

Overcoming Personal Need

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[0 : 00] 2 Kings chapter 4 is we're going to be looking at being resilient in life and we're going! We're going to talk about overcoming personal needs because desperate times call for miraculous! Sometimes God brings us to a point where He is the only one that can make a difference in the situation.

You know, we understand the importance of that as we're going to look at the account here today. You know, we're going to look here because in times of great need, you know, it can be easy to assume that God doesn't care.

You know, have you ever noticed that when sometimes life seems overwhelming, it's like, you know, where's God at? Why is God allowing this in my life? Why am I struggling with this? And so today we're going to look at a widow woman who was in a dire situation and to see how God stepped in and made a miraculous thing happen in her life.

You understand what was available to her that she did not even realize until God took over.

[1 : 16] Because, you know, when it comes to needs, you know, we live in a very blessed nation. I mean, most of us, you know, are likely to sit down somewhere today and have lunch or dinner or with enough food to meet our needs and probably more than enough.

You know, we live in a very blessed place. I mean, we have many needs met. You know, the meal may be at home or a restaurant or somewhere else with main dishes and side dishes and all these things.

And it may be our favorite meal or maybe it's the one that doesn't exactly thrill you today. I don't know what your meal might be. But we're all aware that not everyone is that fortunate, though. You know, not everybody is fortunate enough to have all their needs met. Now, we're talking about food, which has to do with hunger, but the reality is sometimes there's a lot of other needs in life where we feel that we're overwhelmed.

That we feel that life is, we don't know what to do or how that need is going to be met. But, you know, the one thing you find as you read through Scripture, how many times God supernaturally steps in.

[2 : 27] How God steps in at those moments. You know, you think about the story of Ruth. She had a great need, but God stepped in.

You know, we find that others like the widow of Zepath, who was on the brink of starvation with her son, but fed Elijah first of the meal and oil she had left, and God provided miraculously.

And took care of them. You know, when you think about Jesus and some of the miracles he performed, it was moments of life of desperation that he stepped in and changed the course. Impacted the heart and life of an individual. But, you know, a story that oftentimes doesn't get as much attention as some of those is the story of a widow whose time of need came in the early days of the prophet Elisha.

You know, the Bible doesn't even mention her by name, but it does tell her her story. You know, it may be the fact that God doesn't mention her name to make it to where anybody could step in and say, this could be me.

[3 : 39] This is where God is at. And we find here that this woman had lost her husband and she had a huge debt and no way to pay her debtor. It was overwhelming.

We saw as God is going to step in and do something that is miraculous. You know, let's pick up here in 2 Kings chapter 4. Let's look at verse 1.

It says, And she said, And 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.

And it came to pass when the vessels were full, that she said to her sons, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said to her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. 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. Let's pray.

[5 : 23] Heavenly Fathers, we just take a few moments here this morning to look at your provision. Lord, that you step in in desperate times, Lord, to fill the gap and to fill the need that is there, that you step in miraculously at those moments when we have no idea the how or the what in our life.

Lord, Lord, we pray to this work in a mighty way, even here this morning. Lord, that we might, no matter what situations might arise, we might trust you as we walk through.

Lord, and we just ask it all in your precious name. Amen. You know, we realize that, you know, we've talked about Elijah, and we saw that he mentions Elisha, and we understand Elisha's last encounter, or excuse me, Elijah's last encounter with the Israeli king of Haziah, and Elijah was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire, and his ministry was transferred to Elisha, really in a miraculous way.

And when Elijah told Elisha he was going to be taken to heaven, Elisha knew he would need the power of God to be used of God, as Elisha had been, so he asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, and God gave it to him.

God provided miraculously as he saw Elijah depart. But we know Elisha was now the prophet of Israel. You know, during this time, it was Jehoram, Ahab, and Jezebel's son was king in Samaria, and the northern nation of Israel's capital, it was during this early portion, of Elijah's ministry, the widow in today's text came to Elisha for help.

[7 : 15] Because notice here, this widow, what had taken place, as we read here in verse four, she cries out, a certain woman of the wives of the son of the prophets.

You know, we see here the desperation of this widow. When the woman came to Elijah, her need was dire. She was like, I don't know what we're going to do. I don't know what's going to happen. She was in desperation. Her husband was dead. This newly widowed, single mom had a great need. She had two sons, no money, a mountain of debt, and a creditor knocking on her door. When we read this, we realize that this widow wasn't abstract to Elisha. Notice her phrase that she says here.

