

## HOW CAN I HELP YOU, TELL ME WHAT YOU HAVE IN YOUR HOUSE?

2 Kings 4:1-7 (Key verse 2)

*"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 little oil.""*

It is hard for me to imagine that as we seated here there is no one who does not need help in one form or another. In other words, is there anyone here without a problem? As we shall see in this passage we can rely on God's help. We shall see through this passage how our culture of receiving help is challenged. In today's passage God reveals something that is counter cultural. Something against the norm. A woman comes to Elisha seeking help, yet we find Elisha asking the woman, **what do you have in your house**. It was from this point that the woman began to receive what she needed and even better, a personal experience of God. This passage therefore also reveals the purpose of our problems, which is to know God personally (personal faith). That is why the way the Lord resolves our problems is different from the culture of the world. May Jesus open our eyes to see what we have and help us obey his leading so we may see the glorious work of God in our lives and the lives of others. May God grant us practical faith in the midst of what this world throws at us. Amen!

Look at verse 1, **"Now the wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant, my husband, is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And now his creditor is coming to take my two children as his slaves!"**" This woman's husband seem to have been a servant of Elisha and he feared the lord. However, one big problem that he has left them with is he had debts and the creditor wanted to take her sons as slaves as payment to what her husband owed. This creditors had probably been causing havoc in her life, they now finally came to a final and severe ultimatum, to take her sons as slaves for payment. This woman had lost her husband and now her two sons were about to be taken from her. This was extremely devastating situation in her home. This was a real life problem as with many problems, at the center of this problem was the need for money. To some extent she was actually also complaining before Elisha, look at how she reminded Elisha how her husband feared the Lord and was also his servant. As if to say, how could this be happening to my husband's family who served God faithfully? She must have known about the miracle works of Elisha and how God is with him, how then could she come with a complaining spirit instead of faith? Many of us are no different from this woman, though we know the word of God, the way we respond to our deep seated problems, reveal our heart before God.

Let us now look at Elisha's response, look at verse 2, **"How can I help you?" asked Elisha. "Tell me, what do you have in the house?" She answered, "Your servant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil."** Elisha asked the woman how can I help you? And the woman did not give an answer to Elisha's question. This goes to show how overwhelmed she was with her problem. Again revealing how her problem had shaken her faith. Elisha the man of God, then helps the woman with other question, "what do you have in the house." This might have been strange for the woman to hear, that I have come needing help and then you ask me what do I have. Usually when a person ask us for help, we try and see what we have that could be used to help them. However, Elisha asked the woman, what do you have in your house. Her response to Elisha's question was, "your servant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil." Probably the men whom they were indebted to took everything in the house and left her with what was not valuable. All she had was a jar of oil. Now how can a jar of oil change anything?

Look at verse 3-5, ***“Go,” said Elisha, “borrow jars, even empty ones, from all your neighbours. Do not gather just a few. 4Then go inside, shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour oil into all these jars, setting the full ones aside. So she left him, and after she had shut the door behind her and her sons, they kept bringing jars to her, and she kept pouring.”*** The first instruction was, to go and borrow empty jars from all her neighbours. Second instruction, to go inside the house, shut the doors and work with her sons in filling up the empty jars with oil. The woman did not hesitate but did exactly as Elisha had instructed. This was a pure act of faith on her part because how can one jar of oil fill up many jars of oil. She believed in the God of Elisha and the God of her husband. To shut the door behind her to fill up the jars was an act of spending time with God in secret. It was her time to know and experience Jesus personally. It was her personal time with the boys in God’s presence. She co-worked beautifully with her two sons in filling up empty jars with oil. Look at verse 6, ***“When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another.” But he replied, “There are no more jars.” Then the oil stopped flowing.”*** The oil stopped flowing when the empty jars were finished. The oil only flowed as per the number of empty jars she brought. If she believed her one jar could not do much to fill up another jar, she would have probably brought 1 jar or not even bothered to get empty jars from neighbours. This goes to show that the abundance of the flow of oil was dependent on faith and her obedience. Because she believed she brought empty jars and the extent of the flow of the oil relied on how many empty jars she brought in accordance with her faith. Elisha did say in verse 3b, do not gather just a few. Her obedience to Elisha’s instruction was her act of faith and the abundance of oil was a response to her level of faith. Because her level of faith was shown through how much of the empty jars she gathered. The Lord Jesus showed her and her two sons His glory. Through this they could learn the power of simple faith and obedience. This was a priceless lesson in their life.

After all this what next? her house was now filled with jars of oil. Look at verse 7, ***“She went and told the man of God, and he said, “Go, sell the oil, and pay your debt. Then you and your sons can live on the remainder.”*** The woman did not suddenly develop her own ideas and do as she wanted with the jars of oil. She went back to the man of God and told him all that had happened. Elisha then gave her direction, to go sell the oil and pay her debt. They could then live off the remainder. God really helped this woman beyond what she could ever ask for. However, there are a couple of things we can observe from the interaction of this woman with Elisha. This woman came to Elisha for help, she was in a very difficult situation at the verge of losing her two sons to slavery. She had inherited a debt from her husband which needed to be paid. She knew Elisha was a servant of God who probably did not have lots of money to release her from her debt. So when Elisha asked her, how can I help you, she knew she could not request money from Elisha. However, by faith she came to Elisha, hoping and believing she may receive some help. Yet we find Elisha asking her, **what do you have?** She came with a dire need looking forward to receive something from Elisha. She was looking forward for help to come from somewhere out there. She felt she had nothing to resolve her problem. However, Elisha asked her, **what do you have?** No Elisha, you tell me what do you have to help me, why are you asking me what do I have at my house, my house has nothing, I have nothing. I only have this insignificant jar of oil. Little did the woman know that, it is that thing that she regarded little and insignificant that God planned to reveal His glory through. As I indicated before I am confident to say one way or another, we need help in some area of our lives. And chances are that we have been coming to God for help, like this woman who came to the servant of God. We focus on what we do not have.

