**DON’T ASK JUST A FEW**

2 Kings 4:1-7

Key Verse 3b

“Don’t ask for just a few.”

**Introduction**

 In chapter 3, God used Elisha to save kings from defeat and death. In today’s passage, God used him to help a poor widow. Elisha received a double portion of God’s spirit in chapter 2. Imagine if you received a lot of spirit and power from the Lord as a servant of God, you might have been tempted to misuse it for your glory. But Elisha was well balanced in light of his service to help all people who are in need. It is God’s great compassionate heart for all people on earth. Jesus helped Nicodemus as well as the Samaritan woman. May the Lord help us to grow in spirit so that we may grow as shepherds of compassionate heart to carry God’s love. Also we may grow in our personal faith like the woman in this passage so that we may obey and trust the Lord and His servant to always win the battle. Amen.

1. Read verse 1. Why did the wife of a prophet cry out to Elisha? (1) Why might the Lord have allowed this to happen even to a man who revered and served Him?

1-1, Read verse 1.

 The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.”

1-2, Why did the wife of a prophet cry out to Elisha? (1)

 ***The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.”***

* This woman was evidently a believer and the widowed wife of one of the prophets. “Your servant, my husband is dead.” indicates that he was involved in the ministry and teaching of Elisha.
* “You know that he revered the Lord” Elisha must have known him in person. “But now his creditor is coming to take my 2 boys as his slaves.” Wow!
* She had no means to pay them back. The legal system in Israel would not declare bankruptcy. She had to give her sons to her creditor as payment.
* According to Moses’ law, she might have had a silver lining to take them back at the year of Jubilee. But still it was a cruel thing for her to endure!
* She must have been familiar with what God had been doing through the prophet Elisha. In essence, she was seeking God’s provision through him.

1-3, Why might the Lord have allowed this to happen even to a man who revered and served Him?

* 1 Peter 5:6-7 reads, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”
* The issue appeared to be the financial problem of the woman. But the real issue was not the problem per se. Rather our response to the Lord in the face of problems is the one. How do we react? We learned to trust and obey God!
* Galatians 6:9-10 reads, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”
* God might have allowed this seemingly sad thing to happen to the prophet in order that God would like to reveal who He is for His glory!
* God would never disappoint those who earnestly seek him and reward them indeed as long as they keep their personal faith to the end no matter what.
1. Read verses 2-4. What can we learn from Elisha’s reply? (2a, Mark 6:37b-38) What does her answer show about her situation? (2b) What does he ask her to do? (3-4) Meditate on each step of his instructions.

2-1, Read verses 2-4.

 Elisha replied to her, “How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?”

“Your servant has nothing there at all,” she said, “except a small jar of olive oil.”

3 Elisha said, “Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don’t ask for just a few.4 Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.”

2-2, What can we learn from Elisha’s reply? (2a, Mark 6:37b-38)

 ***Elisha replied to her, “How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?”***

* First of all Elisha was as available to a poor widow woman as he was with kings in chapter 3. So he was quick to come to her aid and attention.
* As God shows no favoritism, but treats all men alike if they will come to HIm in faith and prayer. So the people of God should show no favoritism and be just as available to minister to the poor as to the rich and the powerful. In this way we void the sin of partiality. (James 2:1-10)

*My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?6 But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? 8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*

* Apostle Paul also taught about the qualification for elders and deacons that they should put the widows on the list for support. (1 Timothy 5:3-5)

*Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.**The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God And continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.*

* “What shall I do for you?” He meant, “What do you want God to do for you through me?
* According to James 4:2-3, We do not have because we do not ask God or we do have the wrong motive.
* “Tell me. What do you have in your house?” Elisha asked her to think of what she already had in her house by faith in the Almighty God.
* Mark 6:37-38 reads, “But he answered, “You give them something to eat.”They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.””
* We need to investigate what we have in all areas. Then we surrender them to the Lord and trust the Lord to bless and provide as He sees fit.
* Sometimes God does supply from places unknown and in ways beyond our imagination. But our responsibility is to take whatever we have no matter how small or large and turn it over to Him.