In verse one, it says, and now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, thy servant, my husband and dead, is dead. And now knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord.

[8 : 13] Know that. She mentioned specifically that he knew her husband and his service. She recognized and knew them.

It was not abstract. It was personal to the prophet. It was personal to Elijah. And we see here that from the language here, we see the woman knew there was no other avenue of help.

She came and her plea was a hopeful request. It was a desperate cry for help. Here she is having to deal with all the overwhelming dynamics of the situation and feeling isolated and overlooked sometimes.

But this story reminds us that God sees every person's need. No matter how desperate the situation, God sees your need. God knows what's going on in our life.

But I want you to see this widow did what all of us should do. When we have a need, she looked to God. You know, in her case, that was to the prophet Elisha.

[9 : 22] You know, have you ever thought, how do people respond in desperate situations? You know, to whom or what do people tend to go to to help? If they don't go to God first. You know, how often do we try to solve the problems ourselves?

We try to work through every option or everything we might be able to manipulate or to control. It says stopping to say, Lord, you know that the need is there.

It's so easy that we find ourselves in need to go to insufficient places. We try to figure it out or turn to friends or maybe we get angry. You know, or cause of all sorts of situations where this lady's particular problem was the fact of the debt that they had.

This woman turned to the Lord and God met her need in a miraculous way. You know, even better, her children got to see God work in a miraculous way. God to see God step in in a moment when nothing else could fill the need.

You know, as we look at this story, I want you to remember what did Elisha tell her to do? She didn't say, go up on stage and make a big show. He said, go home and shut the door. Just you and your sons.

[10:35] And God did a miraculous work when they were obedient to God's word. God did a miraculous thing. You know, when we understand that she, she and her sons got to participate with God in an unbelievable provision.

Now I handed out some three by five cards this morning to a few. So hopefully you've got those verses looked up for me already this morning. But what I want you to do is those that I handed the cards out to, I want you to read them and then share what that verse says about how it relates to God's intervention in our needs.

So Psalm 32, eight, who's got that one that you, Joe, you drew the first card. Or is that the one you and your brother settled on anyways? Go ahead and read. Okay.

What's God promised to us there? Going to instruct us and teach us. You know, why do you need instruction?

You need to learn something. You know, Psalm 55, 22. Psalm 55, 22, cast thy burden upon the world, shall stand, but God shall have a struggle, right?

[11:58] Okay. So how's God provide for us? Yeah. What we need. Psalm 62, eight. Nice and loud there, Tim. You have to use your outdoor voice.

Trust in him at all times. People pour out in the heart for him. God is a refuge for him. Yep. You know, I think the other thing that's important in that verse too is God listens.

Pour out your heart before the Lord, that God's hearing what's going on. How about, uh, uh, Psalm, uh, uh, 62, eight. Is that, that's when you just read Tim?

That's Tim's. You just read, you read 62, eight, right? Okay. Make sure I'm getting down my list correctly. Proverbs three, five, and six. Who got that one? How's God provide?

Okay. All right. Isaiah 41, 10. He's there to support us along the way.

[13:23] Yeah. Isaiah 43, one and two, not secret code. But now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

He created us, formed us, he redeemed us, we are his, and he will protect us. Amen. How about John 16, 33? Do you think that I've spoken unto you, that if you might have to be, the world of you shall have tribulations, but it's good to you, perhaps, no matter what, along the road.

Yep. Philippians 4, 6 and 7. I care for nothing, but a heavy thing, by fear and temptation, to him, but the peace of God, which happens, Paul, and the peace of God, I see that, like, I just let God know you over you, and he's going to be in prayer.

Yep. Amen. You know, we see all throughout Scripture, there's just a few, of the Scriptures that we have, that God gives us promises, that he's going to be there, that he's going to meet those needs, but we see that, this woman's problem was, her husband was dead, that was a big issue, but now we find, the creditor had come.

[14:52] You know, she had money problems. And I think we can all understand, the reality of, where it is, when you're struggling financially, and this widow's story, went from bad to worse, when the creditor came to collect, because she couldn't pay the debt.

