

She was just a normal, everyday, woman, with extraordinary desire to help people. In this particular passage of scripture for today, she was a great help to a man of God.

Who was that man? Elisha Who was the woman? The bible calls her "The Shunammite Woman." (meaning the woman from Shunem)

Text: [2 Kings 4:8-37](#); [2 Kings 8:1-6](#);

Republic, October 27, 2024

Title: "The Shunammite Woman, Helper to the Prophet Elisha"

Introduction -

You cannot look at The Shunammite Woman without seeing who she was helping:

I'm guessing she really didn't know that she was helping a prophet, nor a prophet like Elisha.

Elisha was a farmer before becoming a disciple of the Prophet Elijah. Most scholars say he trained under Elijah as his servant for 6 years. After Elijah left this world by a chariot of fire, (one of only two people in the bible who never died), Elisha became Elijah's successor.

Just before Elijah left this world, he asked Elisha what he would like to have from God. Elisha wanted a double portion of God's Spirit and power that had been on Elijah. That wish was granted by God, and Elisha ended up performing more miracles than any other prophet in the Old Testament. In fact, as far as miracles goes, he did twice as many miracles as Elijah. So, in essence he did get a double portion. Elijah's life involved 14 miracles and Elisha's life involved 28. (Depending on how you count the miracles, some scholars say 8 for Elijah and 16 for Elisha)

Miracles in the Career (life) of Elisha:

- 1) Parting of the Jordan river ([2Ki 2:14](#))
- 2) Purifying the water source for the city of Jericho ([2Ki 2:21](#))
- 3) Curse of the bears attacking the mocking boys ([2Ki 2:24](#))
- 4) Water for the army of Israel, along with success over Moabites. ([2Ki 3:17](#))
- 5) Deception of the Moabites with the valley of blood ([2Ki 3:22](#))
- 6) Miracle of the multiplying of the vessels of oil ([2Ki 4:4](#))
- 7) Prophecy that the Shunammite woman would have a son ([2Ki 4:16](#))
- 8) Resurrection from the dead of the Shunammite's son ([2Ki 4:34](#))
- 9) Healing/purifying of the poisoned pot of stew ([2Ki 4:41](#))
- 10) Miracle of the loaves of bread that fed 100 men ([2Ki 4:43](#))
- 11) Healing of Naaman's leprosy by washing 7 times in the Jordan River ([2Ki 5:14](#))
- 12) Perception of Gehazi's transgression ([2Ki 5:26](#))
- 13) Cursing Gehazi with leprosy for his deceiving lie to get money and clothes. ([2Ki 5:27](#))
- 14) Floating of the axe head that fell in the river ([2Ki 6:6](#))
- 15) Multiple prophecies to the king of Israel of what the Syrian battle plans were ([2Ki 6:9](#))
- 16) Vision of God's chariots surrounding Elisha and his servant to protect them ([2Ki 6:17](#))
- 17) Smiting the Syrian army with blindness ([2Ki 6:18](#))

- 18) Restoring the sight of the Syrian army ([2Ki 6:20](#))
- 19) Prophecy of the end of the great famine ([2Ki 7:1](#))
- 20) Prophecy that the scoffing nobleman would see, but not partake of, the abundance ([2Ki 7:2](#))
- 21) Deception of the Syrians with them hearing the sound of chariots by the Lord ([2Ki 7:6](#))
- 22) Prophecy to the Shunammite woman of the seven-year famine and to go live elsewhere ([2Ki 8:1](#))
- 23) Prophecy of Benhadad's untimely death ([2Ki 8:10](#))
- 24) Prophecy of Hazael's (*Has-e-el's*) cruelty to Israel ([2Ki 8:12](#))
- 25) Prophecy that Jehu would smite the house of Ahab ([2Ki 9:7](#))
- 26) Prophecy that Joash would smite the Syrians at Aphek (*A-feck*) ([2Ki 13:17](#))
- 27) Prophecy that Joash would smite Syria three times but not consume it ([2Ki 13:19](#))
- 28) Resurrection of the dead man when his body touched Elisha's bones in Elisha's grave. ([2Ki 13:21](#))

This is not to say that Elisha was more important than Elijah. All miracles come from God, not from us. It just shows that God chose to give Elisha the double portion he asked for. Each of us have our own mission in life from God. If one person is gifted more than another, it never means that the more gifted one is more important in God's eyes. DO what God has called YOU to do. Focus on that.

