

Shiloh Christian Church Sunday School
Soul Sisters Series
Lessons from the Life of the Shunamite Woman

I was truly impressed by this woman and as we talked about her, you'll see why. As I researched, I said to myself..this is a prime example of the woman mentioned in Proverbs 31..."a virtuous woman".

Scripture Proverbs 31 v 10-31..As we look at the life of the Shunamite woman see how many similarities you can find between this woman and the woman of God described in Proverbs 31.

Scripture References: 2 Kings chapter 4 v. 8-37, 2 Kings chapter 8 v. 1-6

Facts of her life

- Lived in the town of Shunem in the territory of the tribe of Issachar, a prominent town along a busy trade route called the International Coastal Highway. It stretched from the Sea of Galilee towards the plain of Jezreel (she was used to visitors and very hospitable)
- She was wealthy and influential
- She was married and eventually had one child
- Lived in the time of the prophet Elisha
- Her child died but was brought back to life
- Lost her home and land in the time of famine but it was later restored
- We are never told her name

I found it interesting the words used to describe her and how they differ from translation to translation. KJV calls her "great" NKJV says "notable" NIV says she was "well to do" the New Living says "wealthy" and the Amplified describes her as "wealthy and influential" Over all she was obviously a woman of means, not poor. Her husband had lands and servants.

The story, found in 2 Kings 4, is that as Elisha the prophet would go back and forth in his travels, the Shunamite woman would invite him over to dinner. One day she consulted with her husband and said "You know honey this man seems to be a true holy man." Let's give him a place where he can rest for the night when he comes by". Her husband agreed, and they actually built an addition onto their house to accommodate the prophet. Elisha was grateful and wanted to reward her. He said "Can I put in a good word to the king for you". Some would have jumped at the chance to get in the good graces of the king but she said she was content...her family took care of her needs. Gehazi, Elisha's servant who was not always portrayed in a good light in scripture, did come up with a good plan. "You know master ...she does not have any children and her husband is old."

Elisha said “Excellent idea Gehazi” and called the woman...”In one year” he predicted...” you will have a son”... She could not believe it but in one year she did have a baby.

Life is now complete. She is wealthy, has a good husband who listens to her...and now a son to take care of her in her old age. Life is good.

But tragedy strikes...one day her son who is now an older boy is in the fields with the husband. He starts holding his head and complaining of pain. The servants take him home to his mother...she holds him on her lap but at noon he dies. Notice her reaction. She lays him on the bed of the prophet..there is no mention of crying or complaining...and immediately she tells her husband she is going to see the holy man. He says to her ...”Why are you going to see him, its not a church day”...she replies “It will be well.” No mention if she even tells her husband at this point that the boy was dead. She springs into action, riding on a donkey for the 20 mile journey to Mount Carmel where Elisha was, for she knows if anyone can help her it would be the man of God.

Elisha sees her afar off and sends the servant to ask ...”Is it well with you...is it well with your husband, is it well with the child?” and she replies with some of the most powerful words of faith found in the scripture “It is well’.

To bring you to the end of the story, Elisha sends Gehazi ahead with his staff to lay it on the boy, but nothing happens. Elisha himself arrives and lays himself twice upon the boy. The child sneezes 7 times then opens his eyes. He is raised from dead and given back to his mother. God honors her faith in Him with a miracle.

We see the Shunamite woman mentioned once more in 2 Kings 8... a famine comes on the land and Elisha warns her to take her family and go to the land of the Philistines. When the famine ends she returns and goes to the king to see if he would approve her getting her land and house back...Divinely Gehazi is there talking with the king about Elisha...Gehazi tells about the miracle of her son being raised and the king is so impressed he restores everything to the woman

Lessons from the Shunamite

1. God honors those who are faithful to him. She was hospitable to the man of God and she was rewarded by God in many ways. Blessings included a child, raising the child from the dead, protection in the time of famine and restoration. (1 Sam 2v.30, Matt 25v.40)
2. She had great faith in the midst of impossible circumstances and so can we. She was blessed with a child and then the child dies. Her faith was a faith in action. She still saddled that donkey and rode all those miles ...she knew in her heart it would be well. She took the prophet and God at his word...(Matt 17v.20)

3. God wants us to be women of action. The Shunamite was very capable...a woman of industry and action...it was her idea to make an addition to the home..destroys all the myths of women being somehow inferior to men. It is a lie from the pit. We have different roles and functions. She is actually the one prominent in the story not her husband. God has always elevated women. (Isaiah 32v.9)
4. She exemplified that delicate balance between being an independent, confident woman who still had a submissive spirit to her husband (like the Proverbs 31 woman” the heart of her husband trusts in her”) She communicates respectfully with her husband before she takes the action but she is not deterred from her path ...It shall be well. (Ephesians 5 v. 17-33)
5. The greatest lesson for me is that a woman whose name we do not even know has made such an impact. She has been the inspiration for a song written using the very words she said... “It is well” ... which has echoed through the ages and has encouraged thousands if not millions of Christians to go on another day. We talk a lot these days about destiny and I feel that sometimes it is as if everyone feels that in order to fulfill God’s destiny, you have to have a multimillion dollar business or have a worldwide television ministry or pastor a mega church of thousands. That is God’s will for some. But for others it may be that people may never know your name, but if you would cook a meal for someone, support the work of God with your prayers, have faith in just the right circumstances, it can have far reaching influence in the kingdom of God. The Shunamite woman stands as a shining example of the fact that ordinary, no name women can and do make a difference. You too can be a hero.

Similarities with Proverbs 31 woman

Capable
 Industrious
 Trusted by her husband
 Cared for others
 Took good care of her household
 Owned land
 Financially savvy
 Was a mother (her children call her blessed)
 Energetic and strong
 A diligent worker
 A woman of faith
 She feared the Lord
 Woman of dignity
 Hospitable to strangers