

Empty Vessels

Dear Richard,

This account from Second Kings about Elisha's encounter with a poverty stricken widow whose husband left her and his sons with a pile of debts is one of my favorite Old Testament stories. It speaks to me about spiritual growth in the Lord and how important it is for us to act on what God has told us. I hope you find it enlightening.

Ted Wise

"Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, 'Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD; and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves.' And 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 except a jar of oil.' Then he said, 'Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, even empty vessels; do not get a few. And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all these vessels; and you shall set aside what is full. So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing the vessels to her and she poured. And it came about when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, 'Bring me another vessel.' And he said to her, 'There is not one vessel more.' And the oil stopped. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, 'Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest.'" (2 Kings 4:1-7).

This story from the life of Elisha contains many very important elements for continued Spiritual growth.

- 1) **Go to the right source:** A poor widow called upon Elisha, the man of God.
- 2) **Pray:** She received a direct answer. Elisha had a Word from God that would save her and her children from bondage.
- 3) **Self examination:** Elisha, told the woman to do a personal inventory. She did as he asked.
- 4) **Confession of one's Spiritual poverty:** The widow told the man of God that she had "nothing" except a jar of what was undoubtedly olive oil.
- 5) **Obedience to the Word of God:** To the woman, it probably didn't make much sense to gather a bunch of empty pots, jars and jugs. She did it anyway.
- 6) **Faith:** The widow acted on what she had heard. She did exactly as she was told, even though she must have felt very foolish. She could have thought that if Elisha was going to do a miraculous sign, why would he do it inside with all the doors closed? God must have sustained her faith as she looked at all those empty vessels and began to pour from her small cruet of oil.
- 7) **Perseverance:** She poured as her sons handed her one after another of the empty jugs to fill until there were none left.
- 8) **Depending only on the Lord:** The woman asked the man of God what to do next. Her poverty was over, yet she did not presume to act on her own wisdom.
- 9) **Resting in the Lord:** The widow and her sons were completely delivered from the threat of slavery. She was told to "live" on the over-abundance of the Lord's provision.

There is one principle of growth in this story that all of the rest stand on as a foundation: When all the empty vessels were filled, the oil stopped. The oil can represent the anointing of God or the outpouring of His Holy Spirit. It can even represent the current

"revival". The important thing is that if we don't gather more empty vessels, the oil will stop. Evangelism must play a bigger roll in this "awakening" than it does now or we will be at risk of running out of empties. Elisha sent the widow and her sons out to gather "not just a few".

I'm sure that it is a great deal of Godly joyful fun to be repeatedly filled, anointed, or blessed. However, we can't leave the all the work of gathering up to just a few. There are not people like Chuck Schmitt, who are willing to go out on the front lines of the current spiritual battle. This is a war over the souls of this generation. It just isn't enough to take a stand against the aging New Age false prophets. It isn't enough to simply be on the right side. Elisha said, "Go...". So did Jesus.

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*"Christian thinking is a rare and difficult thing;
so many seem unaware that the first commandment
according to our Lord is, 'You shall love the lord
your god with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your mind.'" (Oswald Chambers)*

May 28, 1998

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