

21.04 Elisha and the Shunammite Woman (2 Kings 4:8–37)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. They also indicate answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- A long robe and a belt

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *hospitality/to be hospitable*: making people feel welcome in one’s home
- *a room on the roof*: Houses at that time almost always had a flat roof; to build a room on a roof was no problem.
- *death*: Ask students if they have ever attended a funeral. If so, they may have seen the body of the dead person in a casket. Death is the cessation of life. Dead bodies are cold because warm blood is no longer pumping through the body.
- *to gird up*: to tuck a long robe into a belt in order to work or run [demonstrate]
- *mouth-to-mouth resuscitation*: a method to attempt to revive a dead person by putting one’s mouth on the mouth of the victim and breathing into that person. It must be done soon after the person dies and often does not work.

Scripture: (ESV)

2 Kings 4:8 One day Elisha went on to Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to eat some food. So whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there to eat food. 9 And she said to her husband, “Behold now, I know that this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way. 10 Let us make a small room on the roof with walls and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that whenever he comes to us, he can go in there.”

11 One day he came there, and he turned into the chamber and rested there. 12 And he said to Gehazi his servant, “Call this Shunammite.” When he had called her, she stood before him. 13 And he said to him, “Say now to her, ‘See, you have taken all this trouble for us; what is to be done for you? Would you have a word spoken on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?’” She answered, “I dwell among my own people.” 14 And he said, “What then is to be done for her?” Gehazi answered, “Well, she has no son, and her husband is old.” 15 He said, “Call her.” And when he had called her, she stood in the doorway. 16 And he said, “At this season, about this time next year, you shall embrace a son.” And she said, “No, my lord, O man of God; do not lie to your servant.” 17 But the woman conceived, and she bore a son about that time the following spring, as Elisha had said to her.

18 When the child had grown, he went out one day to his father among the reapers. 19 And he said to his father, “Oh, my head, my head!” The father said to his servant, “Carry him to his mother.” 20 And when he had lifted him and brought him to his mother, the child sat on her lap till noon, and then he died. 21 And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God and shut the door behind him and went out. 22 Then she called to her husband and said, “Send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that I may quickly go to the man of God and come back again.” 23 And he said, “Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath.” She said, “All is well.” 24 Then she saddled the donkey, and she said to her servant, “Urge the animal on; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you.” 25 So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehazi his servant, “Look, there is the Shunammite. 26 Run at once to meet her and say to her, ‘Is all well with you? Is all well with your husband? Is all well with the child?’” And she answered, “All is well.” 27 And when she came to the mountain to the man of God, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came to push her away. But the man of God said, “Leave her alone, for she is in bitter distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me.” 28 Then she said, “Did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me?’” 29 He said to Gehazi, “Tie up your garment and take my staff in your hand and go. If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not reply. And lay my staff on the face of the child.” 30 Then the mother of the child said, “As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So he arose and followed her. 31 Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the face of the child, but there was no sound or sign of life. Therefore he returned to meet him and told him, “The child has not awakened.”

32 When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. 33 So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord. 34 Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. 35 Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. 36 Then he summoned Gehazi and said, “Call this Shunammite.” So he called her. And when she came to him, he said, “Pick up your son.” 37 She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground. Then she picked up her son and went out.

Introduction/Review:

Have you known someone at whose house you always felt welcome? Maybe it's grandma and grandpa's house. When they invite you to a meal, you just feel so at home there. My husband and I have known people who invited us to their house often and made us feel so at home that we just liked to be there. When Pastor and I were first married, there was the _____ family. When we moved to our present home, there was a lady who often invited us to a meal. These people showed *hospitality*; they were being *hospitable*. Hospitality is a very important principle for God's people to practice.