2-3, What does her answer show about her situation? (2b)

***“Your servant has nothing there at all,” she said, “except a small jar of olive oil.”***

* She had nothing except a small jar of olive oil. It was not a larger supply held for cooking, but a smaller vessel for anointing. In other words, she was really poor!

2-4, What does he ask her to do? (3-4)

2-5, Meditate on each step of his instructions.

***3 Elisha said, “Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don’t ask for just a few. 4 Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.”***

* First of all, Elisha made this woman commit herself in faith to God’s provision. To borrow vessels from all her neighbors for empty jars seems awkward.
* She might already have asked all her neighbors to borrow money or food. So it might have been hard for her to ask for empty jars from them.
* “Don’t ask for just a few” She must ask for as many jars as possible. She needed food. Why empty jars? She might have thought that it sounded nonsense.
* “Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons.” The closed door suggests the principle of privacy.
* What she did was to be done without distractions so she and her sons could focus on the Lord and set their hearts upon Him in faith.
* To be alone with God is one of the vital needs of any believer at any time, but it is especially true in the days in which we live with all the noise and busyness.
* One of the reasons we often do not see God working is because we fail to get along with Him individually. Elisha’s absence helped her to rely on God only.
* They might have thought that each detailed step is too weird to obey them. Then “pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.”
* God’s instructions in and through the prophet Elisha were step by step command. Each step was not to skip it according to their own thoughts. Humble obedience and trust are absolutely required for them to see God’s intervention on this.
1. Read verses 5-7. What did the widow and her sons do? (5-6a) What can we learn from the fact that the oil stopped flowing when there was no jar left? (6b) What do the final instructions of Elisha tell us about how to meet our daily needs in life? (7)

3-1, Read verses 5-7.

5 She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. 6 When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another one.”

But he replied, “There is not a jar left.” Then the oil stopped flowing.

7 She went and told the man of God, and he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left.”

3-2, What did the widow and her sons do? (5-6a)

***5 She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. 6 When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another one.”***

* Although this author did not describe how she borrowed empty jars from her friends or neighbors, she must have obeyed as Elisha had said.
* She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring.
* When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “bring me another one.” We notice that Elisha made her do this from A to Z by herself.
* He might have been tempted to gather the jars and pour the oil by himself. But he knew that she had to trust God by herself and by her own faith including her son’s obedience. Praise the Lord!

3-3, What can we learn from the fact that the oil stopped flowing when there was no jar left? (6b)

***But he replied, “There is not a jar left.” Then the oil stopped flowing.***

3-4, What do the final instructions of Elisha tell us about how to meet our daily needs in life? (7)

 ***She went and told the man of God, and he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left.”***

* The miracle was given according to the measure of her faith in borrowing vessels. She borrowed enough so the excess oil was sold and provided money to pay the debt to the creditor and to provide for the future.
* Had she borrowed more, more would have been provided. If she borrowed a few vessels, she would have but little oil.
* The oil did not pour out on the ground. It was intended for a prepared vessel. Each vessel had to be prepared by being gathered, by being assembled, by being emptied, by being put in the right position.
* When there was no more prepared vessel, the oil stopped. God’s powerful provision invites our hard work and never excuses laziness or complacency.
* She was not requested to gather a specific number of vessels. Rather God wanted her to act in faith.
* For this reason Elisha warned, “do not get a few.” In other words, bring as many as you have faith that God will fill.
* God’s supply was provided in a proportion to her faith and obedience, without greediness. The moment we become greedy and selfish in our request, the flow of God’s provision would stop there.
* I believe this godly woman brought vessels sufficient enough for her needs and stopped before greed took over.
* The amount of vessels was limited by the size of her room. God has promised to meet our needs, but not our greed.

**Conclusion**

 God is a God of blessing and provision. The widow might have been hard on her poor condition when her husband served faithfully and sacrificially the Lord and His servant, Elisha as a companion in the evil times. But God never forgot her. When she did not lose her faith, God provided her through Elisha. “Trust and obey” is the right response of believers in any situation. May the Lord help us to grow in our faith so that we may live by faith, but by sight. Amen. **One word: Don’t ask just a few!**