



**Individual Responsibility**  
**Honor-Support Family Leadership**  
**The Shunammite Couple**  
*Living in the Image of God*  
*Module 04 Session 12*

Banking Blessings Ministry  
 San Antonio, Texas  
 USA



**Living in the Image of God**

- God creates every person to represent him in interactions with others
- Be for others what God would be for them if he lived with us in human form
- He provides resources for people to perform the responsibilities
- He blesses those that do

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**Living in the Image of God**

- Program seeks to understand
- Meaning of *Living in the Image of God*
- Resources God has provided to guide us
- Human responsibilities
- Benefits of *Living in the Image of God*


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**What We Will Learn**

- Family leadership based on bible examples
- Shunammite couple. Adam and Eve. Abraham and Sarah. Isaac and Rebekah. Mary and Joseph
- Honor and support family leadership
- Husband as overall leader
- Wife as leader in specific matters and custodian of specific information

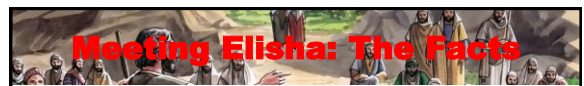
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**What We Will Learn cont'd**

- Shunammite couple
- Well-suited for the study
- Abundantly blessed through lasting close relationship with Prophet Elisha
- Interactions in three events highlight honor and support for family leadership
- Meeting Elisha
- Long-term shelter for Elisha
- "SOS" call to Elisha
- 2 Kings 4:8-37 and 8:1-6

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**Meeting Elisha: The Facts**

**2 Kings 4:8** 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.

- Woman met an interesting stranger
- Maybe at a public event
- Did not know he was Prophet Elisha
- Brought stranger home to share a meal with her and husband

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### Meeting Elisha: The Facts cont'd

- Interactions in sharing a meal proved a pleasant experience for Elisha
- And for the Shunammite couple

**2 Kings 4:8** ...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.

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### Meeting Elisha: Discussion

- Husband honored and supported wife's leadership in a call to compassion
- Woman recognized a need
- Cared about the needy
- Committed on behalf of family to doing what they could to alleviate the need
- Call to compassion came to family through the woman as leader and her husband as supporter

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### Meeting Elisha: Discussion cont'd

- Husband accepted stranger
- Based only on wife's information
  - Husband's habit of trusting wife's judgment
  - Wife's habit of protecting husband's trust
- Husband honored and supported wife's leadership in a call to compassion
- Family established lasting close relationship with Elisha without knowing him as Prophet

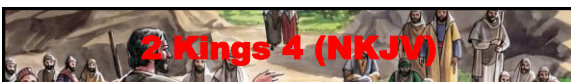
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### Long-Term Shelter for Elisha: The Facts

- Woman sensed stranger was man of God
- Proposed providing long-term shelter in their home for the stranger
- Honored husband's leadership
- Asked with humility: Promise of obedience
- And assurance husband will consider the proposal in good faith
- 2 Kings 4:9-10

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### 2 Kings 4 (NKJV)

**9** And she said to her husband, "Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly.

**10** Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there."

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### Shelter Proposal: Discussion

- Woman had "vision" and "blueprint"
- Reason to believe she had a call from God
- Had access to needed resources
- Could have proceeded without consultation
- Recognized husband's leadership
  - Home modification
  - Required husband's approval
- Tabled proposal with husband
- In humility: with promise of obedience

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### Shelter Proposal

- Honored husband's leadership
- Asked with humility
- Promise of obedience: will accept approval or disapproval but will appreciate approval
- Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall... [2 Kings 4:10]
- Did not say "I want to do" or "I am doing"
- Trusted husband will consider in good faith

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### Call to Compassion Shunammite's Experience

- Couple could receive call to compassion through husband or wife
- One as leader, the other as supporter
- Shunammite wife recognized the need
- Cared about the needy
- Proposed a plan to alleviate the need
- Husband joined wife to commit to the plan
- Worked together to complete responsibility

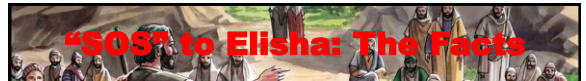
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### Unexpected Child

- Shunammite couple did not have a child prior to their association with Elisha
- Did not expect to have a child
- Elisha interceded on their behalf and they had a son
- 2 Kings 4:11–17 [Not read in session]
- Discuss an event that involved the son

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### "SOS" to Elisha: The Facts

- Father sends sick child home to mother
- Mother cared for child but child dies
- Placed dead child on Elisha's bed
- Requested transportation from husband
- To visit man of God at Mount Carmel
- 2 Kings 4:18–25 [Selections]

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### "SOS" to Elisha: The Facts cont'd

**2 Kings 4:22** Then she called to her husband, and said, "Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back."

**23** So he said, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath."

And she said, "It is well."

