

### Elevating God's Word

This talk is basically about putting God's Word above your situation, your circumstance and your life. God's Word is absolutely true and the Bible tells us that every bit of it is breathed by God. If we put the Word of God above everything we do, if we put it first – we can expect God to use us in incredible ways, we will always be in the will of God (because we will know it) and you'll see incredible answers to prayer and mighty things happen in and through your life!!

### Credit

Credit for the basic inspiration of this goes to a Matthew Ashimolowo talk from GOD TV.

### Bible Reading – 2 Kings 4.8-17

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. She said to her husband, "I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God. 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."

One day when Elisha came, he went up to his room and lay down there. He said to his servant Gehazi, "Call the Shunammite." So he called her, and she stood before him. 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."

"What can be done for her?" Elisha asked. 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."

"No, my lord," she objected. "Don't mislead your servant, O man of God!"

But the woman became pregnant, and the next year about that same time she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her.

### Being kind and selfless – the Shunammite Guesthouse

Sometimes people do great acts of kindness for others. I heard of a vulnerable woman who went to America for a holiday. She got herself in a bit of a problem and needed help. She went to a local church who helped her out. A couple at the church put her and her daughter up in their house for a week. The kindness that the couple showed was incredible. To this day we'd like to know who they were to thank them. But they acted out of Christian compassion for this lady.

The Shunammite woman did something great for Elisha. We don't know her exact motives, but we can guess that her family struck up a good relationship with Elisha. They would prepare him food whenever he was passing (and they probably didn't always get advance notice as there were no cell phones!) This developed into a desire to make a small room for him to stay in. This was a great act of kindness. She also knew that he was a holy man of God. So she knew enough about him to know who he was – and we can probably say she had a respect for him and God. There is nothing to suggest that the Shunammite woman did anything for Elisha out of self-interest. We know this because when Elisha asked the woman what he could do for her, she was content, basically saying, "Thanks but I already have a nice home and husband here among my people."

## We can learn 4 things from this woman's attitude..

### Use your money, time, gifts wisely – give

She used her money to do good things for Elisha. She cooked for him and then built a room for him. How are you using the money and talents that God has given you? You can tell what your priorities are by the way you spend your money and your time. God alone is God. Make sure that nothing else comes before him. The Bible says many things about loving money.. You can't serve God and money, love of money is a root of evil that causes many griefs and can help lose your faith, and can rob you of contentment and trust in God..

Matthew 6:24 – "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

1 Timothy 6:10 – "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

Hebrews 13:5 – "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

## Making things happen and going the extra mile

She was a woman who made things happen and went beyond what others did. The woman was happy to provide a meal for Elisha when he was in the neighbourhood. But she was also motivated to have a room built. It was her concern, her determination and insights that meant she was able to do a great thing for Elisha. The question for us is whether we are committed to making a difference, having our eyes open, ready to allow God to use us and work through us? Ask God to show you something you can do for him or someone else, every day.

Men, lads – women often want you to take responsibility for things. Don't cop out of doing things and standing up, making a difference. Women – you can make a massive difference. Don't ever doubt yourself or think that you are somehow second best to men.

The Shunammite woman makes a great example of a determined, faith-filled and loving woman, wife and mother. That's the kind of woman that makes a difference for God – and one that most Christian guys like!

## Elisha the “holy man of God”

She noticed that Elisha was a man of God. It is significant that the Bible mentions the woman saying to her husband, *“I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God.”* This was important and she noticed. Women often notice the details that blokes miss. If you're a lad, you may know that women often tell a story by giving you all the details. If you're a lady, you will be frustrated that the men around you only seem to give the basic outlines and not the details.. !

The Shunammite woman realised who Elisha was and that he carried something that was from God. She recognised God's hand in Elisha's life. The room that she had built was on the roof. Maybe they had no other space and maybe this is where 'extensions' were built, but we know that she was well-off and presumably could have built a room for him somewhere else.