By the way, Elijah and Elisha's names are very similar. I can remember that the 2nd one did twice as many miracles. But, I kept confusing the two names. Finally, how I remember the difference in them is alphabetically Elijah would come before Elisha.

Elisha's ministry took place during the reign of 4 of Israel's less known kings.

End of the Introduction

[2 Kings 4:8](#) (NKJV)

⁸ Now **it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem (*Shoe-nim*), where there was a notable woman, and she persuaded him to eat some food.** So it was, as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food.

In verse 8, the bible calls her a notable woman. The KJV bible calls her a great woman. Other translations refer to her as a wealthy woman. I believe we can refer to her as a great woman, who happened to be wealthy.

She, apparently saw him walking by and **she persuaded him** to eat some food. With scripture using the words "persuaded him," we can only guess that she first asked him, and he turned her down like people do when they don't want to inconvenience someone, then eventually he gave in. And, we can also assume, that she told him to stop in for a meal every time he passed by in the future.

See location of Shunem on the map

2 Kings 4:9 (NKJV)

⁹ **And she said to her husband, "Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly.**

Apparently Elisha and her had never spoken of God, or at least, not a lot. But, there was something about Elisha that made the woman believe he was a man of God.

Ask yourself this morning: *"Is there something about me that other people can tell I am a man, or a woman, of God? Can they tell by the way I talk, or how I treat people?"*

She continues her conversation with her husband:

2 Kings 4:10-11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ **Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; & let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there."**

¹¹ And it happened one day that he came there, and he turned in to the upper room & lay down there.

Bible Exposition Commentary says this:

"Shunem was about twenty miles northwest of Abel-meholah, Elisha's hometown, and twenty-five miles or so beyond Shunem was Mount Carmel (see [v. 25](#)). The average traveler on foot could cover fifteen to twenty miles per day, so Shunem was the perfect halfway point for Elisha whenever he went to Mount Carmel to pray, meditate, and see the Lord in a new way. Since Mount Carmel was a very special place because of Elijah's ministry, perhaps there was also a school of the prophets there."

So, this wealthy, good natured, woman convinces her husband to create a 2nd story room "on the wall" side for the "holy man of God," so he can stay when passing by. Note that by locating it on the wall side, instead of the middle of the upper room, it probably provided him a window with a better view.

Inside that small upper room, the bible tells us they had a bed, a table with a lampstand, and a chair.

See pictures of how that room might have looked.

Note that quite often, Elisha had his servant, Gehazi, with him (See upcoming verse 12) So, it's unknown how the room accommodated Gehazi, as well besides being large enough for both of them.

The Shunammite Woman is not the only woman in the bible that supported & helped godly men, or God's work. Here are 5 examples of women who did this in the New Testament:

- Peter's wife and mother-in-law opened their home to Jesus & His disciples. ([Mt 4:13](#); [Mt 8:5](#); [Mk 1:21-28](#); [Mk 2:1](#); [Lk 7:1](#))
- Mary and Martha of Bethany opened their home to Jesus and His disciples. ([Lk 10:38-42](#); [John 12:1-2](#);))
- The house of Mary of Jerusalem became the first church home of Peter and the christian community in Jerusalem. ([Acts 12:12](#))
- The widow Lydia offered support to the Apostle Paul. ([Acts 16:14-15](#))
- Priscilla and her husband Aquila took in Paul and founded a church home in Ephesus, and later in Rome. ([Acts 18:26](#); [I Cor. 16:19](#); [Rom. 16:3-5](#);))

The Shunammite woman had this same kind of heart to help others, and in her case, it was this man of God.

[2 Kings 4:12-13](#) (NKJV)

- ¹² **Then he said to Gehazi his servant**, "Call this Shunammite woman." When he (*Gehazi*) had called her, she stood before him. (---> *stood before Gehazi*)
- ¹³ And he said to him (*Elisha said to Gehazi*), "Say now to her, 'Look, you have been concerned **for us** with all this care. What *can I* do for you? Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?' " She answered, "I dwell among my own people."
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Matthew Henry's Commentary says this:

"Elisha was well thought of by the king of Israel for his late services; ... But the Shunammite needed not any good offices of this kind. (*She did not need a job working for the king*) It is a happiness to dwell among our own people, that love and respect us, and to whom we are able to do good ..."