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### "SOS" to Elisha: The Facts cont'd

- Reassured husband with "it is well"
- Husband provided transportation
- Woman went to Mount Camel to appeal to Elisha regarding their child
- Elisha returned with her and restored the dead child to life

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## **"SOS" to Elisha: Discussion**

- Couple accepted division of responsibilities
- Husband sent sick child to his wife in order to focus on their farm work
- Wife accepted responsibility to care for child
- When the child died, she stepped into her responsibility as spiritual leader to take their grievance to the man of God at Mount Carmel

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## **"SOS" to Elisha: Discussion cont'd**

- Honored husband's leadership by requesting transportation from him
- Informed him of trip to Mount Carmel
- Requested transportation from him
- Husband accepted "it is well" as explanation and did not press for further justification
- Honored and supported wife's leadership as spiritual gateway for family

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## **What We Learned**

- The Shunammite couple recognized division of family leadership
- Husband was overall leader
- Wife was spiritual gateway for family
- And occasional leader in specific matters
- They honored and supported each other in family leadership

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## **What We Learned cont'd**

- Their honor and support for family leadership resulted in several benefits
- Blessed through interactions with Elisha
- Miraculous birth to a son
- Son restored to life after a sudden death
- On Elisha's advice, family relocated to avoid severe famine (2 Kings 8:1)
- Recovered their lost property after they returned from exile (2 Kings 8:3-6)

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# Individual Responsibility to Honor-Support Family Leadership: Shunammite Couple

## Living in the Image of God M04S12

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Bible accounts of the Shunammite couple appear tailor-made for understanding the individual responsibility to honor and support family leadership among a husband and wife. The couple was abundantly blessed through lasting close relationship with Prophet Elisha, which occurred because they honored and supported each other's leadership of their family affairs. The husband was the overall leader while his wife was the spiritual gateway for the family and occasional leader in specific matters. Their honor and support for family leadership resulted in several benefits, through the relationship with Prophet Elisha: such as, their miraculous birth to a son, the son was restored to life after a sudden death, the family relocated to avoid a severe famine on the advice of Prophet Elisha, and they recovered all their lost property after they returned from exile.

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This is the first in a bible study series to understand the individual responsibility regarding family leadership. The series is based on examples of husband-wife interactions from the bible and will include a discussion of the Shunammite couple, Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Mary and Joseph. The discussion focuses on aspects of their husband-wife interactions that illustrate the individual responsibility to honor and support family leadership. The examples show the husband as overall leader with his wife as leader in specific matters and custodian of specific information.

The series begins with the Shunammite couple. We will see that several accounts from their life provide information that appears tailor-made for the study. The couple was abundantly blessed through lasting close relationship with Prophet Elisha, which was a direct result of their honor and support for each other's leadership of family affairs. We will discuss their interactions in three events that highlight their honor and support for family leadership: their first meeting with Elisha, events of providing long-term shelter for Elisha in their home, and an "SOS, that is, Save-Our-Soul" call to Elisha.

### Meeting Elisha: The Facts

The facts regarding the couple meeting Elisha are conveyed through one bible verse [2 Kings 4:8]: "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." The account conveys the following facts: The Shunammite woman met an interesting stranger, maybe at a public event. She did not know that the stranger was Prophet Elisha. However, she recognized that the stranger needed rest and a home-cooked meal and took him home to share a meal with her and her husband.

Additionally, their interactions in sharing a meal proved a pleasant experience for Elisha and the Shunammite couple. This understanding is based on the statement: "...So whenever he came by, he stopped there to eat" [2 Kings 4:8]. Also, the subsequent verse adds to the understanding: "She said to her husband, 'I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God'" [2 Kings 4:9]. That is, Prophet Elisha enjoyed his interactions with the couple and returned to their home frequently whenever he was in the area. Also, the wife (i.e., the Shunammite woman) realized he was a "holy man of God."

## Meeting Elisha: Discussion

We can understand better by seeing the event of their first meeting with Elisha as a call to compassion. The Shunammite woman recognized a need (i.e., a stranger that needed rest and a home-cooked meal); she cared about the needy (i.e., she cared about the stranger); and she committed on behalf of her family to doing what they could to alleviate the need. That is, a call to compassion came to the family through the woman as leader and her husband as supporter. The woman's husband honored and supported her leadership in responding to the call.

The husband accepted the stranger into their home based only on his wife's information. Likely because the husband had a habit of trusting his wife's judgment, and his wife had a habit of protecting her husband's trust. The woman accepted a call to compassion on behalf of her family, and her husband honored and supported his wife's leadership regarding the responsibility.

As a result, the Shunammite couple established a close relationship with Elisha without knowing that he was Prophet Elisha.

