

Grace Under Pressure

On Sunday, we resumed our study of the life & times of Elijah and Elisha – learning from the example of a great woman of faith who crossed paths with Elisha.

1. Warm up question: Who is the most powerful woman of faith you've ever known? How has her example affected you?
2. The story of the Shunnamite woman (pronounced SHOO-nehm-ite) unfolds in three parts. The first part of the story emphasizes her generosity. Read II Kings 4:8-17.
 - a. As she got to know Elisha, the Shunnamite woman became confident that he was “a holy man of God.” What may have led her to that conclusion? What kinds of traits cause you to regard someone as a genuine “man or woman of God”?
 - b. Generosity seemed to be second nature to the Shunnamite woman. Jeff also told a story about two little boys in our church, Landon and Tyler, who spontaneously gave all their dollars and coins to the church on “A Little Extra Sunday.” Why is it that some people just love to give, while others struggle? What makes the difference?
 - c. On Sunday, Jeff asked: “Does the amount you're giving to God's work feel to you like an adequate expression of your generosity?” How can we know that? What are some ways to self-evaluate our generosity?
 - d. When Elisha offered to put in a good word with the King on her behalf, the Shunnamite woman declined. Clearly, she hadn't given in order to get something in return. Nevertheless, Elisha insisted on blessing her, thereby illustrating a common pattern we see in life: **Generosity often sets in motion a cycle of blessing in our lives.** Have you seen this principle at work in your own life experiences, or in the lives of people around you? Tell us about it.
 - e. How do you think the Shunnamite woman felt when her son was born?
3. Now let's read Part 2 of the story: II Kings 4:18-23.
 - a. As the boy's head ached and his condition deteriorated, what do you think the Shunnamite woman was thinking and feeling as she held him in her lap? When in your life have you felt that way?
 - b. Suppose someone asked, “Did God cause the boy's death?” What do you say?
 - c. What impressions do you have of the father in this story? What do you make of the question he asked in verse 23?

- d. When the Shunnamite woman told her husband, “It will be all right,” what do you think she meant? What was she really saying?
- e. In the words of the Shunnamite woman – “It will be all right” – Jeff heard echoes of a hymn called “It Is Well With My Soul,” which was written by a man grieving the death of his four daughters in a shipping accident. The song begins like this:

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
 When sorrows like sea billows roll;
 Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
 It is well, it is well with my soul.

Jeff said, “I don’t think it’s possible to live with serenity until we learn that lesson. **When all hell breaks loose, practice saying, “It will be all right.”** Do you agree? Do you have that kind of serenity? Why or why not?

- f. Right now, what’s the biggest challenge to your serenity? Suppose, in that situation, you tried prayerfully saying over and over again, “It will be all right.” Do you think that would help?

4. Now let’s read Part 3 of the story: II Kings 4:24-37.

- a. When the Shunnamite woman aggressively grabbed hold of Elisha’s feet, what do you think Gehazi [gee-HAY-zai] was thinking? What do you think Elisha was thinking? What do you think the Shunnamite woman was thinking?
- b. How would you paraphrase verse 28? What was she saying to Elisha? Do you ever talk like that to God? Why or why not?
- c. Elisha proposes to send his staff with Gehazi to be laid on the face of the child. The Shunnamite woman rejects the proposal, declaring she won’t leave without Elisha. At this point, what do you think the Shunnamite woman was thinking? What was Gehazi thinking? What was Elisha thinking?
- d. Jeff saw the persistence and determination of the Shunnamite woman as a reminder that: **Bold persistent prayer, coupled with bold persistent action, is a powerful, powerful formula.** When in your life have you used this formula – or seen someone else use it? What happened?
- e. The Shunnamite woman got an amazing result, and sometimes so do we. But not always. What should we think when, despite our best prayers and boldest action, what we sought doesn’t happen? Does that invalidate this third principle?
- f. Which of the three principles we’ve discussed today (in bold above) most speaks to where you are right now in life?