

Sermon on Give without expecting any returns and you will receive great returns

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Text:

2 Kings 4:8-16 ⁸ One day Elisha went to Shunem. And a well-to-do woman was there, who urged him to stay for a meal. So whenever he came by, he stopped there to eat. ⁹ She said to her husband, "I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God. ¹⁰ Let's make a small room on the roof and put in it a bed and a table, a chair and a lamp for him. Then he can stay there whenever he comes to us." ¹¹ One day when Elisha came, he went up to his room and lay down there. ¹² He said to his servant Gehazi, "Call the Shunammite." So he called her, and she stood before him. ¹³ Elisha said to him, "Tell her, 'You have gone to all this trouble for us. Now what can be done for you? Can we speak on your behalf to the king or the commander of the army?'" She replied, "I have a home among my own people." ¹⁴ "What can be done for her?" Elisha asked. Gehazi said, "Well, she has no son and her husband is old." ¹⁵ Then Elisha said, "Call her." So he called her, and she stood in the doorway. ¹⁶ "About this time next year," Elisha said, "you will hold a son in your arms." "No, my lord," she objected. "Don't mislead your servant, O man of God!"

1 Introduction

1.1 Giving without solicitation or expectation incurs favor

At Christmas last year we decided to bless someone. When they received the gift they were surprised. They were not expecting any gift at all let alone the size of the gift. The person called and explained how that gift had met a dire need they had. They proceeded to utter many blessings upon us. And I believe that these blessings have materialized this year.

In the Spring of 2007, my wife and I decided to bless a man of God with an unsolicited gift. It was not something we were expected to do nor was it something he was expecting from us! He prayed so many blessings upon us to the extent that I believed something great was going to come to us. In the Fall of 2007, we received a surprising reward.

Try this experiment. Just pick someone at random and every week you see him give him a gift. Soon the person is going to want to do something special for you.

1.2 Emulate the Shunammite woman's giving to receive your blessings

Our Bible passage tells us of a Shunammite woman who decided to bless a man of God, Elisha, just because he was a man of God without expecting anything and not in response to anything the Elisha had done for her. In the process she received the greatest desire of her heart without even asking for it. We should emulate the Shunammite woman and give not in response to anything a man of God has done for us nor in anticipation of what a man of God might do for us. Give to the man of God just because he is a man of God. Give to your pastor and you will receive great returns from God. Give to your minister and God will bless you greatly. As we enter the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons I call upon you to give to your pastor in appreciation to God. Surprise him with something big. Don't give a token. Give something big and God will bless you greatly as he did the Shunammite woman.

2 Elisha depended on God's children to provide for him

Elisha was a traveling prophet. Many times we forget that the Bible prophets were human not supernatural beings. Like we do, they got tired, experienced hunger, became thirsty, and their clothes wore out. One major difference was that these prophets couldn't hop into a vehicle to go preach the word or perform miracles in a faraway town. And while they were away they couldn't spend the night in a Holiday Inn or a Motel 6. Every once in a while they might find someone kind enough to let them spend the night in their house but this was never guaranteed. After a day's work in a remote town they had to go wait in the town square to see if someone will take them home for the night. Therefore the prophets were fully reliant on God's provision for shelter, food, and clothing.

As the servant of the Most High God, Elisha understood that God would provide for him, but he didn't know exactly how. Would he drop food from the sky like he did for the Israelites when they were in desert? Would he build a house for him to stay in when he traveled to those remote places? Elisha did not know. This is the same situation for ministers of the church today. Our passage teaches us that God used the Shunammite woman to provide for the needs of Elisha. She gave to the man of God without expecting any returns and ended up received great returns.

3 The Shunammite woman gifted a room to Elisha

In verse 8-10 of our text, the Bible explains that as part of his evangelism Elisha would travel from Samaria to Shunem. So while Elisha was in Shunem it was inevitable that he would become hungry and need a place to stay. He was always invited to dine at the house of a Shunammite couple and stay in their living room. It came to the point that Elisha was in Shunem so often that the Shunammite woman suggested to her husband that they build a room in their house especially for him. This was not a guest room for any guest to stay in nor was this a room they already had that was to be converted into a room for Elisha. This was a room that was BUILT solely for Elisha. This woman understood that Elisha was a man of God and therefore opened her house to him.

