

Week 26: The Widow's Oil - Obedience in the Ordinary

A Sabbath Family Bible Study

Introduction

Elijah's ministry ended with fire from heaven, but Elisha's began with mercy on earth. His miracles often happened not on mountains, but in kitchens. In 2 Kings 4, a poor widow faced the loss of her sons to debt bondage. With nothing left but a small jar of oil, she obeyed the prophet's simple instruction, and God multiplied what little she had. This study reminds us that faith is not proven only in grand acts of courage, but in quiet obedience when resources are small and instructions seem ordinary.

Scripture Reading: Selected Passages (KJV)

2 Kings 4:1–7 (KJV)

(With commentary throughout)

2 Kings 4:1 – 7 - The Widow's Oil: Provision Through Obedience

1 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

2 And Elisha said unto her, 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.

3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few.

4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.

5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out.

6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.

7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

Commentary:

Her need met God's command. She did not debate; she obeyed. The door shut on fear became the doorway to provision. God multiplies what we surrender, not what we withhold. The widow had lost everything, yet she still possessed obedience. God's instructions often begin with what remains, not what is missing. She thought she had "nothing ... save a pot of oil." That small confession became the seed of her miracle. Faith begins where human sufficiency ends.

2 Kings 4:8 – 17 - The Shunammite's Hospitality: Faithful Generosity

8 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.

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

10 Let 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.

11 And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.

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

13 And 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.

14 And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

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

16 And 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.

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

Commentary:

The Shunammite woman's faith showed itself through quiet generosity. She recognized Elisha as a holy man of God and made room for him, not seeking reward, but honoring what was sacred. Her hospitality was thoughtful and deliberate; she built an upper chamber and furnished it simply with a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick, rest, instruction, order, and light.

When Elisha offered repayment, she declined, content to "dwell among [her] own people." Her obedience was not driven by desire but by devotion. Yet God, who never overlooks faithfulness, gave her what she did not ask for, a son. The lesson is clear: when we make space for holiness, God fills it with life.

2 Kings 4:32 – 37 - Life Restored: Faith Rewarded

32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.

33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD.

34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

36 And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.

37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

Commentary:

When Elisha entered the room, the child was lifeless, but faith does not stop where breath ends. The prophet's actions were deliberate: he shut the door, prayed, stretched himself upon the child, and persisted until warmth returned. This was not ceremony; it was covenant compassion. Elisha identified with the child's condition until life was restored.

The Shunammite woman's faith carried her from despair to resurrection. She refused to leave the prophet's side, trusting that the same God who gave life could give it again. The miracle shows that faith doesn't deny death, it confronts it with obedience. Where faith holds fast, God breathes again.

Discussion Questions for All Ages

Young Children:

- Why was the widow sad and afraid?
- What did Elisha tell her to do with her oil?
- Who made the oil keep flowing?

Older Children & Teens:

- Why did Elisha ask the widow what she had instead of what she needed?
- What does this story teach about trusting God when we have very little?
- How does private obedience prepare us for public blessing?

Adults:

- Why is it significant that the miracle happened behind closed doors?
 - How does this account challenge our view of "enough"?
 - In what ways should families practice obedience with what they already have rather than waiting for more?
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Psalm Reading

Psalm 37:3–7 (KJV)

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him.

Commentary:

The widow rested and obeyed. This psalm echoes her story, trust, delight, commit, rest, and wait. Faith does not force results; it follows instructions.

 **Hymn: “Trust and Obey”**

By John H. Sammis (1887)

1.

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Refrain:

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

2.

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt nor a fear, not a sigh nor a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey.

Refrain:

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

3.

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey.

Refrain:

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Family Application Points

1. **Start with What You Have:** God works through the ordinary when we obey faithfully.
2. **Close the Door:** Private obedience precedes public blessing.
3. **Borrow Not a Few:** Faith expects abundance even before it arrives.
4. **Pour Until It Stops:** Do your part fully; let God decide the measure.
5. **Live in the Overflow:** Use His provision to serve others and secure your household.

A Sabbath Feast Prayer

Heavenly Father, You are the God who multiplies little things into abundance. Thank You for seeing our needs and meeting them through obedience. As we share this meal, teach us to trust You with what we have and to follow Your instructions without fear. Let our home overflow with Your goodness and Your peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank You for the widow's example of faith. Teach us to obey in the ordinary things of life and to trust that You are working even behind closed doors. May our household be a place of generous obedience, where Your provision never ceases and Your presence is known. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.