

Elisha Helps A Poor Widow

2 Kings 4:1-7

MEMORY VERSE

2 KINGS 4:7

“...Go, sell the oil and pay your debt; and you and your sons live on the rest.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Five or six different types of glass or metal containers from home and a pencil.

Enough “Paper Vessel” templates for each child in your class, several different colors of tissue paper cut into 1” squares, scissors, and glue.

Small slips of paper and pencils for each child in your class.

“Pouring Promises” template, red butcher paper, scissors, stapler, ruler, markers or crayons.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

How Many Jars?

Bring from home as many different and unique containers as you can find. These will represent the different jars that the widow collected. You will want to pick out about five or six (probably small ones) and use glass or metal containers to get a musical tone when tapped.

Show the class the different kinds of containers that you have. Next put different amounts of water in each “vessel.” Then using a pencil or something similar, tap the different vessels. Each vessel will make a different sound. With the different tones, you will come up with a tune. If you would like, allow the children to take turns playing your vessel instruments.

Elijah and Elisha were both powerfully anointed by God for His service; yet, their ministries were different in direction and purpose. We are vessels of the Lord. Each one of us is different in the body of Christ. But when we use the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given us we can make something wonderful (like music) that can honor the Lord.

LESSON TIME!

As the successor of Elijah, Elisha continued the awesome ministry of a prophet to God's people. Elisha, like Elijah, experienced an intimate relationship with the Lord that attracted those around him. The fiery Elijah confronted and exposed idolatry, helping to create an atmosphere where people could freely and publicly worship God. Elisha had an exciting ministry that seemed to be centered on helping others. He was a vessel through which the people could see God's power and love intervening in their difficult situations. The miracles that occurred during Elisha's ministry put people in touch with the personal and all-powerful God.

In God's eyes, one measure of true greatness is a person's willingness to serve the poor as well as the powerful. Elisha, the prophet, was a great man of God. For through Elisha, God moved to demonstrate His powerful, yet caring, nature to all those who called upon Him for help, even a poor, helpless widow. **God provides for all who come to Him for help.**

2 KINGS 4:1

A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves."

When reading the Old Testament, it is easy to focus on God's judgment of those who are rebellious. Yet, we also see His tender care for those who love and serve Him. In our lesson today, we see Him at work in the life of a widow in desperate need of God's help for herself and her sons. God's everlasting love draws us and His mercy leads us to repentance.

Those who live in poverty have a very hard life. Hopelessness and despair can overwhelm them everyday. Simple necessities such as clothing and food can be a matter of life or death. The widow's troubles were multiplied when her husband died leaving her with a great debt, which she could not pay off, and no means to support her family. She cried out to Elisha for help. Something had to be done right away.

She appealed to Elisha on the basis that her husband, a prophet, had been a faithful servant to the Lord. He was a man who lived in reverence and devotion to God. Now his creditor wanted what was owed him, but the widow had no money to pay him. The taking of her sons as slaves would be payment for the debts she owed. First, she lost her husband, now she would lose her sons and be left all alone, struggling to survive.

Poor people and debtors were often constrained to pay their debts by selling themselves or their children as slaves. God had ordered rich people and creditors not to take advantage of those people during their time of extreme need (Deuteronomy 15:1-18). This woman's creditor was not acting in the spirit of God's law. Elisha would not turn her away.

2 KINGS 4:2-4

So 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 but a jar of oil."

Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors; empty vessels; do not gather just a few.

"And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones."

Elisha was eager to help the widow. The widow had nothing of value except a jar of olive oil, which was used for food and fuel. The sons of the prophets were poor. Their hearts were concerned about heavenly things, not the things of this world. Those in her community would most likely have sufficient means to help her. Elisha, therefore, was inquiring about what she had on hand to sell for money and found she had nothing to sell but one jar of oil. She was truly in a hopeless situation.

Elisha instructed her to collect empty jars from her neighbors. This might have seemed a foolish thing to do considering the circumstances. Why gather jars? What would she say when my neighbors ask about my request? Many thoughts must have overwhelmed this woman as she obeyed Elisha, but she was faithful to carry out his request.

Sometimes God wants us to step out in faith, just as this woman did. When we look at our resources and abilities, we might shrink away from such an act of faith. God is good and powerful. He is able to meet our physical needs, though we have no resources of our own. He is able meet our spiritual needs and use us for His glory, though we can offer nothing of ourselves—abilities, talents, etc. **God provides for all who come to Him for help.**

Paper Vessel

Use the "Paper Vessel" template to make your paper vessel. Using colored tissue paper, cut out several 1" squares of assorted colors. Give each child a copy of the template. Allow them to glue the squares of tissue to the vessel in order to make it beautiful. They can make stripes or other designs if they like. Allow them to glue over the lines. When filled in with colorful tissue paper, cut out the shape of the vessel. Allow the children to write their name on the back.