And in biblical times, what would happen, is they would come, and take the children, and they would be put, into indentured servanthood, servanthood, to pay, or to make for the debt, of the family, to pay that off.

And we see here, that she couldn't pay, so the debtor, or the creditor, came to indenture, her children, to pay it off.

And according to the Mosaic law, creditors could require this, of a debtor, or their children. You know, Leviticus chapter 25, tells us this, in verse 39, it says, if thy brother, that dwelleth by thee, be waxen poor, and sold unto thee.

Now I want you to understand, something here, because culturally, this sounds harsh to people. I'm just going to do, a little side note here, to help you understand, because, they didn't have, all the social programs, we have today.

[16:07] Oftentimes, this was very beneficial, because it did provide, the one thing, the woman could know for sure, that her children, were going to be fed, they were going to be cared for. You know, there were some elements, socially, that God structured this.

But as we read through this, I want you to see here, because God also, made some provision. He said this, thou shalt not compel him, to serve as a bond servant, but as a hired servant, and a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee, under the year of Jubilee.

You know, the interesting thing is, God said, you're not to treat them, like you would, a bond servant, somebody that, as we would call, a common slave, he said, you treat them like, a hired person.

In other words, they had a different status, within that, and he said, if the year of Jubilee, this is another great thing, in scripture, God had years of Jubilee, when the year of Jubilee, would come down, all sorts of things, would reset.

You know, they were set free, they were able to go back, matter of fact, the land that was taken, or sold off, would go back, resort back to the families, in the year of Jubilee.

[17:15] God had a plan, of how all this worked through, that the families, would make everything, in the land, work the way God designed it to, that they would all have, their inheritance.

But we see here, that working off this debt, was a common practice, but I want you to understand, it would have been, even more devastating, to this woman. not only is her husband gone, but now her children.

You know, that's a dire situation, a desperate situation, she was in, and we see here, that not only, would it be added to the lost, but it was unbearable, to a mom.

I mean, I couldn't imagine, but without her sons, the other thing is, she would be truly destitute. She would have nothing, this widow's story, highlights the importance, of a resilient life, because desperate times, call for miraculous measures.

You know, it's been said, that man's extremity, is God's opportunity. You know, God does miraculous things, in moments, when we say, God, where you at? When we trust him, God steps in, and makes a difference.

[18:27] It's when our backs, are against the wall, and we're just at the end, of our resources, when our need, isn't just unlikely, to be met, but impossible, for us to work out. Have you ever asked, why does God bring us, to the point, that we can't work something out, that we feel overwhelmed?

Have you ever thought, that God's already got a plan, that God's already got means, in place, that God's got an answer, for the situation? Like this woman, when we understand, her desperate need, that she had, but you know, it applies, not just to financial needs, but it also, applies to relations, you know, your relationships, your emotional needs, your health, I mean, we all come against things, that are difficult, that seem overwhelming, and times of personal need, is when we, it's easy to spiral, into fear, rather than grow in faith, you know, these are times, when God's desire, to meet our needs, and prove, he is sufficient, he intervenes, in a supernatural way, you know, when God steps in, in a supernatural way, there's no doubt, who did it, there's no way, of questioning, what happened, because you say, there's, God did something here, it's obvious, you know, when we realize, that God is the one, that's going to work through, it's easy to go into fear, but what God wants us to do, is to grow our faith, but these are times, when God desires, to meet our needs, and prove, he is sufficient, whether it's through, supernatural needs, or something, that he orchestrates, you know, sometimes it's amazing, how God takes care of things, that God's got things, under control, before we even realize, that we need it, that God steps in, and takes care of things, you know,

I want you to understand, God meets needs, in a couple different ways, in our life sometimes, sometimes it's because, he steps in, and supplies something, and sometimes, it's just that God, keeps things moving forward, without a need, you know, that God works miraculously, to keep things operating, you know, that things come together, you know, God is able to help, but we see the desire here, secondly of the prophet, because after the widow here, in 2 Kings 4, pours out her story, he responds, notice this simple question, that he responds, notice verse 2, and Elisha said unto her, what shall I do, for thee, in other words, how can I be of service, you know, it's a tremendous question, for Christians, to ask, those in need, you know, we understand, that we need to be concerned, about others, you know, think about what James tells us, in James 1 27, it says, pure religion, undefiled before God, and the father is this, to visit the fatherless, and the widows,

and their affliction, to keep himself unspotted, from the world, you know, when we see here, that James tells us, that we ought to put those things, into action, what does he say, how can I be of service, what can I do to help, when we understand, that God, ultimately is the one, that could help, you know,

