

Mothers Day 2020 - A Great Woman

Today, we are going to look at a wonderful woman and mother in Scripture, the great woman of Shunem in 2Ki 4. There is a wonderful message of motherhood that is played out in her life.

One of the great things about the Bible is the way we can see truth in life. The Bible is not merely a book of philosophy or abstract principles. Now, that does not mean that the Bible does not present a philosophy for life nor does it mean that it does not contain abstract principles. When it comes to motherhood, we often look to Prov 31 for a description of Godly femininity. The apostle Paul describes Godly womanhood in his epistles in the New Testament. But the Bible does not stop with the *principles* expressed in Proverbs or the epistles .

When we read the Bible, we *also* see truth in a different way. Not only do we see *synthetic* truth, or extracted principles which we can apply, but we also see *organic* truth. When you describe something as *organic* you are referring to those things that come from living organisms. When you go shopping and buy food that is certified as organic, it means that you are getting food that was fertilized *not* with chemicals distilled in a laboratory, but nutrients that were produced in *nature*. There are many other things that come in natural fertilizer that enrich our foods. Similarly, our spiritual diet is enriched when we see truth in life. How many times have we been disappointed by someone who spouts spiritual platitudes to tell us how to live, only to find them falling in failure.

When Bible stories like these were written, they didn't need to write out every detail for us to be able to identify the great truths contained in them. In between the lines we find the spiritual nourishment that God has for us.

2Kgs 4:8-10 And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where *was* a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And *so* it was, *that* as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

9And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this *is* an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.

10Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.

In vs. 4 she is called a great woman. This means that she was well to do, but not just with money or material wealth, she was also a very prominent woman. Many women have been a great blessing in ministry. There were women who were great supporters of the ministry of Christ, for example.

This woman of Shunem, a city in the Galilee region which belonged to the tribe of Issachar, was a great mother, but the things that made her great as a mother occurred long before she actually had a child.

This is the day we celebrate our mothers. We want to remember our mothers and give thanks for them, but at the same time I am sensitive to those who have not given birth and raised a child. A number of years ago we started celebrating all women, but not in the sense that we were just seeking to elevate women in recognition of a feminist notion that they are the same as men and not even equal to men. Women are as equal to men as a clock is equal to a book. They are simply not the same. Each are valued in different ways. By honoring all women, we look to recognize that there are

God given qualities to women that are unique which make are also very handy for mothering. Greatness as a mother does not have to be discovered through the labors of child birth.

1. She was a nurturer.

Because of the area we live in, we end up coming into contact with many different cultures. What I find so interesting is that each group says the same thing, "You know how Jewish mothers are." "You know how Filipino mothers are." "You know how black mothers are." "You know how Italian mothers are." "You know how Polish mothers are." I am *very* sure that if I talk to any other group I will hear the same thing. There is something about mamas wanting to feed people.

It doesn't matter who the better cook is in the house, it doesn't even matter if you don't even like to cook. That quality that is so stereotypical of mothers manifests itself so often.

This is so true when it comes to the Shunemite. She was a nurturer. As the man of God passed through the area, he often ate at the family table.

2. She was a spiritually sensitive and Godly woman.

The Shunemite woman was also Godly and spiritually sensitive. As a Godly woman, she sought to honor the man who carried the title of prophet by providing for Him. However, this can be done just as a matter of good manners. She was also a spiritually sensitive woman. Notice how in vs. 9 she identified Elishah as a holy man of God.

In that day just as ours, there have been false prophets, mediocre prophets, and Godly prophets. It is appropriate to treat anyone who carries the mantle of a prophet with respect, but not all are necessarily holy. She could tell that there was something holy about this man. She was spiritually sensitive to God's holiness.

I have to tell you that there is something to this. I have had a number of times when I have had a stranger walk up to me and ask if I was a pastor. This is not something to be boastful of, this is a fearful thing. It puts a great burden on a man because if there is any confirmation that God is present you had better make sure you are living and thinking and breathing right. I remember being in church conference where there must have been a thousand people. A man walked into the church and Nancy turned to me and said, "That's the pastor." We had never met nor seen him before and I asked her how she knew. She just said, "I can tell." I remember a time when we were given a gift to a football game. I don't follow a lot of sports, but you don't have to to have fun at a game. We were getting into the game and Nancy was doing one of the things that Nancy does, she was praying for the players. All of a sudden, a man from about five rows down turned around and pointed at her and called out to everyone around, "That's my girl! That's my girl! She's praying! She's praying!"

