

The Gift

2 Kings 4:8-17

The good hand of the LORD has been on Elisha! His reputation as a man of God . . . a man to whom God speaks and through whom God acts is growing. The LORD has already performed five miracles through him.

You remember that Elisha began his work by raising Elijah's mantle and slapping the waters in the Jordan River. The rushing current separated and Elisha walked across on dry ground to return to the Promised Land.

When the leaders of Jericho came to him about a problem of bitter water, Elisha threw a bowl of salt into the spring and the water became sweet!

When some young men met him with angry ridicule and defiance against the LORD, Elisha called a curse from God upon them and two she-bears came out of the woods and tore 42 of them apart.

When the armies Judah and Israel ran out of water as they confronted Moab, God used Elisha to make a dry streambed flood with pools of water. He did this without any rain falling from the sky.

When the widow comes to him in distress over the threats of her creditors, Elisha instructs her to pour her little jar of olive oil into all the big jars that she collected from her neighbors. One by one each of the big jars are filled to the brim with precious, valuable oil!!

All of these recorded miracles as well as miracles that are not recorded fill the conversations of God's people throughout Israel. For the godly, there is a hope that perhaps the LORD will bring revival to the nation through His instrument, Elisha. Perhaps the darkness of sexual immorality, idolatry, greed, rebellion, and hostility will be vanquished by the grace of God! What hope Elisha represents to the few godly people living in Israel!

One of those godly people who are filled with hope is a very wealthy lady living in the town of Shunem. Her family owns several vineyards and the wine they produce is sought after all through Israel.

She heard Elijah's call on Mt Carmel, *“How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.”* (1 Kings 18:21 [ESV](#)). When fire came from heaven to consume the sacrifice, it was as if the fire enters her heart. First, she is cut to the core with conviction. She had lived her life for the power and pleasure that wealth gave her. But now Solomon's words roll through her spirit, “Vanity, vanity, all is

vanity.” Her money does not buy her meaning. In emptiness, she calls upon the name of the LORD. And, the LORD fills her with a passion for His glory. More than anything, she wants to be used of God to bring Him glory. She surrenders everything to Him.

All through the rest of Elijah’s ministry, this converted woman prays and prays and prays for a true national revival . . . and she sees God bringing grace to pull her people out of deep idolatry. Yet the work of spiritual renewal is not complete. When she hears about Elisha being a man of God with the spirit of Elijah, she rejoices. *“God is still bringing His grace through his servant!”*

One day, she walks through the market in her hometown of Shunem, when she hears a woman point at a man and say, “That is Elisha.” Her heart jumps with joy! She knows she has to meet him!

In her conversation with Elisha, she discovers that this was his first time visiting her town. She immediately says, “You must come to my house today and have dinner with me and my husband!” Elisha lived by faith and God always provided for his needs. He had no money and no friends here. So he knew that the invitation was the LORD’s kindness in this journey.

At the dinner, Elisha tastes the best lamb chops he had ever eaten. He is overwhelmed by this woman’s hospitality. And this woman and her husband ask the best questions! *“What is Yahweh doing in our times?” “When will the Messiah appear?” “When will the LORD fulfill His promise of a King who will rule in righteousness on the throne of David?”*

The evening passes as quickly as it had begun and as Elisha is leaving, the woman places some coins in his hands and pleads with him, *“Please come back to our home. Whenever you pass this way, know that we believe in what you are doing. We want our home to be your home.”* AND that is what Elisha does. These strangers become deep friends to him as the result of their generosity and hospitality.

After a few visits from Elisha, God places a burden on the woman to do more. She knows that the man of God needs a place where he can commune in private with the LORD . . . a place that he can call his own. So she says, *“Husband, the holy man from God has visited us often and he is now our dear friend. We see the good hand of the LORD upon him and often pray for God to use him to bring us revival.”*

“Yes. That is true.”

“Well, I have prayed over a matter and I have a plan. What do you think about building on to our house? I would like to construct a room on the roof of

our home with walls around it. I have even thought of the color design and the furniture. I have planned a Sleep Number bed, a table, a rocking chair, a cute little oil lamp. I have a vision so clear for this room! When Elisha comes, this can be his place. We will have an external door and give him a key so that he can come and go anytime!"

"What do you think?"

