

# A Home With a Difference

by Denis Lyle

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*A home with holiness, helpfulness, and happiness is a home with a difference.*

**Scripture:** 2 Kings 4:9, Matthew 10:41, Romans 12:13, Romans 14:7, Hebrews 6:10, Hebrews 13:2, 1 Peter 1:15

**Topics:** "Christian Living", "Hospitality Ministry"

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## Description

Denis Lyle preaches about the importance of establishing a home with a difference, focusing on the story of the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4:8-17. This woman's home was characterized by holiness, known by its geographical position and agricultural prosperity, and recognized for the godliness of Elisha's life. The sermon emphasizes the practical holiness displayed in everyday life and the need for distinctive, impressive, and extensive godly living. Additionally, the sermon highlights the helpfulness found in the home through the woman's generosity, hospitality, and spiritual provision for Elisha, showcasing the ministry of hospitality urged in the New Testament. Furthermore, the sermon touches on the happiness brought to this home through contentment, service that was noticed and rewarded by God, and the fulfillment of the woman's desire for a child.

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## Transcript

2 Kings 4:8-17 A HOME WITH A DIFFERENCE Many years ago a man left the American continent and went away for several years. When he left, he was an unknown: no one knew that this man really existed or that he really lived. After being away from America for several years he returned. Upon his return he was greeted with a cheering crowd and was given a hero's welcome. This man had not fought a battle and won a great victory: this man had not made a tremendous discovery that had brought great benefit and aid to people: this man had written a simple song.

In the song were these words, "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home". In the words which this man had been inspired to pen, he expressed the feeling of the hearts of many people about the home and the importance of the home. Ills: Some years ago a preacher visited an old feudal castle in England. The castle was so old that one of its towers dated back to the fifteenth century. At breakfast the minister noticed high overhead a massive beam that spanned the grand old hall.

The beam bore this inscription: "That house shall be preserved and never shall decay, where Almighty God is worshipped day by day". What a testimony concerning the home! When you pray together as a family, are active in a church together, serve God together, and make the Lord the determining factor in every decision, you're establishing a solid foundation for your home. Your home will be, "A HOME WITH

A DIFFERENCE." I think this home at Shunem was like that! Take a look inside it!

It features a well-heeled middle class couple, who seem to have everything: large house, secure income, happy marriage and all of their material needs met. Everything that is, except a child to share this abundance with them. It is noteworthy that the husband is a background figure in the story. He may have taken a back seat in other respects also. Its possible for, example, that this man had little or no relationship with God. Certainly many marriages are like this... a keen believing wife coupled with a nominally spiritual husband who is busy with his work, interests, and long-term career!

Now whether we have misjudged the Shunammite's husband or not we can several comments about the characteristics of this particular home. "A HOME WITH A DIFFERENCE". Notice there was: (1) A HOLINESS THAT WAS KNOWN BY THIS HOME: Now try and get the GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION in your mind. You see Shunem lay in the North of Israel in the Valley of Esdraelon. Ills: Matthew Henry tells us that: "Shunem lay in the road between Samaria and Carmel, a road which Elisha was accustomed to travel as we gather from (2:25) which says: "And he (Elisha) went from hence to Mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria". (4:25) Now try and get the AGRICULTURAL PROSPERITY in your mind.

For the plain of Jezreel was perhaps the richest ground in the Land of Israel. The soil was fertile and well cultivated and as far as the eye could see their spread those rich fields. Even today the Jewish tour guide will tell you that this very area is the bread-basket of Israel! And situated between Mount Tabor and Mount Carmel lay Shunem where Elisha often passed through! Can you see this womans genuine hospitality She urges him to stay for a meal. This becomes a regular occurrence and in this lovely, pastoral, farming setting she notes THE GODLINESS OF HIS LIFE!

"I perceive that this is an holy man of God". (4:9) Not just a man of God, but a holy man of God. What a tribute! What a testimony! She did not designate him as a "nice man", or "a charming man", she did not allude to him as " a learned man", for scholarship and spirituality by no means always go together! She didn't say, "I perceive that this is a famous man of God, or a popular, or brilliant, or successful man of God". She said, "a holy man of God". She was touched with the godliness of his life in a time of moral depravity (9:22) " A holy man of God".