## Long-Term Shelter for Elisha: The Facts

The Shunammite couple built an addition to their home as long-term shelter for Elisha. Here are the facts. After their first meeting, Elisha visited the couple often and the woman sensed that he was a man of God: "And she said to her husband, 'Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly'" [2 Kings 4:9]. She proposed to her husband that they should build a long-term shelter in their home for the stranger: "Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there" [2 Kings 4:10].

In making the proposal, the woman honored her husband's overall leadership of the household. She asked with humility, that is, with a promise of obedience. Also, her approach to asking showed she believed her husband will consider the proposal in good faith.

## Shelter Proposal: Discussion

To understand the husband-wife interactions regarding the woman's proposal for a long-term shelter for Elisha, we need to understand that the woman had abundant reason to believe that God called her to undertake the project but still sought her husband's approval. She had a vision for providing comfortable shelter in their home for a man she realized was a holy man of God. Also, she had a clear blueprint for a suitable basic accommodation. Further, she had access to the needed resources, because the bible described her as well-to-do. That is, she had the vision, she had the blueprint, and she had the resources. Therefore, she could have proceeded to work on the shelter without consulting her husband.

However, she recognized her husband as overall leader of the household, which means that his approval was needed for the type of home modification she contemplated. Therefore, she tabled a proposal with her husband, in humility: that is, with a promise of obedience.

Although God had given her a vision and blueprint, she needed to honor and support her husband's leadership of the household in seeking to implement the vision. The language of her proposal conveyed a promise of obedience: that she will accept an approval or disapproval but

will appreciate an approval. "Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall..." [2 Kings 4:10]. She did not say "I want to make a small upper room on the wall" or "I am making a small upper room on the wall." She sought her husband's approval and trusted him to consider the proposal in good faith.

Their experience regarding the project helps us understand that a couple could receive a call to compassion through the husband or wife: one as leader and the other as supporter. In this example, the wife recognized the need, cared about the needy, and proposed a plan to alleviate the need. Her husband joined her to commit to the plan and they worked together to complete the responsibility.

## **"SOS" to Elisha: The Facts**

To continue with the next segment of our discussion of the Shunammite couple, let us note that the couple did not have a child prior to their association with Elisha. They did not expect to have a child, because the husband was old [2 Kings 4:14]: "'What can be done for her?' Elisha asked. Gehazi said, 'She has no son, and her husband is old.'" However, Prophet Elisha interceded on their behalf and they had a son: "'About this time next year,' Elisha said, 'you will hold a son in your arms'" [2 Kings 4:16]. And she did: "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" [2 Kings 4:17].

As the child grew, one day he fell sick while visiting with his father in the farm. The man sent the sick child home to his mother. The woman cared for the child but the child died. She placed the dead child on Elisha's bed and requested her husband to provide her transportation to visit with Elisha at Mount Carmel: "Then she called to her husband, and said, 'Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back'" [2 Kings 4:22]. The man wondered why and asked for an explanation. But all his wife said was "It is well" [2 Kings 4:23].

The husband wanted to know more about the reason for the woman's planned trip to meet Elisha at Mount Camel. However, the woman did not provide any more information, but reassured him by saying "it is well." The husband provided transportation as his wife requested. She went to Mount Camel to appeal to Elisha regarding their child. Elisha returned with her and restored the dead child to life.

## **"SOS" to Elisha: Discussion**

The couple accepted divided responsibilities to take care of their farm work and sick child at the same time. The husband sent the sick child home to his wife in order to focus on their farm work. The wife accepted responsibility to care for the child. When the child died, she stepped into her responsibility as spiritual gateway for the family, to take their grievance to the man of God at Mount Camel.

The woman honored her husband's leadership by requesting transportation from him. She informed him of her planned trip to Mount Carmel and requested transportation. Her husband accepted "it is well" as sufficient explanation for the trip, and approved the transportation request without pressing for further justification. He honored and supported his wife's leadership as spiritual gateway for the family.

## Summary of What We Learned

Bible accounts of the Shunammite couple help us to understand the individual responsibility to honor and support family leadership among a husband and wife. The couple was abundantly blessed through lasting close relationship with Prophet Elisha, which occurred because they honored and supported each other's leadership of their family affairs.

The husband was the overall leader while his wife was the spiritual gateway for the family and occasional leader in specific matters. Their honor and support for family leadership resulted in several benefits, through the relationship with Prophet Elisha: such as, their miraculous birth to a son, the son was restored to life after a sudden death, the family relocated to avoid a severe famine on the advice of Prophet Elisha, and they recovered all their lost property after they returned from exile.

We did not discuss the last two benefits in this study, but 2 Kings 8:1–6 provides the information.

**Key Words:** Elisha, Family Leadership, Husband, Individual Responsibility, Shunammite, Spiritual Gateway, Wife