However, this passage reveals something remarkable, the woman was asked, **what do you have in your house?** The man of God helped this woman discover what she had and that it was through what she had that help would come from. **What do you have?** Instead of focusing on what we do not have, Elisha helped the woman focus on what she had, **what do you have in your house?** God wanted to use what she had to reveal his saving grace. Let us look again how this woman came to the servant of God. Firstly, **she was sincere and genuine**, when asked what she had in her house, she really looked hard and sincerely in order to respond honestly to the man of God. Secondly, **she came by faith**, when told to get empty jars from neighbours and fill them up with her one jar of oil she had, she obeyed absolutely. Thirdly, after the jars were filled with oil, she did not rely on her intuition but returned to the man of God for further direction. She did not help herself and take over where God left of. It was probably obvious that she could sell the oil for income, however she returned to the man of God for further instruction. This also shows that, when she came to Elisha for help, she was fully depending on God for help. That is why she did not help herself with her own ideas once she had so much jars of oil filled up. She was humble enough to seek what God's plan was with the filled jars of oil.

Looking also at Elisha, we see how he helped her live by faith and learn practical faith. Elisha could have told the woman everything at the start during her first visit, that after the jars are filled sell the oil and pay back your debt. However, he did not. So Elisha was also teaching her practical faith. Elisha did not reveal the whole plan of God to the woman. She received the whole plan in bits or in pieces as she obeyed God's word from the man of God. As she obeyed each instruction returning to the servant of God, she would be shown what was next and ultimately God's full help. For many of us who need help, **What do you have?** Are you coming to God by faith, fully depending on him or His plan for help. We can see through this passage that when God helps, He helps fully and even beyond what we asked for. One sure thing we do have as believers is the Holy Spirit. The bible teaches us that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Should we not as like Elisha instructed the woman, go into our rooms, close the door behind and spend some personal time with God, asking Him how he can use the Holy Spirit in us to overcome what is burdening us. This is how this woman came to experience Jesus personally.

Remember how she came to Elisha, she spoke of her husband who feared God but nothing about her fear for the lord as though she herself did not really have a personal relationship with God. However through her problem, God helped her have personal faith over and above her practical need to pay her debt. The theme of our regional conference is based on Jesus command to his disciples, **"you give them something to eat"** while they had only few fish in their basket yet many people were hungry for food. This woman only had one jar of oil, however when she brought it to the attention of the man of God, God could use that one jar to fill up many empty jars. I pray that we may come to the throne of God in prayer, spend personal time with Jesus and his word, seeking his direction on how he will use what we have to firstly, have personal relationship with him. And secondly to overcome our burdens and ultimately be a source of blessing to others. May God help us discover what we have as we spend personal time with him in prayer. Moreover, to know Jesus Christ personally through our problems.

This passage also highlights the bad culture of our generation when dealing with problems. Let us look at few examples, I will start with the problem of unemployment in our country. Our government pride itself on promising jobs and on providing grants to those with children. Our government has been training us not to focus on what we have but to rather look to them for help. This actually makes us

and our society slaves to government. Grants which may come in handy for single moms, yet they actually cause a perpetual dependency on government a form of mental enslavement or disability. It is a form of entrenching or reinforcing beggars mentality upon people. Young people from their societies are made to believe that once you get that degree your problems will be resolved and so they study for their degrees as a matter of life and death because we place our focus on the university as though it is our saviour. At our work places, we want to please our bosses so they may promote us for better salary. Our focus is on them for resolving our problems. Some religious leaders also train their congregation to look towards them for help instead of doing what Elisha did. My point is, the world has trained us not to focus on what we have, but rather focus on things around us from which our help will come from. To depend on something or someone out there to come and be our saviour.

However, Elisha asked the woman, **what do you have in your house**. As much as you have come to me for help, **what do you have?** Elisha even helped her see what she had, through faith she could multiply what she had. Moreover, Elisha helped the woman develop personal faith with our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ through her problem. God want to reveal himself to us in the most personal way you can ever imagine through what we have. **What problems do you have?** What problems do you see around you in your community or at campus? This message is calling on all of us to come to Jesus and ask, Lord Jesus **what do I have in my house?** please reveal yourself through what I have so I may know you personally, learn the power of practical faith and be a source of blessing to others.

**In conclusion**, we have many problems because we focus on what we do not have rather than what we have. God wants to help us, he asks how can I help you? What do you have in your house? through this passage we learned the practical faith of a widow. We also learned how Elisha helped her experience Jesus Christ personally through her problem. Our problems are God's way of helping us know Him personally. May we learn to spend time with Jesus in prayer so we may know him personally through our problems. **What do you have in your house?** May Jesus reveal what we have and use what we have to be a source of blessing for both us and to others. May God use what we have to fill up many empty souls of young people with God's word. Amen! One word: **How can I help you? What do you have?**