

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

SONS OF THE PROPHETS' WIDOW LESSON SIX

by Sandy Harber

**"Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors, even empty vessels; borrow not a few."
II Kings 4:3**

The widow identified the pot of oil as the only asset she had to offer. Elisha immediately formulated a plan featuring the widow's offering of oil. God can take anything we are willing to turn over to Him and use it. In God's hands our talents, finances, spiritual gifts, etc. are refined and multiplied and become a blessing to ourselves and others.

One young man offered Jesus his lunch consisting of 5 loaves of bread and 2 fishes (John 6:7). Jesus took the lad's offering and fed over 5,000 people with it. Peter used his skill as a fisherman in obedience to Christ and netted a catch of fish that was so great it nearly broke the net and sunk the boat (Luke 5:4-7). Hannah offered her firstborn son to the Lord for a lifetime of service (I Sam. 1:11). God used her son, Samuel, to judge Israel all his life (I Sam. 7:15) and to anoint Israel's first two kings: Saul (I Sam. 10:1) and David (I Sam. 16:13). And God rewarded Hannah for her sacrifice with three more sons and two daughters. Isaiah offered himself to God to carry His message to the people (Is. 6:8). And God used Isaiah for 60 years under the reigns of multiple kings. Isaiah's prophecies included many about the Messiah, including that He would be born of a virgin (Is. 7:14).

Elisha's instructions to the widow were to gather many empty vessels from her neighbors. He was going to help her but she had to do her part as well. God provides for the birds (Mt. 6:26) but He doesn't do it by throwing worms into their nests. The birds have to hunt for their food, pecking the ground to uncover the worms. Likewise, God provides for our needs but we have to participate in His plan.

The widow's task was to go from house to house, knocking on each door, and humbly requesting the temporary use of all the vessels each housewife was willing and able to give her. She may have felt embarrassed or humiliated by begging her neighbors for help. Perhaps she explained her situation. Perhaps not. The important thing is that she obeyed Elisha without question.

While it seems like a simple task, in reality the widow had to work hard to obtain many ("not a few") vessels. Her sons probably assisted as much as they were able, depending on their ages. And God most likely gave her favor in the eyes of her neighbors so that they were willing to give many vessels into her keeping. Still, she had to gather as many items as she could transport at one time and take them to her home for storage. Then, she returned to the streets to do it all again and again until she had gathered every vessel she could lay her hands on. All the while she had to keep track of which vessels belonged to which neighbor so that she could return them when she was finished with them. It was a very physical activity involving a lot of walking and carrying. And she had to keep an eye on her boys and oversee their participation in the process.

Scripture does not give us the number of vessels that the widow collected. She obviously obeyed Elisha and gathered "many" because we know that she had enough to satisfy her needs (see. v. 7). She fully carried out the task Elisha had given her. The level of our commitment and the endurance of our obedience to God impacts the outcome. Do we want a partial victory or a complete victory? The widow visited enough homes to garner the number of vessels she needed to pay her debt and have money left over. What about you? How determined are you to obey God's Word and serve Him with all your resources?

"And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." I Corinthians 3:8b