The husband thinks what every husband thinks when his beloved wife comes with a plan filled with joy. He first asks to himself, *"Hmmmmmm. How much is this going to cost?"* But then he smiles and says, *"Of course! I love it! Let's do it!"* And he gives her a big kiss. He loves how much she loves the LORD.

One day after receiving so much from his friends in Shunem, Elisha is in the perfect little room constructed for him out of love and he is praying for the woman and her husband. He yearns to do something for them in return for all the generous love that they had given him. He calls out from the window of his rooftop room to his servant,

"Gehazi! Gehazi! Would you come up for a moment please?"

The servant races up the stairs to serve Elisha.

"Gehazi, I need you to have a conversation with the Shunammite woman who is so kind and who feeds us so well. Approach her and ask her, 'Mrs Shunamite, you have done so much for me and my master. You have spent untold amounts of money to feed us and to build a room for us. In addition, you have done this with love. We feel a strong bond of friendship with you and your husband. My master would like to do something for you. My master does not have much money as you know, but he is often invited to talk with the king. He can ask the king for a favor if you would like. What might we do for you?'"

"Honestly, I am content with the LORD's kindness for me. You do not have to do anything for me."

Gehazi returns to Elisha with this report. Elisha is disappointed. He wants to deepen their bond of friendship and he knows that friendship must be reciprocal to be strong. So he presses Gehazi more.

"Gehazi, you have good eyes to see needs of people around you. What do you think? What can we do for this woman?"

"Well, she has no child. And we know how important children are to every woman in Israel. She does not complain about it, but I know it is a sorrow to her soul. And her husband is past his prime . . . he is weakened by his age. It is likely that she has given up hope."

"Thanks Gehazi! Call her up here. I have something to tell her!"

The Shunamite climbs the stairs and stands in the doorway of Elisha's room. Elisha smiles at her and says, *"At this season next year, you will be holding a baby boy in your arms. The LORD is going to give you a son."*

She falls to her knees at the words. Nothing could have shaken her with wonder . . . with doubt . . . with hope . . . with joy like Elisha's words. Trembling at the thought she looks up and says, *"No . . . no . . . really? . . . No . . . O my lord. You are a man of God. You would not lie to me, would you? No. Did I hear you? I have longed for a son all my years and I only recently have given that to the LORD. This is stirring my soul again. Please assure me that this will not bring back the pain of false hope."*

Elisha assures her that this is a promise from the LORD. And within three months, she conceives and that next spring she bears a son just as Elisha told her.

Main Idea: God's grace opens a door for us to use our temporal resources to gain eternal joy. Let us walk through every door the LORD opens for us!!

God's Encouragements to Those with Extra Cash. (I did not say "wealthy" because too many people who are wealthy do not consider themselves to be wealthy. This message is for everyone who possess more than today's necessities. If you have some money in your wallet or in the bank, these encouragements are for you.)

Encouragement #1: Invest your wealth in relationships.

"One day Elisha went on to Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to eat some food. So whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there to eat food." (2 Kings 4:8 [ESV](#))

The woman is not merely offering free food to Elisha. She is offering him friendship . . . a spiritual friendship that he could count on for support when he was under attack, for prayer when he was weak, for encouragement when he was down. She offered to be one of those treasured people in his life who were stable and not fickle . . . who would speak affirmation to him and not spit fire at him . . . who would stand by him and not break fellowship with him.

It is through her investment in Elisha that she secures for her a friend who she enjoys to this day. If she invested her money in new vats for her wine that money would not be earning her interest today.

Truth: Spiritual friendships are the greatest measure of a person's wealth.

He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. 2 And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' 3 And the manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. 4 I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.' 5 So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6 He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' 7 Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' 8 The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

9 And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings." (Luke 16:1-9 ESV)

Jesus has told the story, now He is driving home the applications in vs 9. As we hear this story, we at first might be turned off by it. If Jesus had not said, we might discard it. **Protest:** are you saying that Jesus wants me to buy friendships? No. **But he does want us to use our money to love people and thus win friendships.**

There is a big difference between a person who buys friendships and a person who uses money to make friendships.