As an option you can put magnetic strips on the back to allow the vessel to hang on a metal surface. Encourage the children to take the vessel home as a reminder of the widow's faith in our story today.

2 KINGS 4:5-6

So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured it out.

Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "There is not another vessel." So the oil ceased.

The widow's faith can be measured by the number of jars she collected in response to the prophet's instructions. She could have brought only a small number back; but instead, she and her sons gathered many. It's so easy to put limitations on God, as we are so aware of the measure of our own abilities and resources. How many jars would you have collected?

Shutting the door behind her and her sons, the widow began to pour the oil. The oil was multiplied as she poured! God had miraculously provided for their needs. **God provides for all who come to Him for help.**

God provided oil enough to fill all the jars the woman had collected, all she felt she needed. God was faithful to meet her needs. What if she had refused to do as Elisha had told her? What if she had collected no jars or only a few—perhaps feeling foolish or having doubts about God’s concern for her? The widow displayed a firm belief in God’s power and goodness. Her faith took action—she collected the jars and began to fill them—and she found God to be true to meet her needs. What a beautiful picture of God’s provision.

May we never limit God in what He can do for us or through us. May we, as the widow, be willing trust in God wholly in our difficult circumstances or when we find ourselves completely dependant on Him. May we, as Elisha, have faith that God can do miracles to provide for His children and be willing to be an extension of God’s compassionate hand in their lives. Because Elisha believed God and was willing to be His instrument, the widow was spared much suffering and hardship. People with a heart for God have a heart for people.

Take It to the Lord!

In Bible times, vessels were used for many different things. Most were made out of clay. Today, we use many different types of containers: plastic, metal, clay. The Bible says that we should be vessels of honor. We should be filled with the Holy Spirit and carry the Word of God to those who do not know Jesus. We should also be a blessing to one another.

One of the ways that we can bless one another is by praying for one another. We can bring each other's needs to the Lord.

On a small piece of paper, have the children write one or two prayer needs. For the younger children, you can write the requests down for them. Tell the children not to write their names. Using one of the "unusual" vessels that you brought for the Attention Grabber, place all of the pieces of paper into it (make sure it is dry from the Attention Grabber activity). Mix up the papers and have everyone pull one out of the container. Then gather in a circle and pray for one another's needs.

2 KINGS 4:7

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 live on the rest."

God provides for all who come to Him for help, and as always, He is faithful. The widow returned to Elisha with the wonderful news of the miracle. He instructed her to use the oil to pay off her debt and then to live on the remainder. She now had the means to free herself from the financial obligation from her husband's creditors, allowing her sons to maintain their freedom. After all her financial obligations had been met, there would be enough money left over to take care of the daily needs of her and her sons.

Elisha, the man of God, instructed her well. It was important for her to get out from under the bondage of debt. The creditor must get his money so her family would not have to go into bondage.

Widows were always vulnerable, and the widow of a prophet would have been even more needy than other widows. Yet God miraculously cared for this faithful, dependant believer, and He will care for you. Trusting in God can turn a trial into a triumph. The Bible is filled with demonstrations of a caring and loving God helping His children who call upon Him in their time of need. **God provides for all who come to Him for help.**

What a joy it must have been for Elisha to be God's instrument in blessing this family. Perhaps you can be an Elisha to those around you. If you truly love God, you will love others, and desire to be available to God as an instrument of blessing in their lives. Galatians 6:10 states: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