In other words, she didn't want to leave that area to work for the king. She loved being around people who love and respect us, & ones she can use some of her wealth to help.

2 Kings 4:14 (NKJV)

- ¹⁴ So he (Elisha) said, "What then *is* to be done for her?" And Gehazi answered, "Actually, she has no son, **and her husband is old.**"

So, is she saying she wants a younger husband? He's 80, trade him in for two 40's? NO

Gehazi's comment is helping Elisha to realize that if her husband dies any time soon, there is no son to oversee the property. Back in those days, this would be crucial.

2 Kings 4:15-17 (NKJV)

- ¹⁵ So he said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. (*by Elisha*)
- ¹⁶ Then he said, "About this time next year you shall embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!"
- ¹⁷ But **the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her.**

When we think of this woman, it reminds us to always do kind things for others because it is the right thing to do. We do it as "unto the Lord." ([Col. 3:23-24](#)) That should always be our motivation, not trying to get something in return while we are here on earth. Most of our blessings from what we do unto the Lord will happen in heaven.

I'm sure that this Shunammite woman did all she did for Elisha for the right reasons. She probably had no idea that God would bless her back by giving her a child.

2 Kings 4:18-20 (NKJV)

- ¹⁸ And the child grew. (*no longer a toddler, but we are not told the exact age. Scholars guess 5-6 yrs of age - young enough to sit on mom's lap, as we will see in verse 20*)

Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers.

- ¹⁹ And he said to his father, "My head, my head!" So he said to a servant, "Carry him to his mother."
- ²⁰ When he had taken him & brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees (*lap*) till noon, and *then* died.

What kind of medical condition could cause that? 8 of my bible commentaries all guessed "sun stroke."

I don't know if they had brain aneurysms during those days, or not. Even if they did

exist, no one during those days would have known what it was. A brain aneurysm is a weak blood vessel that balloons in the brain. If it bursts, it can cause severe headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, stiff neck, etc. And, it can definitely result in death.

So, did the child experience sun stroke, or a brain aneurysm, or even something else?

What kind of heartbreak would this be for the Shunammite woman? She finally gets a son, and then at an early age, he dies on her lap. With the boy's death, gone would be the feelings of closeness to your only child. And, gone would be the future of someone who could oversee the property when the husband dies someday.

She had to have lots of emotions inside of her. But, look how she handles this situation:

2 Kings 4:21-23 (NKJV)

- ²¹ And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut *the door* upon him, and went out. (*Elisha was not there at the time*)
- ²² Then she called to her husband, and said, "Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back."
- ²³ So he said, "Why are you going to him today? *It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath.*" (*so they had at least some understanding of religious feasts*) And she said, "*It is well.*"
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Sounds like she didn't tell her husband the child had died. Maybe she thinks he would have tried to stop her, or even slow her down while trying to comfort her, when she was in a hurry to go to Elisha.

This was a determined woman. There was no time to sit around and cry. There was no time to seek her husband's sympathy. She had a plan, and that was to present this problem to the man of god as quickly as possible. Her thinking must have been along the lines of "Maybe God would choose to heal her son, raise him from the dead." She certainly had the faith for it.

If they had police dept, fire dept, or EMS back in those days, she probably would've been a perfect candidate to do that job. She moved quickly in emergency mode, shutting down her emotions in the process, to accomplish what she felt she had to do.

Her husband was probably a busy man, taking care of the property which brought them wealth. But, it sure looks like she was the main spiritual leader of the family.

It is a better situation when a husband and wife work together to find God's will. But, quite often this is not the case. She seems to take the spiritual lead, and it turned out that what she did was the right thing to do.

2 Kings 4:24-25 a (NKJV)

- ²⁴ Then she saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, "Drive, and go forward; **do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you.**" (*In other words, "hurry, dont slow down"*)
- ²⁵ **a And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel ...**

Mt. Carmel is at a different location than last week's story about Abigail, where an area was called Carmel. **Mt Carmel** is 20 miles northwest of Shunem.

See map.

She is going about 20 miles, as the crow flies, so its not exactly straight. Plus, Mt Carmel is going to have an incline, depending where Elisha was staying at. If she walked it, it would take a full day there and a full day back. But, I read where a fit donkey could possibly move 15 miles per hour, but that is probably on straight land, and going at a hard pace. *So, could we say 2 hours, maybe slightly more, to get to Elisha under more perfect conditions?*

2 Kings 4:25 b-26 a (NKJV)

- ²⁵ **b** ... So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, "Look, the Shunammite woman!
- ²⁶ **a** Please run now to meet her, and say to her, '*Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?*' " ...

