

Women in an Era of Decline

The Shunammite Woman...Great and Gracious Huldah...God's Mouthpiece

Lesson 9

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Introduction

In a time of political, as well as spiritual decline for the nations of Israel and Judah, God sovereignly sent two prophets to speak to the people: Elijah and Elisha. The final collapse of these two kingdoms came because the rulers, as well as the people, refused to pay attention to God's messengers.

During the time of the prophet Elisha, a woman of great influence and riches lived in Shunem, a beautiful city on the edge of the Jezreel plain. The Bible does not give us her name, merely calling her the Shunammite woman because she lived in Shunem. She was Jewish, from the tribe of Issachar, and a devout worshipper of Jehovah. The main road from Nazareth to Jerusalem ran past her home, and from time to time she would see Elisha and his servant Gehazi travel that way. Elisha became the catalyst God used for her to use her gifts and resources to bless another.

Study and Personal Questions

Read 2 Kings 4:8-10

1. What was the first act of kindness the Shunammite woman showed Elisha?
2. What further steps did she take to minister to the prophet?
3. Who did she wisely consult before carrying out her plans?

*Notice she did not act on her own initiative, but made sure they were in agreement first.

4. Do you consult the Lord before making decisions? Do you seek advice from your husband or other counselors before putting plans into action?

5. What wisdom do the following verses give about making decisions?

Matthew 6:33

Proverbs 15:22

Proverbs 11:14

Proverbs 24:6

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 & Romans 12:6-8

6. List some of the spiritual gifts mentioned in these two passages.

- a. What does God provide to enable us to use these gifts? See Romans 12:6
- b. Who is manifested as we use our spiritual gifts? See 1 Corinthians 12:7
- c. Identify the gifts you see operating in the Shunammite woman's life.
- d. What gifts have you seen God use in your life?

Hospitality is the friendly act of receiving and entertaining others, or showing kindness by welcoming someone in your home. Being God's hostess is more than just being polite to people, but an opportunity to show His compassion and love. It means reaching out and not expecting anything in return.

7. What does Romans 12:13 say about hospitality? How could verses 10-12 encourage you to be hospitable?

8. Read Luke 14:12-14 and share your thoughts.

9. What is a pitfall to be aware of when practicing hospitality? 1 Peter 4:9

The Shunammite woman went far beyond normal expectations by not only offering her home, but also her heart! When we reach out in hospitality there is always an element of sacrifice involved. She took time to notice Elisha's need, put his need ahead of hers, and gave out of her resources to provide for his comfort and well-being.

10. Read Colossians 3:12-14. What are the things we are told to "put on" in verses 12 & 14?

11. To whom are we to show hospitality to according to Galatians 6:10? What does Proverbs 3:27 add?

12. Read Hebrews 13:2. What is a possibility when showing hospitality to others?

Are you willing to take the necessary time to notice another's need and provide out of your resources to accommodate that need? If not, you need to tell God that you are willing to be made willing. Ask Him to soften your heart and make you more aware of other's needs.

Read 2 Kings 4:11-17

13. What was a need the Shunammite woman had?

14. How did Elisha meet that need?

In 2 Kings 4:18-22 we read that the Shunammite woman's son got sick and died. Her first response was to take the son and lay him on the prophet's bed, then to go to the prophet.

Read 2 Kings 4:23-26

15. How did the Shunammite woman describe the situation to her husband in verse 23 and to Gehazi in verse 26?

16. Why do you think she said this?

17. Read Hebrews 11:1. How does this verse describe faith?

Is there a promise in God's Word that relates to a situation in your life and yet you haven't seen the fulfillment? Will you believe that promise sight unseen and say "It is well"?

Luke 1:45 says "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

Huldah...God's Mouthpiece

Have you ever heard of a woman in the Bible named Huldah? She is relatively unknown, but this godly woman had the privilege of giving advice to a king concerning God's Word. She was a prophetess during the reign of King Josiah of Judah.

Read 2 Kings 22:1-7

18. How old was Josiah when he became king and how long did he reign?

19. How is he described in verse 2 as well as in 2 Kings 23:25?

20. What building project was the king involved in, and who and why did he send someone to the temple? (See 2 Kings 22:3-7)

Read 2 Kings 22:8-14

21. What did Hilkiah the high priest give to Shaphan?

22. What was the king's response when he heard the words of the book?

23. What was his command that followed? (See verses 12-13)

24. What information do we find about Huldah in verse 14?

Discovering Jesus in the Story

The entire Old Testament points toward Jesus as Savior. If we miss that we miss the entire point of the Scriptures.

1. According to the Bible verses we've studied this week, what promise or revelation points to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ?

Reflection

2. Write a short paragraph explaining how the life of **The Shunammite Woman** and **Huldah** have impacted your life, challenged you or corrected you concerning your choices.

A Hero's Vignette

Wilda Matthews¹

**Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
And whose hope is the Lord.
For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters,
Which spreads out its roots by the river,
And will not fear when the heat comes;
But its leaf will be green,
And will not be anxious in the year of drought,
Nor will cease from yielding fruit.
*Jeremiah 17:7-8***

Arthur and Wilda Matthews were a part of the China Inland Mission in the early 1950s. They were given permission by the Chinese church, as well as the Communist government, to work among the Mongol people. Shortly after they arrived, however, the government stopped them from doing any village work at all. The testing came in every form: finances, health, bad living conditions, even separation from other believers. On many occasions, they had no food to eat, or fire to keep them warm. The government would send spies to create accusations against them, resulting in them being held against their will for approximately three years. Finally, without any warning, the government allowed Wilda and their child Lilah to leave, but even as she left, Wilda feared she would never see Arthur again. He and one other missionary were the only two from their mission still in China, and they were accused of being criminals. However, is anything too difficult for God? Three months after Wilda departed, Arthur and the other missionary were miraculously released, much to the joy of all the missionaries of the China Inland Mission.

God had His purposes in deliberately allowing His servants to go through these heavy trials, even though they could not see it at the time. They were leaving a message of hope to the weak, fearful Chinese church. As the Matthews' trials increased and their human comforts were taken away, they continued to trust God, and even sing praises to Him when things were at the worst. As God's life was poured through them, the result was "green leaves produced in drought," reminiscent of God's words in Jeremiah. Are you producing green leaves in your time of drought?

1. How does Wilda's life encourage you, challenge you?

Challenge question:

2. Are there any Bible verses that come to mind after reading about her life?

¹ Kuhn, Isabel. *Green Leaf in Drought*. Littleton: OMF International, 2012.