

Small Group Guide: Living a Proactive Faith

Based on 2 Kings 4:8-37 - The Shunammite Woman



Opening Prayer

Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word, and to help group members apply these truths to their daily lives.

Ice Breaker

Share a time when someone unexpectedly blessed you, or when you were able to bless someone else without being asked. How did it make you feel?

Key Takeaways

1. Proactive vs. Reactive Faith

The Shunammite woman didn't wait for needs to be announced—she saw them and acted. Her faith was built on consistent, daily habits of seeking and serving God.

2. Seeking God First

In her greatest moment of tragedy, her first response was to run to God's prophet, not to grieve alone or seek human comfort first.

3. Authentic Vulnerability Before God

When she reached Elisha, she didn't hide behind religious platitudes. She poured out her honest grief and confusion to God.

4. Tragedy Doesn't Discriminate

Even those living faithfully will experience hardship. Following God doesn't guarantee a pain-free life, but it does provide the source of true healing and eternal hope.

5. The Greater Prophet

This story points forward to Jesus, who not only raised the dead but conquered death itself, offering eternal life to all who trust in Him.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. What stands out to you most about the Shunammite woman's character? What specific actions demonstrated her proactive faith?
2. Why do you think she initially told Gehazi "it is well" when everything was clearly not well? What does this reveal about her priorities?
3. How does the pastor describe the difference between proactive and reactive faith? Can you give examples of each from your own life?

Personal Reflection

4. The sermon states: "If you want to be somebody who, when things hit the fan, your first response is to spend time with God... that is a habit that is built."
 - What daily habits are you building that prepare you for crisis moments?
 - What habits might you need to develop or strengthen?
5. When facing difficulty, what is typically your first response? Do you turn to God first, or do other things come before Him? Be honest.

6. The Shunammite woman was vulnerable and authentic with God about her pain, asking "Why would you hurt me?"
 - How comfortable are you being that honest with God?
 - What masks or facades do you sometimes wear when you pray?

Going Deeper

7. The sermon mentions that "affirmation is not love" and that true love cares about someone's eternity. How do we balance speaking truth with showing genuine love and compassion? Where do you struggle with this balance?
8. Read Jesus' words about loving enemies and praying for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44). How does the current state of Christian discourse—especially online—measure up to this command? What's our responsibility in this?
9. The Shunammite woman received a blessing she never asked for, then had it taken away, then had it restored. How do we maintain faith when God's blessings seem inconsistent or when prayers go unanswered?

Application

10. The woman saw a need (Elisha's need for rest and refreshment) and filled it without being asked.
 - What needs do you see around you right now that you could proactively meet?
 - What's stopping you from acting on them?
 11. The sermon emphasizes that worship should be about "proactively seeking to make a connection between heaven and earth" rather than reacting to what's on stage.
 - How can you approach worship more proactively this week?
 - What about prayer—are you mostly bringing requests, or seeking alignment with God's will?
 12. Jesus' Great Commission calls us to make disciples. Who in your life needs to hear about Christ's offer of eternal life? What proactive step could you take this week to share the gospel with them?
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Proactive Service

- Identify someone in your life who serves others regularly (a pastor, teacher, caregiver, etc.)
- Find a specific, practical way to bless them without being asked
- Do it this week without announcing it

Option 2: Authentic Prayer

- Set aside 15 minutes for three days this week
- Come to God without a facade—pour out your honest thoughts, frustrations, joys, and confusions
- Don't worry about "saying the right thing"—just be real with Him

Option 3: Proactive Discipleship

- Reach out to one person who doesn't know Christ or is struggling in their faith
- Invite them to coffee, lunch, or a walk
- Share your testimony or simply listen to their story and pray for an opportunity to point them to Jesus

Reflection Exercise

Take 5 minutes of silence for personal reflection:

1. On a scale of 1-10, how proactive is your faith right now?
2. What's one specific area where you tend to be reactive rather than proactive?
3. What's one concrete step you can take this week to build a more proactive faith?

Share your reflections with the group (as comfortable).