Now when we speak about HOLINESS we must distinguish between: (1) POSITIONAL HOLINESS which is OBJECTIVE: Something wrought for us by God through Christ (Heb 10:10) and (2) PRACTICAL HOLINESS: which is SUBJECTIVE: Something wrought in us by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 7:1 Col 1:22 Eph 1:4 Heb 10:14) Now it was Elisha's practical holiness that touched this woman most. "I perceive that... God". My, Elisha's: (a) GODLY LIFE WAS DISTINCTIVE: Clearly visible for all to see! She said, "I perceive...

" How did she perceive the prophet's holiness Did she find him at prayer Did she see him immersed in the Word Was it his conversation and conduct Whatever she could see God in the prophet. She knew that here was a man who kept company with the Almighty! (a) Is yours Do the folk with whom we move: live: work perceive that we are holy men and women of God Does our walk: talk: behaviour indicate to them that this is so Are we obedient to the clear command of God: " Be ye holy in all manner of conversation". (1 Pet 1:15-16 1 Thes 4:17) My, to often we smile at our low business standards: laugh at fashionable jests: tolerate ambiguous pleasures.

So often we seek to be all things to all men to please all. There's nothing distinctive about our character! Its a sad day for a preacher when he's afraid that someone will think he is a preacher. And its a sad day

for any Christian when he's afraid somebody will think he's a Christian! " Oh, to reflect His grace, causing the world to see, Love that shall flow, till others may know, Jesus revealed in me". (a) (b) GODLY LIFE WAS IMPRESSIVE: So much so that she said to her husband, "I perceive... man of God". (4:9) She told her husband about Elisha, and can we doubt that others as well heard about this " holy man of God" You see this holy man of God became the topic of conversation!

Its a searching thought that "none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself". (Rom 14:7) Whatever we do has an effect upon others. We make an impression on others by our walk: by our talk! Do you know something We are constantly the subject of someone's conversation! But what do they say about us Are they saying: "If thats Christianity I don't want it". "He calls himself a believer but he's swindling the firm". " She's say's she born again but the only person she ever thinks of is herself".

" They say they are Christians, but I can't tell the difference". My ...we are constantly under the scrutiny of others but do they see Christ in us (a) (b) (c) GODLY LIFE WAS EXTENSIVE: You see it extended to all places at all times. There was a CONSISTENCY about his godliness. Elisha was passing by continually, but he was always the same! Now he didn't hide in a cave and polish his halo. He walked among men. Indeed his godliness was evident in the hardest of all places to live a consistent godly life, the home!

My, Elisha was not exercising a mighty preaching ministry, he was not holding a campaign in the marquee at Shunem, he was simply going in and out this womans house, passing through when she paid this tremendous tribute, "I perceive... us continually". (4:9) Ills: Do you know what Major W.F.Bratt used to say, "Holiness begins at home and sanctification at the sink". (1) My, are you living a holy life in whatever sphere God has placed you I wonder in that factory: office: university: neighborhood are others saying, "I perceive...

Continually" Whether you like holiness or not, you'd better, because without holiness no man shall see the Lord. (1) (2) A HELPFULNESS THAT WAS FOUND IN THIS HOME The Bible describes this woman as "a great woman". (4:8) The Hebrew word here (gadol) is used variously. Sometimes it refers to physical or material greatness (Gen 1:16 21) Other times its associated with social eminence (5:1 Prov 25:6) Here it indicates that this woman was a woman of wealth: means: substance. (4:10 4:22-23) She was well - heeled, but she not hoard it, rather she shared it with the servant of God.

This lady was very generous and very hospitable. How did she help Elisha Well, (a) SHE PROVIDED FOR HIM PRACTICALLY: For as Elisha passed to and fro through Shunem on his prophetic ministry, there was one lady on the lookout for him. She sought occasion to do good. Oh, others may have thought about this practical ministry but this lady took the initiative we read, "she urged him to eat bread". (4:8) Her was a lady given to the ministry of hospitality. Has she not may faithful successors Do you recall that little band of ladies from Galilee who befriended the Lord Jesus and " ministered unto Him of their substance". (Lk 8:3) Do you recall Mnason of Cyprus who opened his home to Paul (Acts 21:16)What about Gaius For Paul speaks of "" Gaius my host". (Rom 16:23) My, this ministry of hospitality is urged upon us time and again in the NT!

