiguing. However, she would make an effort and if possible, carry on the class until the teachers returned.

At the class's first meeting, only three teenage girls showed up. However, she taught the class. The lady never ended up making it back and she ended up teaching this class for 16 years.

Eventually, they had 50. And then Faith Cook says, a spirit of earnest prayer gripped the class which had caught its leader's vision for reaching the unreached church women and girls of London. Just six years later, she was regularly teaching upwards of 1,000 women every Sunday morning.

Humanly speaking, one wonders how a frail little woman had strength and ability to teach 1,000 women while unaided by a sound system. One can almost hear her pleading voice as she regularly used her familiar challenge to women, keep near the cross, my sisters. Mrs. Bartlett's ministry included many London prostitutes, at least one of whom went on to become a missionary.

Her messages were primarily full of exhortations. As I quote, one wrote notes of one of the meetings, she said this, have you any refuge? No, you say, you have no refuge from the hand of death. Have you any refuge beyond that? You must stand before God as a naked sinner.

Oh, it is possible that any of you in this class should ever perish. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you. Think, think, I beseech you.

You hear me now, but you may never hear me again. You're on the brink now. It is only a thread that keeps you here.

Oh, my sister, I beseech you, think, there is a storm coming, the storm of the wrath of Almighty God, which it will be impossible for you to stem or even to escape. Will you go to bed tonight and be careless of the wrath of God? Could you sleep? I beseech you to cry to God where you're sitting. Now on those benches, cry, Lord, save me, or I perish.

Once she said, can you perish? Will you perish, my sister? And a young woman walked in the door at that very point. And just the reality of Ms. Bartlett, it spoke to her soul and the lady was converted. She said, there's a pain that goes through my soul when I think of one who used to sit here.

You knew her face, but if I were to mention her name, you would not know it. She stifled conviction until the great day of grace was past and one day she suddenly fell dead. When I heard of it, I began to

question myself.

Was I faithful to that sister? Ah, there may be some here tonight who may never hear my voice again. There was a last time with that girl and there must be a last time with you. I said to her last time she came to my house.

The Spirit is striving with you. Oh, don't quench Him. But she listened not to my voice and left me as careless as ever.

And now she is gone. Never again to listen to the voice of the love and mercy. But she died at 69.

Spurgeon said of her, much of her power lay in her utter weakness. For the observation of her pains while she was speaking and the feebleness operated upon the people there, a sympathy and a reality basically that made them more appreciate the counsel she gave which cost her so much effort and self-denial because of her physical disabilities basically. And she had all these papers and she burned them all before she died.

She had a great objection to any public notice being taken of her. Burned them, got rid of them, and somehow... Okay, well, that's it. But you see, God was working everything in her life to be a good and fruitful from 56 to 69 in a capacity that she did not perceive.

What's the Lord doing in your lives? Don't be discouraged. If you're a mother, be faithful to your children. God's using all of this to build character.

He might even add sickness in there, and that's for your own good too to make you learn more of the weakness of relying upon the Lord. But whatever comes, you want to be like the Shunammite woman. You want to be faithful.

You want to be laying hold of the Lord in prayer. You want to fear God and live for His approval. Okay, let's pray.

Father, thank You for this woman. Lord, help the mothers here. Give them abundant grace and power.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/t2tunbi5eNk.mp4>

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