Notice that everything Elisha had Gehazi ask the woman had to do with people. Not once did Elisha have Gehazi ask her anything about property, or things she owns in life.

Do you find that interesting? Why would you think he would ask only questions that have to do with people? Would it have anything to do with what Elisha knew were the most important things in life?

2 Kings 4:26b (NKJV)

- ²⁶ **b** ... **And she answered (Gehazi), "It is well."**

One can only wonder why she told Gehazi this. *Is it because she didn't want to waste time with Gehazi, her main focus was to talk to the man of God?*

2 Kings 4:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ Now when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet, but Gehazi came near to push her away. **But the man of God (*Elisha*) said, "Let her alone; (*reminds us of times that Jesus did the same type of thing*) for her soul is in deep distress, and the LORD has hidden it from me, and has not told me."**

Elisha could tell she was in deep distress, but he did not know why, or what happened.

With all the miracles that prophets did, it would be easy for us to think that prophets knew about everything going on with people. **Verse 27 is a perfect example of the fact that God did not always tell the men of God, or prophets, what was going on in someone's life.**

And the way Elisha says it makes it sound as if this has happened to Elisha many times before where God did not tell him what was going on.

So, prophets were told by God "on a need to know" basis, when God needed them to know. They did not have total knowledge of everything. They were not God. They just worked for Him.

2 Kings 4:28-29 (NKJV)

²⁸ So she said, "Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me'?"
²⁹ Then he (*Elisha*) said to Gehazi, "Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child."

We do not know why Elisha was going to send Gehazi to solve the problem. *Was it because Gehazi could get there quicker than Elisha? Or, was it because Elisha was not going to go at all?*

2 Kings 4:30-31 (NKJV)

³⁰ And the mother of the child said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So he arose and followed her. (*If Elisha wasn't originally going to go, it is clear he is going to go now*)
³¹ **Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing. Therefore he went back to meet him (*Elisha*), and told him, saying, "The child has not awakened."**

God did not heal the boy based on the method Elisha first chose. AGAIN, prophets are not God. They do not have all knowledge or power. In the case of the boy, the first thing Elisha tried was having Gehazi use Elisha's staff, and it did not work.

Jesus, in His days on earth gave the disciples the ability to heal in some cases. Remember the time they could not heal a man full of demons, and Jesus said "Because of your lack of faith,... *(and then said)* This kind does not come out except by prayer & fasting?" ([Matthew 17:20-21](#))

Sometimes we pray for others healing and we don't see it. There can be many reasons why, but it is important that we remain open to God for Him to give us insight about what to do, which might even include prayer and fasting.

[2 Kings 4:32-33](#) (NKJV)

- ³² When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his (*Elisha's*) bed.
³³ He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD.
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The phrase "behind the two of them" is referring to Elisha and the dead child. There was no one else in the room, but them. Proof of this is found later in verse 36 where he calls for Gehazi (obviously outside of the room) to go get the Shunammite woman, (also clearly outside of the room) showing neither of those two were in the room.

So, in verse 33, it was just Elisha and the dead child.

[2 Kings 4:34](#) (NKJV)

- ³⁴ And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm.
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See the possible picture of this.

What a totally unorthodox way of raising someone from the dead.

Throughout the bible, God heals in different ways. There is no set method every time. We may read a verse where it says to gather the elders, anoint the person with oil, and pray. We may read a different verse where it says "Lay hands on someone and pray." And, other times we need to fast and pray.

God does things in different ways. There is no set method of doing everything, in every situation. Just because something worked somewhere else, does not mean it will

work in another location. GOD IS IN CHARGE, not what we think is the right method.

Why would God use different methods?

If life worked where we use the same method, it could lead us to the point where we think we don't need God as much. People would use methods, instead of being led by God. So, God makes us seek Him in all situations to see what He wants.

2 Kings 4:35 (NKJV)

³⁵ He (*Elisha*) returned and walked back and forth in the house, (*implying he must have come down into the house, as he walked and prayed to get God's insights*) **and again went up** and stretched himself out on him; **then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.**

So, Elisha was praying, and trying to be sure he was supposed to handle this the way he first did. He was trying to keep asking God for the miracle, while figuring out what God wants him to do.

