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The Shunammite Woman

Taking the Initiative

2 Kings 4:8-37

“I thought he must be a Christian when he took me to his home for dinner and overnight,” said a visiting Chinese scholar, recounting how a stranger had offered him hospitality when he was stranded at the airport. Hospitality is a trait repeatedly commended in the Bible. God is hospitable, and he wants his children to be also.

GROUP DISCUSSION. What are the ingredients of hospitality?

What happens when you feel welcomed into someone’s life or home?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Ask yourself: “Am I waiting for certain positions or a certain lifestyle before exercising hospitality?” What can you do today to show hospitality?

In this story a woman welcomes a “man of God” into her home and is rewarded for doing so—or so it seems until the day her son dies. The initiative she shows in offering hospitality leads her to deeper faith in expecting God to act on her behalf. Her faith and boldness, as well as her generosity, are a model for us. *Read 2 Kings 4:8-37.*

1. How does the Shunammite woman take initiative here?

2. Why did the woman use her resources to help Elisha?

What do you think her generosity meant to Elisha and his servant?

3. Compare your own use of resources. How can you show hospitality even with limited resources?

4. What do you think Elisha's concern for her needs (vv. 12-14) meant to the Shunammite woman?

Why do you think the woman didn't initiate her own request to Elisha (v. 14)?

5. After being given a son and raising him to boyhood, the woman now faces a terrible loss (vv. 18-20). How does she respond to the death of her son (vv. 21-30)?

6. How do you account for the implied accusation the woman makes against Elisha (v. 28)?

7. When have you spoken accusing words like these to God or to others?

8. What is the woman's strong resolve in the face of her son's death?

What alternative action might she have chosen?

9. When you feel distressed about something in your life, how do you react?

10. How can we develop a foundation of faith and trust in God before times of crisis come to us?

Ask God to help you to always turn to him as the source of both goodness and power to meet your needs.

Now or Later

We meet the Shunammite woman again in 2 Kings 8:1-6 when she verifies the ministry of Elisha. Like the woman, what can you tell about the wonderful works of God on your behalf? Be specific.