Elisha must have felt, pretty desperate, he says, okay, how am I going to solve this, what can I do, you know, sometimes it's overwhelming, to the others also saying, you know, how do we help this situation, sometimes there's situations, you want to help, but you just, there's, you don't know what to do, or how to do, except just tell, point people to the Lord, to say, Lord, you need to, we have to trust the Lord, notice what, the prophet says here, he asks, and he says, tell me, what hast thou in thy house, and she said, thy handmaid, had not anything in the house, save a pot of oil, you know, we see here that, he asks, what shall I do for thee, God doesn't stand, indifferent, from our needs, and he doesn't want us, to try to figure out, first, before we come to him, he invites us, to come boldly, and receive freely, the help, that is there, you know, consider, what did, what did, Elijah, point to, he's like, what do you have, what has God already given you, that can help, through this situation, as she had come boldly, before, the prophet, which is a picture, of us coming boldly, before God, notice the reality, it tells us,

Hebrews 4, 16, let us therefore, come boldly, under the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace, to help, in what, in time of, need, you know, that God is there, God promises, to provide for our needs, as we bring them to him, but he says, secondly, what is in thine house, you know, God was going to supply, the widow's need, but he wasn't going to do it, through a snap, of Elisha's fingers, to make money appear, rather, he gives her a question, what is in thine house, it may seem like, a strange question, because, obviously, when you think about that, he asked her this, he says, her creditors are coming, what's in her house, isn't sufficient, you know, you think about that, for a moment, don't you think, she probably would have sold, what she had, to try to make up, for the difference, and here the prophet says, what's in your house, she says, nothing but a pot of oil, if she would have had enough, she would have just paid, the creditors, but he asked, what do you have, you know, because I want you to understand,

[23 : 59] God is always going to ask us, to do by faith, what we can do, God uses what we have, and then turns it miraculous, in his hand, it not only grows our faith, but gives us the opportunity, to be involved in his work, rather than simply watching, as impressed bystanders, you know, think about for a moment, think about Moses, when God called Moses, to lead the children, to lead the children, of Israel, out of Egypt, what was Moses' response, at that moment, here's your Bible trivia, think back, I can't, I can't, Lord, do you know, who you're talking to, I don't have what it takes, I don't have the ability, to speak, God replied, with a question to him, notice what, in Exodus 4, God said unto him, what is in thine hand, in Exodus 4, God looks at Moses, when he's saying, I can't, and he says, what's in your hand, what was in his hand, a staff, a rod, common thing, you know, it wouldn't have looked, any different, than any other rod, or staff, that a shepherd, would have used, it was a common item, that nobody would have, thought anything about, he told Moses, to throw down the rod, and he did, and it became a snake, he told him, to pick up the snake, and it became a rod again, and that rod, went with Moses, as he stood before Pharaoh, and demanded on God's behalf, to let his people go, it's the same rod, that Moses proclaimed, the plagues of God, that were sent to Egypt, it's the same one, he stretched over the Red Sea, before it parted, it was held up in prayer, during the battle, but it was simply, what Moses had, in his hand, there was nothing special, about the physical composition, of it, in fact, the very commonness, of the rod, is what made it, such a special token, of God's power,

Moses gave, what he had, his shepherd's staff, to God, and God worked miracles, through it, there was nothing special, about that rod, what made it special, is what God could do, think about another situation, in Mark chapter 6, when you have a little boy, that Jesus wanted, to feed the multitude, who had been listening to him, he didn't make food, miraculously appear, you know, that's the one thing there, when Jesus fed the 5,000, Jesus could have just, spoken a menu, into existence, you know, Jesus could have, instantly catered, the situation, but instead, he looked out, and sought out, a young man, he asked his disciples, first, how many loaves, have ye, go and see, Jesus took, five loaves, and two small fishes, and fed, the multitude, I want you to understand, he fed them, with what was at, hand, what they had, you know, this lad, that gave a small lunch, and Jesus fed a multitude, you know, when we realize, that, that what we have,

