

# ELISHA

The Great Things That

One of the great prophets and miracle-workers of the Bible was Elisha. His ministry after the translation of his master Elijah covered over fifty years, and was marked by mighty evidences of the power of faith in God. Let us let our faith grow as we study what Elisha did.

**Lesson #4:** A Miraculous Pot of Oil

**Scripture:**  
II Kings 4:1-7

**Key Verse:**  
II Kings 4:3  
“Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neigh ours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few.”

## Hath Done

Miracles characterized the prophetic ministry of Elisha, and several of them are quite instructive to us about living by faith and seeing God move. The story of the widow’s oil is especially instructive about having the Lord supply our needs. Psalm 23 says,

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” (v. 1)

Philippians 4:19 says,

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

The Lord supplies the needs (physical, emotional, and spiritual) of His servants as they trust Him to do it. If it took something like a miracle for God to keep His promises, He is perfectly capable of performing a miracle. The wife of a ministerial student in one of the prophets’ schools was left desolate and in debt when her husband died (II Kings 4:1). This situation is recorded in the Bible to teach us several lessons: (1) that God is in control of every situation and has reasons for the things He allows to happen; (2) that Christian men should not go deep into debt and thus subject their families to terrible consequences in the event of their death; (3) that God can perform miracles to supply our needs. See in Elisha’s instructions to the widow some basic principles in having God respond to our faith.

### I. “What Hast Thou?” (II Kings 4:2)

Even if you don’t have enough, God asks you what you have. Read the exchange between Moses and God when God called Moses to do the big job of leading the Israelites out of bondage (Exodus 4:1-5).

“And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.” (v. 2)

When Moses devoted his shepherd’s rod to the service of God, the Lord caused it to

become “the rod of God” (See Exodus 4:20), and great miracles were done through its use.

In Mark 6 we read that when Jesus offered to feed a great multitude (vs. 34-44), He asked, “How many loaves have ye?” (v.

## (II Kings 8:4)

38). Then He took what they had (five loaves of bread and two fish) and fed the thousands that sat before Him. To supply a need, God begins with what we already have. If you are not willing to dedicate what little you have, why should the Lord give you more?

In response to the widow’s pleas, the prophet Elisha said,

“What shall I do for thee? Tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.” (v. 2)

## II. “Go, Borrow. . .” (II Kings 4:3-4)

When Elisha told the widow to “borrow not a few” vessels into which oil could be poured, he was calling upon her to act in faith. This one pot of oil could only fill another vessel the same size, according to natural law. For it to fill many vessels would require the supernatural—a miracle. Nevertheless, the widow was challenged to act in faith, to obey the command of God through the prophet, and to trust God to do His part in bringing about the needed result. The Lord usually calls upon us to *do something*, even if that something could never in itself meet the need. Elisha had to cast salt into a spring (II Kings 2:21); the kings had to dig ditches (II Kings 3:16). Moses had to cast his rod down (Exodus 4:3). The disciples had to start distributing the loaves and fish (Mark 6:39-42). Doing what we can do demonstrates our faith in God to do what He can do. Remember, however, that our actions must be in response to the direction of God. In another passage about miracle-working faith (Mark 11:20-26), Jesus says, “Have faith in God.” God must make a promise or give an order for us to exercise faith in Him. To say that you are going to believe that God will do something without any indication that God *wants* to do it is presumption and can even

be tempting God!  
Look at Matthew 4:5-7. The widow followed God’s order through Elisha and thus showed her faith in the implied promise of the command. That’s what we should do. If you have fulfilled what God has commanded in relation to the supply of your needs (you are His child, you are doing His will, you are giving as you

Notes:

should), then act as if you expect He *will* supply your needs “*according to his riches in glory*”!

In this matter of faith, God gives us room to demonstrate the *size* of our trust in Him. The widow was told to borrow “*not a few*” vessels, but was not told exactly how many. When the vessels she borrowed were filled, “*the oil stayed*” (stopped coming). This was like the time years later when Elisha told a king to strike a bunch of arrows on the ground several times before he would prophesy concerning Israel’s fate in future battles with Syria. The king “*smote*” only “*thrice,*” and the prophet became “*wroth*” (II Kings 13:14-20) because of the king’s lack of faith. Now Israel would win only three battles, when a little more faith would have allowed them to win more. In the New Testament, we are told in reference to giving by faith,

*“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”*  
(II Corinthians 9:6-7)

We can give more by faith if we can believe more. In our faith-promise giving for missions, we borrow the number of vessels we can believe God will fill. We promise at the Missions Conference how much we will trust God to supply for missions through us in the next year. We plan on giving a certain amount, as God’s Spirit directs us. Then we give, trusting God to supply our needs. This is really the teaching of Philippians 4 about God supplying our needs.

**III. “Go, Sell. . .”  
(II Kings 4:5-7)**

God’s power does not forbid us from working. Paul wrote that he and Apollos were “*laborers together with God*” (I Corinthians 3:9). God works, but we work, too. Elisha required the widow and her sons to gather vessels, to fill them, to set aside the full vessels, to sell the oil, and to pay the debt. Certainly God *could* have had some rich man pay the whole debt for them without them doing anything. But that is not usually God’s way. II Thessalonians 3:10 says that “*if any would not work, neither should he eat.*” Always do what you can to solve your problem. Show yourself diligent and honest. The big unpaid debt was not only a problem for the widow, it was a spot on her reputation. God wanted her to show her integrity by borrowing vessels and returning them, by working hard with God at a miracle-blessed business, and by paying her debt first before using the money for

other things. The integrity of our character and the purity of our testimony for God are very important. Don't expect God to do miracles to make up for your laziness or irresponsibility. Tackle your problem, work hard, and trust the Lord to keep His promises and help you!