So why was the room for Elisha on the roof? Well, we can see a spiritual reason. Was it just that the Shunammite woman put the man of God on the roof for him to be closer to God? No, I think it is more. She was elevating God and the man who carried God's Word, above her life and her circumstances. Putting the man of God on the roof meant she was giving him and God's Word great significance. She elevated it above her. We need to do the same.

No matter what you are going through, God is faithful and his Word is true. His Word promises you many things. Take time to learn the Bible, pray verses over your life and other people's lives. Refuse to listen to the lies that come from the enemy and your own mind. Instead, make up your mind to always put God and his Word first. And then watch God build your faith and do incredible mind-blowing things!! What areas in your life do you need to elevate the Word of God above today? Make a list, have a search in the Bible and then start to believe what God says in his Word, rather than what you feel or think or see. Keep on and see God work.

## She was not self-seeking

We live in a very selfish world. When I look at my own life, I am often really challenged about how selfish I am, how much I try to serve me, talk about me, think about me.. A selfless life means a life where we live 'less' (without) self. You know the kinds of people who do so much for others with a real love and joy and kindness. They are selfless people. Mother Theresa was one of these examples, but there are many people like it in the church today. Our example is Jesus.

In Philippians 2 we learn a little bit about Jesus: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!”

The Christian life is one where we are motivated to look out for and serve others because (a) we love God and (b) we love people. Hope 2008 and many social action projects in your community are ways to show God's love and serve people. But it needs to go beyond this to our daily lives, our home lives and our interaction with people around us. I heard of a guy talking about married life recently. He said, "One day I wondered why my wife hadn't picked some socks up off the floor. Then I realised it was just as easy for me to pick them up, than for her to do it." You see, you can serve the people in your family by doing very small things, small acts of kindness. People will notice, they will ask and they will see God through you. However, if we are selfish and just like everyone else, then how will people see God in you? Think about practical things you can do to serve other people.

## The Reward

God is so much bigger than we can possibly think or imagine. The Bible promises in Ephesians 3.20 that God is *"able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us."*

The Shunammite woman simply wanted to do something for Elisha and for God. She wasn't selfish, but put herself out to help and to be kind. Although she was content with what she had, Elisha's servant saw that she really wanted a child. So he spoke, *"About this time next year," Elisha said, "you will hold a son in your arms."* She was so overwhelmed with the hope of this happening she said, *"No, my lord," she objected. "Don't mislead your servant, O man of God!"* But the Bible tells us that sure enough, *"the woman became pregnant, and the next year about that same time she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her."*

Out of the woman's selfless act, came a blessing (good thing) from God that was beyond her wildest dreams. We know this because she was so happy at the thought of this happening, she basically said, 'please don't get my hopes up! I want a child sooooo much!' Note the role that Elisha's servant played in this – he was the one who noticed that she didn't have a child (and obviously wanted one). We need to listen to the insights that others have from God, no matter what their 'status'!

Jesus tells us (Matthew 6.33) to "seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Jesus was talking about clothes, food and the things of life. Listen, God knows exactly what you need and he will provide for you in every way. Elisha had insight into what the Shunammite woman did not have but obviously had in her heart. What he wants is a heart that burns for him, loves him, obeys him and seeks him, puts him first. THEN, these other things will be given to you. We don't seek God in order to get these things we need, but when we seek God and put him first, he will do these things for us.

The Word of God is powerful and when God speaks something over your life, he will do it. As the Shunammite woman put God first (through Elisha), she was given the desires of her heart. Psalm 37.4-6 says, *"Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this."* Delighting yourself in God unconditionally (seeking his face not his hand, as Joyce Meyer puts it), will bring about God working in you and bringing the God-given desires of your heart to pass. If God has said it, put it in you.. It will come to pass.

Be encouraged today (and this is for someone reading this talk..) – Sometimes your miracle is just around the corner. The Shunammite woman had to wait around a year after God brought her an unexpected blessing through the words of Elisha (note the power of words).. Listen to God's Word again – *the woman became pregnant, and the next year about that same time she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her.* *“the woman became pregnant, and the next year about that same time she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her.”*

God is faithful and **WILL** do what he has promised.