There's something about the presence of the Spirit of God that is powerful. This woman was spiritually sensitive to the holiness of God and she carried an awe for that power.

3. She influenced others for the good.

The Shunemite woman next provided what we call today a prophet's chamber. There have been many such chambers set up. Sometimes I go to preach at churches that are a little far away. Sometimes preachers in these cases are put up in a home where someone has provided a room for

visiting preachers. Sometimes Nancy and I have stayed in the prophet's chamber at the church. There are some very interesting guidelines for caring for a visiting prophet. Now, we could just treat this as a further instance of this woman's nurturing nature, but I think we would miss an important point here. She addressed her husband and suggested that they should build this room for the man of God. She was not only a nurturer and a spiritually sensitive woman, she influenced others, in this case her husband, for the good. It's been said, "Behind many a man who has climbed the ladder of success is a great woman who stood there and held the ladder steady, and behind many a man who falls off the ladder of success there was a woman who stood there and shook it." There have been many women who have made a tremendous spiritual difference in the lives of those around them.

4. She was a focused woman.

The next thing we see is Elisha wanting to be a special blessing in appreciation for the Shunemite woman.

2Kgs 4:11-13 And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.

12And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him.

13And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what *is* to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.

Elisha offered her some kind of standing before the king or benefit of the military. Her response is so very significant. Instead of pursuing some aspiration of greatness, she merely replied that she was content in her role among her own people. This is one of the siren songs of our modern culture. It breeds dissatisfaction and says, you can be something more, you can have something more, it magnifies the idea that something is missing in your life. The world has sold women a bill of goods that suggests they can do it all...they can break the glass ceiling, they can juggle a computer and a baby on their lap, they can be lured by some perception that if they could only be treated like a man they would be happier, which should be no more desirable than a man being treated like a woman.

The Shunemite woman was focused on her situation. It takes something to do that, to keep reinvesting yourself in the work God has for you. There are wonderful jobs that women are doing that are outside of the household, but the home should never be looked at as something that is holding someone back and it should never take second place. If someone is led into a job because they have some idea that they will finally be fulfilled, they will find that there is something is always missing. The home is the great foundation of any society. If someone has a career it should be to secure the home.

I am reminded of a sermon by Charles Spurgeon in which he found 29 ways for a candle to illustrate spiritual truth. Every single one of the ways was interesting and enlightening. With effort, one can go back and go back and go back to a task and discover more. One of the blessings I have had in ministry is to be content in this church. By reinvesting myself in *this* ministry, I find myself folded back into the work and have been blessed abundantly. I thank God for Nancy because she has been beside me all the way, reinvesting herself also into *this* work. I have known of quite a few

pastors' wives who led their husbands out of ministry in New Jersey because of their discontent. When it comes to the home, don't be discontent. Go back and go back and go back and reinvest yourself ...find new ways to make your home important.

Prov 14:1 Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

Prov 7:11 (She *is* loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house:

Prov 31:26-27 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness.
27She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

Prov 31:30-31 Favour *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain: *but* a woman *that* feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

31Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

It has been duly noted that the Proverbs start with the destruction that comes from an ungodly woman and it ends with the blessing of a godly woman.

5. She was a blessed woman.

The blessing of a child came late in the life of this woman and her husband.

2Kgs 4:14-17 And he said, What then *is* to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

15And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

16And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, *thou* man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

17And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

Sometimes women have children and sometimes they do not. What made the Shunemite great was that she was a Godly woman whether or not there was a child in her life. It would be a mistake to think every time a woman is barren it is because someone does not deserve a child. Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, Elizabeth are four examples of spiritual women who know the pain of barrenness before miraculously conceiving. Motherhood, whether it is of those you bear, or those who are entrusted to your care, or those who you just end up being around for mere minutes, is *blessed* motherhood for those who are nurturers, Godly, spiritually sensitive, and focused on the blessings of God. The issue is not whether we deserve a home, but that our homes require us, not deserve us, but require us.

For so many homes, God is missing to one degree or another. You have to remember that when you have become a child of God, all the strength of God is there to sanctify your home and family. If you are not saved then you need to take care of that.