It is interesting that the child sneezed 7 times. The number "7," sometimes in the bible is used as symbolism for God's perfection.

Note that additional prayer and seeking God for answers is what brought about the miracle. God DID CHOOSE to use the same method as Elisha's first attempt. He just made Elisha pray more before it happened.

2 Kings 4:36-37 (NKJV)

³⁶ And he called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite woman." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Pick up your son."

³⁷ So she went in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; then she picked up her son and went out.

God had done a miracle that a woman's wealth could never have accomplished.

A person may be rich, but there are certain things in life that their money cannot achieve for them. Only God can do those certain things.

Later on, Elisha received prophetic insight that a famine was coming. He tells the Shunammite woman what is about to happen:

2 Kings 8:1-2 (NKJV)

- ¹ Then Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, "**Arise and go, you and your household, and stay wherever you can; for the LORD has called for a famine, and furthermore, it will come upon the land for seven years.**"
- ² So the woman arose and did according to the saying of the man of God, and she went with her household and dwelt in the land of the Philistines seven years.

See map where Philistia is located from Shunem

Here is another blessing that God gives her, through Elisha, because of her kind, caring heart. She is saved from a famine because God told Elisha that a famine was coming.

2 Kings 8:3 (NKJV)

- ³ It came to pass, at the end of seven years, that **the woman returned from the land of the Philistines; and she went to make an appeal to the king for her house and for her land.**

All the commentaries I looked at indicated that there must have been some kind of law of the land that if a property was abandoned for a certain length of time that either someone else could occupy it, or that that the property goes to the king.

One of the commentaries also said that there is a chance her husband had died by the time of her return to her property, because SHE is the one trying to appeal to the king, rather than her husband.

2 Kings 8:4-6 (NKJV)

- ⁴ Then the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me, please, all the great things Elisha has done."

The way verse 4 reads, it appears that Gehazi just happened to be with the king before the Shunammite woman arrives. Apparently, the king was fascinated by all the great things Elisha had done up until then, and he wanted to hear more about Elisha. Gehazi is talking about Elisha when the Shunammite woman comes to the king about her property.

2 Kings 8:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ Now it happened, as he was telling the king how he had restored the dead to life, that there was the woman whose son he had restored to life, appealing to the king for her house and for her land. **And Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son (the sone was with her) whom Elisha restored to life."**

⁶ And when the king asked the woman, she told him. *(all about her son, as well as why she came to talk to the king)* So the king appointed a certain officer for her, saying, **"Restore all that was hers, and all the proceeds of the field from the day that she left the land until now."** *(probably not alot of proceeds during a famine)*

Now, she receives another huge blessing by getting her property back, as well as any proceeds the property earned from the time she left. Again, it sure looks like all of this happened as a result of God blessing her back for the things she did for Elisha.

Note: The fact that the king is restoring any income she missed, makes me believe that her property had gone to the king to oversee when she left. It would be easier to have her income returned if the king was the one who received the income.

Conclusion -

Here was a good-hearted woman, just caring about, and helping people. She just so happened to help Elisha, a great & powerful prophet of God. She probably had no idea all of the stories about his life. She just saw he was a man of God and wanted to help him. She fed him a couple of times, then finally decided she wanted to help him even more. She has her husband create a free guest quarters for him to use anytime he was coming that way. She never knew that she would ever receive any benefit to her own life for all that she did, especially things that her money could ever buy on its own. She never knew that Elisha would someday ask her how he could help her in return.

She never knew that she would receive at least 4 huge blessings:

1. A child
2. The healing of that same child from the dead.
3. A warning from Elisha to move away because a 7 year famine that is coming.
4. Getting her house back, along with any profits she missed while she was gone.

The more we want to do things to bless others, and when we do it for the right reasons, the more God will bless us. Our desire should always be to "Do it for God," and just be blessed in the afterlife. But, many times God goes ahead and blesses us earlier than that, while we

are still on earth.

All of the blessings The Shunammite woman received, her wealth could never have bought her. That makes the story even more interesting.

Live for God, have a caring heart like the Shunammite Woman, and God will find a way to bless you, either here on earth, or in heaven some day.

By the way, we never did find out her name. But we sure saw how great of a life she lived blessing others, helping God's people, being a strong woman in tough situations, & how God kept blessing her back.