



Small Groups

Small Group Discussion Guide

God's Provision is the Same, but Always Different
Part 10 of Courageous Faith: Lives of Elijah and Elisha
Message by Pastor Brian Howard
(Discussion Guide by Carolyn Taketa)
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We continue our teaching series on "Courageous Faith," insights from the lives of Elijah and Elisha. This week, we look at 2 Kings chapter 4 which records how God provides for his people through Elisha. We see four stories that follow the pattern of God powerfully meeting needs of individuals in specific ways. Whether it is a widow in dire poverty, raising a son from the dead, a poisonous stew, or feeding of a hundred men, God sees the need and responds in miraculous ways. Through these stories, we learn some truths about God's provisions that still apply to us today.

Opening Question: Have you ever been early or late for something due to the Daylight Savings Time change? Share what happened.

Read through 2 Kings 4:1-44 aloud.

- **What are the elements that all four stories in this chapter have in common? List what is similar about the stories and what is different.**
- **Which of these stories resonate with you the most and why?**

I. God's Provision is poured into empty vessels.

This widow is destitute and in danger of losing her sons. She is desperate when she comes to Elisha for help. The widow believes she has nothing. Yet, the tiny bit of oil she has (oil is a form of currency in ancient times) is more than enough for God to work through her. God chooses to engage with her through specific instructions and she chooses to become an active participant in the process of God's provision.

- 1. Put yourself in the widow's shoes. What would you have been thinking and feeling when you received the instructions from Elisha to collect empty jars and fill them?**
 - a. Would you have been resistant to following Elisha's instructions or would you have been excited?**
 - b. Would you have only collected a few jars because you have no idea why you are being asked to do this? Or are you anticipating a miracle and would collect as many as possible?**
 - c. What do you tell the neighbors when you ask for their jars? Are you embarrassed to say why for fear of looking foolish or are you excited to share?**
 - d. What would influence and determine how you feel about this whole situation?**

2. **Though God could give her money instantly, how does God engage the widow to participate in his provision? Why might our participation be an important part of the process of faith?**
3. **Pastor Brian Howard noted that we often fill our hearts with pride, anger, resentment, busy-ness, or skepticism which do not leave room for God to fill us. Which of these (or other factors) get in the way of what God wants to provide for us? Share examples.**

II. God's provision does not preclude pain.

This woman from Shunem provides gracious, generous hospitality for Elisha with no strings attached. Through her friendship with God's prophet Elisha, her life is changed forever. She experiences her greatest joy when God miraculously grants her a baby and then she experiences her greatest pain when that beloved son dies. In this woman's life and in ours, pain and provision are often mingled together and God uses both to shape us.

4. **Look up a few verses in the New Testament about suffering and read them aloud. What do they reveal about the relationship between pain and spiritual growth?**
5. **What is the "Prosperity Gospel?" What are statements some Christians make that reflect this false (John 16:33) view of how God works?**
6. **Share a time when you could recognize God's provision even while you were suffering.**

III. God's provision often keeps us from what we want.

Given the famine in the land, ingredients were limited and this stew was made with a poisonous plant. The people are hungry and begin to eat before they realize it is toxic. God uses Elisha to supernaturally purify the stew and makes it safe for His people to consume. Just as God's provision protects them from harm, He sometimes does not give us what we want for our own protection.

7. **Sometimes we fail to see when God has been "closing a door" and instead we keep trying to force our way into situations God does not desire for us. Is there a situation in your life where God may be closing a door at this time for your protection?**
8. **Is there an area of your life where you need clarity from God and wise counsel from godly friends before you move forward? Pray together and ask Him to help.**

IV. God's provision is meant to multiply and bless the world.

The man had the right idea in offering twenty loaves of food to Elisha. What he did not expect was that God would use his offering to feed a hundred men. Likewise, God wants to take what He has given us and multiply it to bless others.

9. **What are some resources God has given us as individuals, families, and as a church?**
10. **Think about one resource God has provided for you. How might you or your family use that provision to bless someone this week? Share and pray for God to help you become a river of blessing and not a reservoir.**