



NG Study Guide: 2Kings 4:1-44 “The Double Portion Life” [Pt. 3] [9.20.20]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: God delights in mercy, grace, and provision. As we see the “Double Portion” displayed in miracles of God through Elisha we see God supply needs resulting from the fall. We live in a fallen world resulting from man’s rebellion. God is Sovereign, and His job is not to fix our problems; yet, we see His love as He cares for the poor, the hungry, the barren, the grieving, and famine and poisoning victims. Thus, we are encouraged that we can trust God to provide for our needs too.

1. Relief for the poor [1-7]

A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves.”² So Elisha said to her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” And she said, “Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil.”

³Then he said, “Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors—empty vessels; do not gather just a few. ⁴And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels and set aside the full ones.” ⁵So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured it out. ⁶Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, “Bring me another vessel.” And he said to her, “There is not another vessel.” So, the oil ceased. ⁷Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debt; and you and your sons live on the rest.”

The widow is in a desperate situation with a creditor. In that culture there was no insurance, no government social programs, and it could be particularly difficult for a widow. Her husband loved God, and one might wonder why God would allow her to suffer [1]. God is concerned about widows, orphans, and social justice [Deut. 16:10-11, Ac. 6:1-7, Ja. 1:27]. God sees the way the poor are treated; and calls His people to care. Faith is expressed in ministry to the poor.

After her husband died, the widow discovered her family had a great big debt that she could not pay. The creditor was coming to take her children to become servants to pay the debt [1]. Her only provision was a little bit of olive oil which would be used for cooking, oil lamps and even medicinally [2]. Elisha tells her to go and borrow many empty vessels. Archeological evidence shows these ceramic or clay pots were common at the time. She was to collect the jars trusting what God’s representative told her to do. How many vessels did she have? How many could she have gotten? How many would you get? We tend to limit God by our lack of trust. When the disciples had caught no fish on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus told them where to cast nets, plural, but they let down only one net, that was filled to overflowing [Lu. 5:1-6]. She entered her home and closed the door as instructed. God was with her [Cf. Mk. 5:40 Jesus and Jairus’ daughter]. She poured the oil from her jar and filled all the pots until there were no more. The provision of the oil allowed her to pay her debt, and there was extra provision to live on.

The oil is a picture of the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life [Lu. 11:11-13]. There is an endless supply of God's power available to Jesus' followers, but we can limit the work God wants to do by our lack of trust. In a season of economic upheaval, there is uncertainty and suffering, yet through a variety of ways God is providing relief for the suffering [Cf. LONCI assistance forms to help or receive help].

2. Relief for the barren [8-17]

⁸ Now it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where there was a notable woman, and she persuaded him to eat some food. So, it was, as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food. ⁹ And she said to her husband, "Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly. ¹⁰ Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there." ¹¹ And it happened one day that he came there, and he turned in to the upper room and lay down there. ¹² Then he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite woman." When he had called her, she stood before him. ¹³ And he said to him, "Say now to her, 'Look, you have been concerned for us with all this care. What can I do for you? Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?'" She answered, "I dwell among my own people." ¹⁴ So he said, "What then is to be done for her?" And Gehazi answered, "Actually, she has no son, and her husband is old."

¹⁵ So he said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. ¹⁶ Then he said, "About this time next year you shall embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!" ¹⁷ But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her.

This woman, unlike the widow, had much. She used her plenty to provide hospitality to the servant of God [8-11]. Hospitality relates to providing comfort and caring for needs. Hospitality is a qualification for church leaders [1 Tim. 3:2], and Jesus' followers generally [Rom. 12:13, 1Pet. 4:9, Heb. 13:1-2]. Elisha wants to know what he can do for her [13]. She declared that she was content [13]. Elisha is wondering what they can do for her when his servant reminds the prophet that she and her elderly husband have no child [14]. Barrenness was experienced by Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, the parents of Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist. She thought it was impossible [16], but the birth of her son displayed God's grace and power.

Barrenness is not a curse, or a sign of God's neglect, but an opportunity for God to display His mercy, grace, and parental love in a host of ways. Sometimes, those who struggle with pregnancy are blessed with a child, other times God blesses through adoption or foster parenting. God cares for the barren.

Consider the existential issue of whether bringing a child into the world is a selfish or selfless decision. Yes, a child that is never conceived will not endure the suffering of this life, however every child conceived can experience the contentment of life with Christ in this world, and the immeasurable perfection of eternity with God in heaven.