When I was seventeen years old, I did not have very much money. I worked at McDonald's for about \$3.00/hour. But I became interested in a girl named Kimberly. And what did I do? **I invested money to provide opportunities to get to know her and to bless her.** Making a phone call from my house to hers in Pekin was expensive. Gas was very expensive. Dates to go bowling or out to eat or to putt putt golf all were very costly. On her birthday, I searched for the right gift. I thought about a book, but then thought that is not personal enough. I thought about jewelry, but then thought I might scare her away by how personal that is. I ended up buying a nice knitted blouse. It was a risk because my fashion sense is not great. And do you know what, recently Kimberly found that blouse in the back of her closet and wore it. She even received compliments on it! **Though I had very little money, that use of money has**

given me more joy than I could have ever imagined. It was a great investment. Now, I did not purchase a wife, but I the investment of money allowed me to make a forever friend.

Now pay attention to Jesus' words.

⁹ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. (Luke 16:9 ESV)

Every believer will be welcomed into heaven by God. But Jesus is also teaching us that we will have friends who welcome us. Not everyone will have the **same number of friends rejoicing at our arrival.** Some will have had a greater spiritual impact on people than others and so will have more friends in heaven. Evidently, friendships will be valued in heaven even more than they are on earth.

Principle: Friendship in heaven is not based on temporal good times like being on the same softball team or being a jokester or being part of the same family. **Friendship in heaven will be acquired on the basis of the spiritual joy that we contributed to people through the use of our money and time in this life.**

The message is simple: Money invested in this world will fail us. There will come a time when it will no longer benefit us at all. **But money invested to bring spiritual good to people will provide us with eternal joy.**

How do we make forever friends with our money?

1. We make friends with our money when we open our home in hospitality to encourage the saints.
2. We make friends with our money when we give to our local church who uses it to spiritually and materially bless others.
3. We make friends with our money when we give to specific missionaries and ministries.
4. We make friends with our money when we directly give to help the poor.

Encouragement #1: Invest your wealth in relationships.

Encouragement #2: Give to advance the ministry of the LORD.

And she said to her husband, "Behold now, I know that this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way. Let us make a small room on the roof with walls and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that whenever he comes to us, he can go in there.""
(2 Kings 4:9-10 [ESV](#))

The LORD was not taking something from the Shunammite that He needs. The LORD is giving the Shunammite something she needs. The LORD does not need her room, but the Shunammite needs to live for something that possesses eternal meaning.

Truth: The ministry of the LORD is the most important thing happening on the face of the earth. If we are part of it, we will rejoice now and forever.

Question: What is the ministry of the LORD? The Shunammite knows that the ministry of the LORD is focused on the man of God . . . Elisha. So she invests in him. How do we know what the ministry of the LORD is today?

I would urge you to ask Jesus. Ask Him what His ministry is. **On the basis of the Word of Christ recorded in the Bible, I would say two truths:**

1. **If you ask Jesus about His ministry in the world today, He is going to talk to you about the local church.** The local church is where Jesus ministers to His people and to His world. Jesus may mention other ministries, BUT ONLY IN AS MUCH AS THOSE MINISTRIES connect to and strengthen the local church. Jesus loves the church so much that He gave Himself up for her.

"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18 [ESV](#)).

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," (Ephesians 4:11-12 [ESV](#))

2. **If you ask Jesus about His church, He is going to say that some churches are not churches.** He will warn us away from churches who have strayed from Him in doctrine, in life practice and in their love for Him. We know that He will talk about these things because that is what He does in Revelation 2-3.

Encouragement #2: Give to advance the ministry of the LORD.

Notice how it is the woman of the home who takes the initiative. She does not wait for Elisha to ask for a donation to his ministry.

She asks her husband whether he is on board with her plan. She knows that taking another man into her home requires unity of opinion. I am not sure if her husband was resistant at all to her desire, but the story is told with a view that both participate.

Men, if your wives are generous people, thank God for that! Do not get frustrated with their generosity, but rejoice in it. **Many husbands receive the spiritual reward that flows from participating in their wives great-heartedness.**

Why did this woman and her husband invest in Elisha? Answer: God's grace is strong in her life.

The Spirit of God produces a freedom from the love of money and the zeal to give freely to advance God's glory.

Truth: Christian giving flows from the grace of God at work in the hearts of God's people. Our conversion produces a passion for Jesus' name. And passion for Jesus produces generosity toward to ministry of Jesus in this world.