Memory Verse

Matthew 6:33 - "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Closing Prayer Points

- Pray for group members to develop proactive faith habits
 - Pray for authenticity and vulnerability in our relationships with God
 - Pray for those facing tragedy or hardship, that their first response would be to seek God
 - Pray for opportunities to proactively serve others this week
 - Pray for boldness to share the gospel with those who need to hear it
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For Next Week

Come prepared to share:

- How your proactive faith challenge went
 - One way you saw God work through your obedience
 - Any struggles or questions that arose
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Leader Note: Create space for honest sharing, even if it's messy. Not everyone will have victory stories. Some may be wrestling with unanswered prayers or current tragedies. Model vulnerability by sharing your own struggles with proactive faith.

5-Day Bible Reading Plan: Living a Proactive Faith



Day 1: Seeking God First in Every Season

Reading: Matthew 6:25-34

Devotional:

The Shunammite woman's immediate response to tragedy was to seek God's presence through His prophet. She didn't wait for a religious holiday or convenient moment—she recognized that God is what we need all the time. Jesus echoes this truth when He teaches us to seek first the kingdom of God. A proactive faith isn't built in moments of crisis; it's cultivated through daily, intentional pursuit of God's presence. When we make seeking Him our first response rather than our last resort, we position ourselves to receive His peace, wisdom, and healing. Today, examine your reflexes: when difficulty comes, where do you turn first? Begin building the habit of running to God before running anywhere else.

Day 2: Filling Needs Before They're Asked

Reading: Hebrews 13:1-3, 16

Devotional:

The Shunammite woman didn't wait for Elisha to express a need—she proactively created a space for him to rest and minister. She saw an opportunity to serve God's work and seized it without being asked. This is the heart of proactive faith: moving beyond reactive charity to anticipatory love. God calls us to be attentive to the needs around us, to serve without waiting for formal requests or recognition. This requires spiritual sensitivity and intentional observation of our communities. Who in your life is quietly carrying a burden? What need exists that you could fill today without being asked? When we love others proactively, we reflect God's character—He loved us and provided salvation before we even knew to ask.

Day 3: Authentic Vulnerability Before God

Reading: Psalm 62:5-8

Devotional:

When the Shunammite woman finally reached Elisha, she didn't hide her anguish behind polite religious language. She poured out her honest grief: "Did I ask for this? Did I not say, do not deceive me?" God desires our authenticity, not our performance. He already knows our pain; the facade we maintain only prevents us from receiving His healing touch. Like the psalmist who declared "pour out your heart before Him," we're invited to bring our rawest emotions to God's throne. It's hard to apply ointment to a covered wound. If you're hurting, angry, confused, or disappointed with God, tell Him. He can handle your honesty far better than your pretense. True intimacy with God begins when we stop performing and start being real.

Day 4: Love Greater Than Everything

Reading: Luke 14:25-33

Devotional:

Even with her son lying dead at home, the Shunammite woman refused to leave God's presence, declaring, "As the Lord lives, I will not leave you." This demonstrates the radical priority Jesus calls us to—loving Him above even our deepest earthly attachments. This isn't about devaluing family or minimizing grief; it's about recognizing that our ultimate source of life, hope, and healing is found in God alone. When we cling to His presence first, we're actually better equipped to love others well. The mother's choice wasn't abandonment of her son but recognition that only God could truly help him. What competes with God for first place in your heart? Today, surrender those competing loves and recommit to seeking His presence above all else.

Day 5: Pointing to the Greater Prophet

Reading: John 11:17-27, 38-44

Devotional:

Elisha's resurrection of the Shunammite woman's son points forward to Jesus, the ultimate Prophet who conquered death itself. While Elijah and Elisha each raised one person, Jesus raised three during His earthly ministry—and then raised Himself, offering eternal life to all who believe. Every Old Testament miracle whispers of the greater reality found in Christ. The temporary resurrections performed by prophets remind us that physical healing on earth, while wonderful, isn't the ultimate promise. Jesus offers something far greater: eternal resurrection for all who trust in Him. The penalty for sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Have you received this gift? Have you moved from merely knowing about Jesus to truly trusting in Him for your salvation?

Reflection Questions for the Week:

- In what areas of your life are you reactive rather than proactive in your faith?
- How can you create space this week to serve someone before they ask?
- What honest conversation do you need to have with God about your current struggles?
- Is there anything competing with God for first place in your heart?
- Have you personally trusted in Christ's death and resurrection for your eternal life?