3. Relief for the mourning [18-37]

¹⁸ And the child grew. Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers. ¹⁹ And he said to his father, "My head, my head!" So he said to a servant, "Carry him to his mother." ²⁰ When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. ²¹ And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out. ²² Then she called to her husband, and said, "Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back." ²³ So he said, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath." And she said, "It is well." ²⁴ Then she saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, "Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you." ²⁵ And so she departed and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel. So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, "Look, the Shunammite woman! ²⁶ Please run now to meet her, and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?'" And she answered, "It is well." ²⁷ Now when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet, but Gehazi came near to push her away. But the man of God said, "Let her alone; for her soul is in deep distress, and the LORD has hidden it from me, and has not told me. ²⁸ So she said, "Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me?'" ²⁹ Then he said to Gehazi, "Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child." ³⁰ And the mother of the child said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So he arose and followed her. ³¹ Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing. Therefore he went back to meet him, and told him, saying, "The child has not awakened."³² When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying

dead on his bed. ³³ He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD. ³⁴ And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm. ³⁵ He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. ³⁶ And he called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite woman." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Pick up your son." ³⁷ So she went in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; then she picked up her son and went out.

The young boy died in the field [17-20], and the mother goes to seek Elisha, the man of God [20-22]. She responds, "It is well" [23]. Despite the death she knew God had it under control [26]. She falls at the feet of Elisha, and his servant Gehazi sought to push her away, like the disciples when the multitudes approached Jesus. Elisha is surprised that God didn't reveal her need to him [27]. Gehazi did not expect God to work [28-31]. On the other hand, Elisha prayed, and relied on the Lord [33]. Elisha paces back and forth waiting for God's miraculous work to progress [35]. God's gracious love and power were displayed when the child's life was restored.

The gospel provides hope, comfort, and relief for the mourning who's loved ones are in Christ [1Th. 4:13-18]. Jesus declared that He was the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Him, though they may die, they shall live. And whoever believes in Him shall never die [Jn. 11:25-26].

The death of a loved one causes others to mourn their loss, however, God has provided the greatest relief for the mourning through the gospel. Knowing that a loved one is in the very presence of God, and that there can be a reunion through trusting God is the greatest comfort and hope imaginable.

4. Relief for the poisoned [38-41]

³⁸ And Elisha returned to Gilgal, and there was a famine in the land. Now the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said to his servant, "Put on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets." ³⁹ So one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, though they did not know what they were. ⁴⁰ Then they served it to the men to eat. Now it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, "Man of God, there is death in the pot!" And they could not eat it. ⁴¹ So he said, "Then bring some flour." And he put it into the pot, and said, "Serve it to the people, that they may eat." And there was nothing harmful in the pot. Gilgal was one of the three schools of the prophets or training centers for ministry [38], along with Bethel and Jericho [2:1-6]. Gilgal was historically a place of spiritual renewal for the Jews [Josh. 5]. There was a famine in the land both physical and spiritual [Amos 8:11]. Desperate people will grab onto anything including poisonous gourds (and toxic doctrines) [39-40]. Elisha puts flour in the pot of poisonous stew and it is restored [41]. The flour is a picture of Jesus, the Bread of Life [Jn. 6], and the Word of God [Deut. 8:3, Matt. 4]. When Jesus comes into a toxic situation there can be restoration. Jesus and His sound doctrine restore those who have been harmed by consuming false teaching.

There is unfortunately way too much disinformation and misinformation about culture, politics, and unfortunately religion. Something that claims to be a Christian worldview that is actually contrary to sound doctrine is unhealthy, toxic, and the only cure is Jesus and learning about and from Him.

5. Relief for the hungry [42-44]

⁴² Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, "Give it to the people, that they may eat."

⁴³ But his servant said, "What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?" He said again, "Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: 'They shall eat and have some left over.'" ⁴⁴ So he set it before them; and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD.

The man presented a gift of the first-fruits of his harvest to thank God [42]. He brings the gifts to the man of God, since people in the northern kingdom would not go to the temple in Jerusalem to worship [42]. Gehazi doesn't believe the small portion could feed many, but twice Elisha instructs him to give the loaves to the people that they may eat [42-43]. God prompted Elisha that they would eat and there would be leftovers [43]. *So, the loaves were set before the people, they ate, and they had some left over, according to the word of the Lord* [44].

God abundantly provides [John 6 (feeding of 5,000), Eph. 3:20]. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" [Phil. 4:19].

We live in a fallen world resulting from man's rebellion. God is Sovereign, and His job is not to fix our problems; yet, we see His love as He cares for the poor, the hungry, the barren, the grieving, and famine and poisoning victims. Thus, we are encouraged that we can trust God to provide for our needs too.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. What do you feel is the most pressing need for you and/or your loved ones in this season?

Q2. Describe an area where it was difficult in the past to trust God's provision. What did you learn?

Q3. We live in a fallen world resulting from man's rebellion. God is Sovereign, and His job is not to fix our problems; yet, we see His love as He cares for the poor, the hungry, the barren, the death of a child, famine and poisoning victims. How does that make you feel?

Q4. As you read about God providing different types of relief in this chapter, which one(s) do you relate to the most right now and why?

"Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a helpful article regarding what it means that God provides

<https://www.gotquestions.org/God-provides.html>.

2. Spend some time journaling about how God has provided for you through the years. What did you discover about God, His provision, and yourself?

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

This is a great time to invite a neighbor where you live, work, study, play, or worship to participate in your NG.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.

3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. Every time you meet consider asking:

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.