The Shunamite and her husband knew that their world . . . their nation was going the way of the dogs. They knew that God is still faithful to His covenant to bless Israel with salvation. They knew that Elisha is God's servant to do God's work. They want to be part of what God is doing in the world. **They asked, "What is the LORD doing in this broken world?" And then they said, "Whatever God is doing, I want to be part of that!"**

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Encouragement #3: Enjoy the reciprocity of giving.

One day he came there, and he turned into the chamber and rested there. 12 And he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite." When he had called her, she stood before him. 13 And he said to him, "Say now to her, 'See, you have taken all this trouble for us; what is to be

done for you? Would you have a word spoken on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?" (2 Kings 4:11-13 [ESV](#))

All spiritually healthy relationships are reciprocal. Love begets love. Elisha wants to share something good with this couple who has loved him.

True, spiritually healthy people love to give more than to receive. They long to contribute to the lives of others. This means that they are primarily looking to contribute something out of a friendship.

However, this also means that if spiritually healthy people are reluctant to receive, they will not grow deep in relationship with other spiritually healthy people. The woman initially replied, "I do not need anything." But there actually was something Elisha could do for her that would bring her immense joy.

Truth: Love opens our hearts to receive blessing from others as well as to give blessing to others. Independence is the driver that motivates us to resist blessings that others may bring to us.

Some of us need to hear more of the Spirit's conviction about being generous. **Our flesh may be grudging and stingy with our resources.**

But I know of some who need to hear more of the Spirit's conviction about being receptive to receive blessing. **Our flesh may be fearful of vulnerability or may be proud of our own self-sufficiency.**

Even the LORD who does not need anything opens His heart to receive from us contributions that deepen our relationship with Him.

Christian love is reciprocal. The LORD designs His people to need one another. **In order for love to be reciprocal, every person must both be willing to give and to receive.** If we give and refuse to receive from others, we cut off love by refusing to acknowledge that others can make a meaningful contribution in our lives. If we receive and refuse to give, we cut off love by refusing to offer ourselves as a gift to help others.

Application: We are right to be willing to give when we are called by God to give. We are right to be willing to receive when we are called by God to receive!

Friends, let us build reciprocal love and loyalty in our relationships!

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Encouragement #4: Use your money to store up eternal riches.

Notice that this rich widow gives joyfully. She did not give in hopes of getting Elisha to become her debtor. She is not being crafty to make Elisha HER servant. She is not fearful that her supply will be depleted by her generosity.

Her joy in giving is based on what she knows about the LORD:

- She knows that her ability to give is based on God giving to her in the first place.
- She knows that her giving will bring her abundance not poverty.
- She knows that God is worthy of worship
- She knows that God will continue to provide her with everything she needs.
- She knows that God rewards those who seek Him.

When we give to the LORD out of joy, we ALWAYS receive back more than we give.

Truth: God people KNOW that we never out-give the LORD. When we give, we always receive back so much more than we give.

"give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."
(Luke 6:38 [ESV](#))

Our giving never makes God our debtor. Our relationship with Him is not one of paying for the gifts He provides us. Our relationship with Him is responding to His love with love.

Application: Give with joy looking to the eternal reward! The righteous live believing that God rewards those who seek Him.

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:6-7 [ESV](#))

Encouragement #5: Rejoice in the greatest treasure of all.

She answered, "I dwell among my own people." And he said, "What then is to be done for her?" Gehazi answered, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is old." He said, "Call her." And when he had called her, she stood in the doorway." (2 Kings 4:13-15 [ESV](#))

16 And he said, "At this season, about this time next year, you shall embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord, O man of God; do not lie to your servant." 17 But the woman conceived, and she bore a son about that time the following spring, as Elisha had said to her." (2 Kings 4:16-17 [ESV](#))

Question: who received the most from this friendship? Elisha or the Shunamite? Elisha received some good food and a comfy room. The Shunamite received a child.

None of this was a barter . . . none of it was an exchange. You give me what I want and I will give you what you want. This is love from God. Yet the LORD gave the Shunamite the best part.

This is a picture of dramatic importance for us as we consider the LORD and His workings in our lives. This is a picture of the Gospel itself and the treasure that is Jesus Christ.

All through the OT, God's announcement of his eternal Son is foreshadowed through unlikely births:

The LORD promises Abraham and Sarah a son and at 99 and 89, Sarah gives birth to Isaac.

Rebecca is barren for 20 years before she gives birth to Isaac.