Pouring Promises

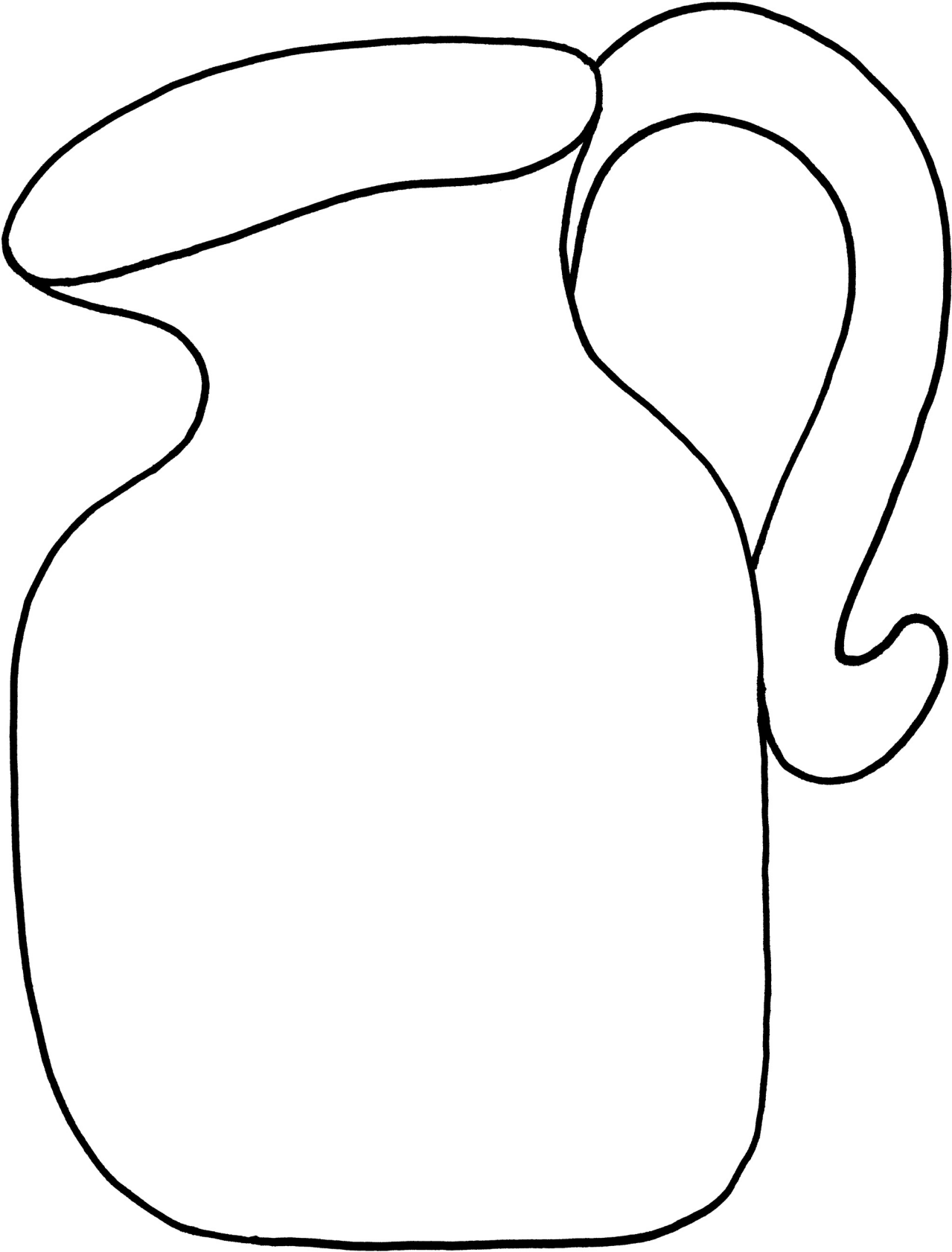
This can be a class project to place on the bulletin board. Using red butcher paper cut out a large heart (approximately 2' x 2'). Cut out the Bible, the spout and the handle from the "Pouring Promises" template. On the heart draw lines, one for each child in your class. Ask each child to tell what promise in the Bible is hidden in his or her heart. If they have a hard time thinking of one, help them.

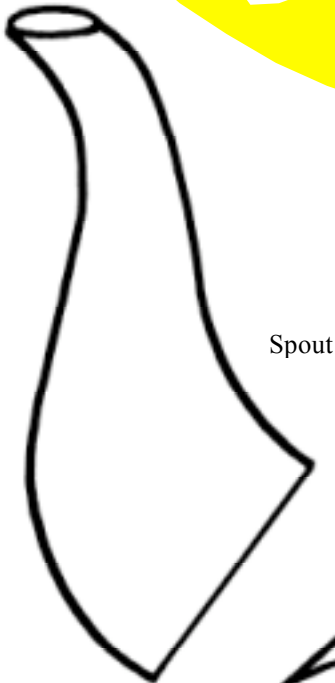
Write down their names and their promises on the heart. You can split the class into teams. Some can work on cutting, others on coloring the spout, handle and Bible, and others who can write on the heart. Staple the heart to the class bulletin board and then staple the handle and spout to either side of the Bible. Next staple the Bible over the heart to represent God's Word being poured into our hearts.

Explain to the children that we need to hide God's promises in our hearts.

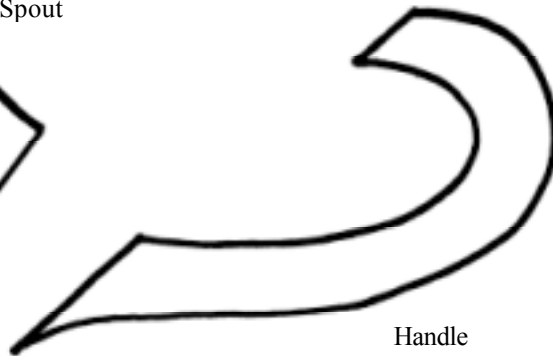
PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for the goodness of the Lord in providing for our every need. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.





Spout



Handle

"For all the promises
of God in Him are
Yes, and in Him
Amen, to the glory
of God through us."
2 Corinthians 1:20

"Through the Lord's
mercies we are not
consumed, because
His compassions fail
not. They are new
every morning;
Great is Your
faithfulness."
Lamentations 3:22-23