God can use, God already knows, what you have, he knows what the problem is, and he knows where you are, we have a great need, in our life, and God is always, available, and always willing, to help, but he doesn't swoop in, and just make the need, disappear, rather, he asks us, what we have, calls us, to give it to him, in faith, and allow us, to be part, of his amazing, work, God's going to work, in your life, because think also, the deliverance, of the family, you know, this accounts, pretty miraculous, because, what does the prophet, tell her to do, he says, hey, what's in your house, a pot of oil, he didn't tell her, to do anything, with the pot of oil, at that point, notice what he tells her, when he says, there's just a pot of oil, you know, what is this, you know, think about, Andrew, with the boys meal, that we talked about, a few minutes ago, what is this, among so many, you know, what's five loaves, and two fishes, among so many, she's probably looking, here's a small pot of oil, what is this, to the need, how is this, going to make a difference, she had nothing else, all that she owned, in my house, of her house, was only a pot of oil, you know, think about her response, have nothing in the house, but save a pot, of oil, you know, as I read that, sometimes it makes me think, that she'd already sold, everything else, trying to pay the debt, all he got left, is a pot of oil, you know, it's easy to look, at the needs around us, and say, very similar to the Lord, God, I see these great needs, for supporting your work, or giving to others, or doing what you would have, or challenges in my life, but I don't have much, but I want you to understand, God takes that which is little, by faith, and makes it much, God steps in, in a miraculous way, you know, this little, here's the thing, she didn't have something, she had a pot of oil, she was right, that it was insignificant, towards the need at hand, but she was wrong, that it was insignificant, to God, or what he wanted, to do for her, you know, the oil she had, was most likely, olive oil, used for everything, from cooking, to burning lamps, to anointing, a body, after bathing, to mixing with spices, for anointing the dead, when we see that dynamic, of, it was used for so much, it was so beneficial, but yet there wasn't much, but God stepped in, rather than assuming, that we have nothing, and can do nothing, we need to take inventory, and say Lord, what do I have, what's the financial, provision I have, at my disposal, where am I at, with maybe your career, or what God could do, with your life, because once we ascertain, what we have, it's that, then it is God's will, that we deploy, what we have, into his service, you know, sometimes we take, what we have, and put it secondary, or to say Lord,

I don't have much, or I'm not a great speaker, or a great person, but you know what, God can use you, if you're willing, to give what you have, to him, she was willing, to trust the Lord, on this matter, that it, something took place, because you know, sometimes, instead of, trusting God, we draw back, you know, she very could have, easily just went, and closed the door, and stayed home, she could have ignored, what the prophet, told her to do next, because she didn't like, what he had to say, you know, sometimes that happens too, you know, sometimes people don't like, what God has to say, about a situation, when we realize it, when we try to rationalize, what it is, God can do, we can become, stingier, or hold back, you know, I want you to understand, it's kind of like, a plant in a garden, when you put a seed, in the ground, you're giving up, that seed, but what's the benefit, of planting a seed, in the garden, that it, multiplies, you know, that it comes up, you know, some more than others, some grow things, like cucumbers, and zucchinis, and it's the zucchini season, once again, you know, everybody's trying to give them away, and everybody's already, got too many, but how'd that start, with a seed, and when we plant a seed, what you're doing, is surrendering it, this is what I have, but I'm surrendering it, for what God's going to do, of what, how God's going to work through it, when it's scattered, it multiplied, when we hoard it, it accomplishes nothing, you know, it's interesting, that statistics tell us, that most people, when surveyed, believed they'd be more generous, if they had more money, but according to Forbes magazine, in 2007, there were 946 billionaires, and they gave an average, of 1.2% of their income, to charitable causes, you know, there's a lot of people, that have much less, that are way more generous, with the needs, you know why, it's because their perspective, what you have, isn't what's going to make you generous, it's how your attitude is, towards what you have, that makes a difference, you know, with many Christians, generosity, needs to be a lifestyle, not in your level of income, but in your level of faith, you know, sometimes you have to step out, by faith and say,

[32 : 49] God, I'm not sure, how everything's going to come together, but I know this is what, you would have for me to do, to step out in faith, to do those things, you know, when we understand the needs, she could have tried, to hoard what she had, instead of saying, God, I'm willing to give it to you, to follow, what you would have, what you would desire for us, that we can give, because of what we have, not because of what we have not, she presented it, simply what she had, a pot of oil,