Rachel is barren for many years before she gives birth to Joseph

The angel of the Lord appears to a barren couple announcing that they will concen and have a son. And Manoah gives birth to Samson.

Hannah goes to the Temple to pray with tears for a child after years and years of barrenness. God tells her through Eli that the God of Israel will grant her request. And Samuel is born.

Zechariah and Elizabeth are barren and long in the tooth. Gabriel stands before Zechariah in the Temple to announce that Elizabeth will give birth to the forerunner of the Messiah. He marvels, "How can this be? I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." Nine months later, Elizabeth gives birth to John the Baptist.

All these point to the ultimate miracle baby.

Luke writes to tell us the story:

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary . . . 30 And the angel said to her, ". . . 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God." (Luke 1:26-35 [ESV](#))

This story in 2 Kings is told to reveal the goodness of the LORD. It is given to us to enter in to the joy of the treasure that God brings to us. You see the Baby is not just born to Mary and Joseph. This Baby is born to us as well.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;" (Isaiah 9:6 [ESV](#))

Question: Do you rejoice in the gift of God's Son? He is the ultimate treasure from the LORD. Nothing can compare to Him. If you have Him you have everything. If you do not have Him, nothing else you have matters. **No one who has Jesus is poor.** We need never envy anyone.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9 [ESV](#))

Christian friends, Satan often wants to cloud our hearts with what we do not have . . . we may not have a **job that pays much or a job that is fulfilling, we may not have **the marriage** we want or **the health** we want, we may not have the **talents** we wish for, we may not have **the past** that we long for, we may not have **the social life** we wish for, we may not have **the country** we desire or **the leaders** we vote for . . . **Christian, Satan would rob you of joy by parking your hearts and minds on what you do not have.** Satan uses discontent to steer us into darkness . . . the darkness of depression, the darkness of resentment, the darkness of covetousness, the darkness of hatred, the darkness of despair.**

Christian, you are rich beyond measure! This is the real truth! Can you say with me, *"I have Jesus, so I have everything. He keeps every promise to me and makes me rich. I rejoice in the greatest treasure of all!!"*

If you are not a follower of Jesus, I urge you to consider Jesus. I KNOW He is the treasure that you are seeking. Consider Him. Then come to Him. He offers His very self to you!

In 1858, a scientific expedition passed through what we now call the Grand Canyon. A young lieutenant by the name of Joseph Ives made the following entry in his report:

"This region we last explored, the Grand Canyon, is, of course, altogether valueless. It can be approached only from the south, and after entering it there is nothing to do but leave. Ours has been the first and doubtless will be the last party of whites to visit this profitless locality. It seems intended that the Colorado River, along the greater portion of its lonely and majestic way, shall be forever unvisited and undisturbed."

Obviously the young man did not see what was right in front of Him. He could see, yet he was blind. **He failed to appreciate the grandeur and majesty of the Grand Canyon.** Far from being "unvisited" and "undisturbed", this natural wonder inspires awe in millions of visitors each year. Ives never returned to the Grand Canyon and he boldly predicted that no one else would visit this "profitless locality" either. **The lieutenant's report however was not an indictment upon the grandeur of the Grand Canyon, but upon the hollowness of the young lieutenant.**

Many are like this young lieutenant when they encounter Jesus. They look at Him and see His humility or His gentleness, but they miss His lofty grandeur. **They see nothing that would prompt awe or adoration.** They think Him a "profitless locality" and leave Him unvisited and undisturbed.

Now you must consider the question, "Who is Jesus?" This is the most crucial question you can answer. It will affect your life here on earth in the most profound ways and it will change your eternal destination and experience.

Matt. 11:28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

God's Encouragements to Those with Extra Cash

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Encouragement #2: Give to advance the ministry of the LORD.

Encouragement #3: Enjoy the reciprocity of giving.

Encouragement #4: Use your money to store up eternal riches.

Encouragement #5: Rejoice in the greatest treasure of all.

Question: How much negative weight can you bear in a friendship before you break fellowship? What efforts do you make prior to breaking friendship out of your covenantal commitment to your friends?

Truth: Christian friendships bear the weight that Jesus bears with us. They do so only in the power of the Holy Spirit. No one personally has the inner strength to bear what Jesus bears with us, yet Jesus offers us His Spirit so that we can love like He loves.