We can say the following about the Shunammite's woman's proposal:

1. It did not come from the husband as men are often oblivious to the needs of a man of God.
2. It was unsolicited by Elisha. We had a visiting pastor from another church whom, out of courtesy, we allowed to minister in our church. Then he went around soliciting gifts from members telling them it was their duty to give to him as a man of God. That behavior is not proper. Elisha never asked for gifts.
3. It was not in response to any favor Elisha had done for the woman.
4. It was not in expectation of any favor the woman was asking Elisha.
5. The proposal meant a substantial gift to Elisha, which represented a good amount of the woman's resources.
6. She, understanding that he was a man of God, permanently opened her home and her resources to him just for being a man of God.

O, that you may bless the man of God, your pastor, just for being a man of God!

4 The Shunammite woman's giving attitude was solely to make the man of God comfortable

Verse eight of our text says that "whenever he came by" meaning whenever he came to Shunem, he would stop by their house to eat. The Shunammite woman could have easily thought feeding him was good enough and she didn't need to do anything else. She, however, realized

that he is an anointed man of God and so she went the distance and gave more of her resources to him.

Many times people give with the expectation that they will receive something in return but this was not the case with the Shunammite woman. Even now when asked to give in appreciation of a man of God, people think first of what he has done for them in the past. When asking her husband to build a room for Elisha she could have said: “I know this man is a miracle worker, let’s create a room for him” or “we need a blessing over our crops, prepare a room for him” but she didn’t. Her attitude for giving was to give in order to make the man of God very comfortable without any expectation of receiving anything from God.

How many of you have purposed to make your pastor, a man of God, very comfortable through your giving? The Shunammite woman portioning off an area in their home solely for Elisha is comparable to allocating a portion of your funds or resources to bless your pastor, a man of God. Your attitude should be like that of the Shunammite woman. Give generously without expecting any returns and you will receive great returns.

5 Elisha Blessed the Shunammite woman without her requesting it

5.1 The Shunammite woman refused Elisha’s offer to reward her

Elisha was puzzled and overwhelmed by this generous giving by the Shunammite woman. The giving stirred his soul and he wanted to bless the woman in some way. So, as we read in verse thirteen of our text, Elisha summoned the Shunammite woman and asked her what she would like in return for all she had done for him. Rather than jumping at the chance to ask for more servants, a larger home or more riches, she told him that she was fine and didn’t need anything. Elisha even offered to speak to the King and the commander of the army on her behalf and she turned him down! This woman understood that it was more important to BE A BLESSING rather than to RECEIVE A BLESSING. She knew to give without expecting any returns. She just wanted to give to make the man of God comfortable. I am looking for someone to give generously to a man of God without regard for what he has done for you and what he might do for you!

5.2 Elisha identified her big need and supplied her need by the power of God

But Elisha was so determined to bless the Shunammite woman because of her unsolicited generosity that he turned to Gehazi and said, “‘*What can be done for her?*’ Gehazi said, ‘*Well, she has no son and her husband is old.*’ Then Elisha said, ‘*Call her.*’ So he called her, and she stood in the doorway. ‘*About this time next year,*’ Elisha said, ‘*you will hold a son in your arms.*’”

Because the Shunammite woman had done such an extraordinary thing for Elisha, he could not leave her household without blessing her family. Even with her insisting that she and her husband didn’t need anything Elisha decided to bless the family anyway. Due to her giving to the man of God, God through Elisha gave her what money could not buy and allowed her and her husband to conceive the child that would have otherwise been impossible for them to have.

5.3 Your giving will induce your pastor to ask God’s blessings upon your area of need

If you give generously to your pastor anytime he sees your gift something will stir his soul and he will plead to God to give you your heart’s desire. It is a human feeling. If you give generously to your pastor, I promise that God will give you your heart’s desires this time next year for God loves a cheerful giver and his Word tells us to give and it shall be given unto us. So I repeat, give to your pastor and you will receive more than you gave. Give without expecting any returns and you will receive greater returns.

6 Conclusion

God provides for ministers through his children. The Shunammite woman availed herself for God to use to gift a room to Elisha. Her giving attitude was to make the man of God comfortable. Her giving incurred Elisha’s favor. God through Elisha blessed her with what money could not buy. If you give to your pastor without regard to what he has done for you or might do for you, then you are opening the door to receive your most unexpected blessing.