Listen to what Paul says to the Roman believers: " Distributing to the necessity of saints, given to hospitality". (Rom 12:13) Is this not to be a mark of the elders Well, Pauls tell us a bishop must be "a lover of hospitality". (1 Tim 3:2 Titus 1:8) And lest you think thats you excused Peter says, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging". (1 Pet 4:9) Now do you see how this lady did it Well, firstly she was marked by submission, she consulted her husband. Do you ladies do that I mean she respected his headship over

her life.

She had no "little secrets", which she kept from him. She urged him to build an extension especially for Elisha, setting this room aside to make life more comfortable for the man of God! My, this is true hospitality as opposed to mere entertaining! Do you know the difference In entertaining the focus is upon the hosts and their home, the furnishings, decor and cordon - blue cookery which are all designed to impress the guests. In hospitality the focus is on the the comfort, pleasure and refreshment of the visitor.

Beans on toast before a blazing fire may be all thats required because the design here is to bless the guests! (a) (b) SHE PROVIDED FOR HIM REGULARLY: " So whenever he came by there he stopped there to eat". (4:8) This was no fleeting mood of kindness, which suddenly came upon her and suddenly disappeared. My, this was a steady and permanent thing. She did not tire of ministering to the servant of God but continued to provide for his need and comfort and at considerable trouble and expense!

Do you know homes like this Ills: I'm thinking just now of one like this in Scotland, where "a great woman", has a prophets chamber: and continually ministers to the servants of God who come there! (a) (b) (c) SHE PROVIDED FOR HIM SPIRITUALLY: Do you see what she did She did not give him one of the rooms in the house Do you know why Well, she wanted him to come in and go out as he pleased, without more contact with the family than he himself chose! My, living with folk even Christians can be stressful, but she was a real home - maker she had got the balance right!

Did you notice what she put in the room A Bed! What does that speak of REST! A Table! What does that speak of FOOD! A Stool!What does that speak of COMMUNION! A Candlestick! What does that speak of TESTIMONY! My, here was a place where this holy man of God would be undisturbed in his devotions and meditations. Have you such a place (Matt 6:6) Do you take time and make time to be holy Are you speaking often with your Lord My, A HOME WITH A DIFFERENCE! There was (1) (2) (3) A HAPPINESS THAT WAS BROUGHT TO THIS HOME Now I don't want you to think that this home was unhappy before this incident for it wasn't!

Indeed when Elisha offered to use his influence to bring some material reward to this woman, her reply is striking. She says, "I dwell among mine own people". (4:13)" Thanks, but no thanks. We really do have all that we need". No complaints, only contentment! Is that you Can you say with Paul, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content". (Phil 4:11) Ills: Matthew Henry "It would be well with many, if they did but know when they are well off". But they don't.

There was contentment in this home! Yet for all that it lacked one thing, the sunshine of a child's presence and the music of a child's voice! So we read, " And the woman conceived and bare a son". (4:17) My, do you know something This lady's (a) SERVICE WAS NOT UNNOTICED: Now she didn't engage in this ministry to be noticed. She didn't provide for the prophet in order to talk about it to others. She had no desire to be recognized! (4:13)But her service was not unnoticed! My, are you ministering away there in the background Are you laboring away in some difficult sphere that is not glamorous or conspicuous Listen: "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister". (Heb 6:10) (b) SERVICE WAS NOT UNREWARDED: " And the woman conceived and bare a son". (4:17) She knew that the God of Sarah and the God of Hannah still lived.

The Lord Jesus said, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophets reward... and whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water... he shall in no

wise lose his reward". (Matt 10:41-42) Do you know something God rewards genuine hospitality. The Book of Hebrews says: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares". (Heb 13:2) Do you know what happened in the OT Many people took in strangers and found out later that the strangers were angels (messengers of God) (Gen 18:1 Jud 6:11 13:2) And do you something These messengers left more than they took... rich promises: powerful encouragement: outstanding advice were just some of the blessings that the angels left.

Was this woman any different My, the guest she blessed left a blessing with her too for God rewards genuine hospitality! A HOME WITH A DIFFERENCE! There was Holiness there: Helpfulness there: Happiness there. This was her home! What about yours

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/denis-lyle/a-home-with-a-difference/>

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