Story:

Today's story is about a hospitable woman. She lived in a town named Shunem. [Locate the places mentioned as you come to them in this story.] It was about 12 miles southwest of the south end of the Sea of Galilee. Elisha seemed to like to go to Mount Carmel (about fifteen more miles down the road from Shunem), and this town seems to have been on the way from Samaria to Mount Carmel. ✓Perhaps Elisha had preached in Shunem one day, and the woman and her husband had invited Elisha and his servant, Gehazi, to come to their house for dinner. The man and woman were wealthy, and it was no problem for them to feed two extra people. Elisha and Gehazi ✓felt so welcome and well fed in this home that whenever they passed through the town of Shunem, they stopped by to talk to the man and woman and to eat a meal. ✓“No problem!” insisted the woman. “We are so glad to have you visit us. Come by any time you want to. You can count on a meal at our house.”

One day the woman said to her husband, “I know 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 through Shunem.”

“Good idea!” replied the husband, and he set about to getting the room built on top of the house.

This was a great place for Elisha! He could go up to this room just to rest a while on his journey or to stay overnight or to pray or whatever he wanted to do, and he could do it without disturbing the man and his wife downstairs. Elisha was truly grateful for this wonderful provision for his needs.

One day when Elisha had gone up to this room and was lying on his bed, he thought about how grateful he was for the woman's kind hospitality. “Gehazi,” he called, “ask the Shunammite to come here.”

So Gehazi called, “Shunammite Lady, Elisha wants to talk to you.” The lady walked upstairs and stood before Elisha.

Rather than speak directly to the woman, for ✓perhaps that was not appropriate behavior in those days, Elisha spoke to Gehazi. “Gehazi, tell her this: ‘You have gone to all this trouble for us. Now what can we do for you? Can we speak to the king about you? Can we speak to the commander of the army for you?’”

The woman replied, “I am content just to live here among my people.” So, did she want the king to help her? [No.] Did she care to be honored by the commander of the army? [No.] In other words, she was happy with her life as it was, ✓except . . . for . . . maybe . . . one thing . . . that only she and her husband and God knew. But she was not about to tell this man of God. Besides, she really was happy with her life as it was.

She went back downstairs, but Elisha still was wondering what he could do for this great woman. “Gehazi, what can be done for her?” he asked.

“Well, she has no son, and her husband is old,” answered Gehazi.

“Yes! That’s just the thing. ✓Every Israelite woman wants to be a mother. Call her back, Gehazi.”

When the woman came back upstairs, she stood in the doorway while Elisha talked to her. “About this time next year,” he said, “you will hold a son in your arms.”

“No, my lord,” the lady said in disbelief. “Please don’t deceive me! O man of God, please don’t give me false hope.”

But Elisha did not give false hope, for, indeed, the woman did have a son and held him in her arms just as Elisha had told her.

✓Four, five, six years, perhaps more, passed, and the boy grew. One day he went out to see his father in the field when, suddenly, he grew sick. “My head, my head,” he cried to his father.

His father called a servant. “Carry my son to his mother.” So the servant lifted the boy and carried him back to the house, where he sat on his mother’s lap. But at noon this only son of the great woman died. Mother carried his lifeless body up the stairs to the room of Elisha, who had gone to Mount Carmel. She laid her son’s body on Elisha’s bed, left the room, shut the door, walked down the stairs, and went to her husband in the field.

“Please let me have a servant and a donkey so that I may go to the man of God quickly and return,” she requested.

“Why go to him today?” the husband asked. “It’s not a special day for our religion.”

“All is well,” answered the woman, and she saddled the donkey, saying to the servant, “Go fast. Don’t slow down for me unless I say so.” She and the servant hurried down the road to Mount Carmel.

Elisha saw the woman and servant from a distance and said to Gehazi, “Look! There’s the Shunammite! Run to meet her and ask her, ‘Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is your child all right?’”

Gehazi did what he was told, but the woman answered only, “Everything is all right.”

However, despite what she said, her next actions showed that everything was not all right, for when she reached Elisha, she bowed to the ground and took hold of his feet and wouldn’t let go.

Gehazi was indignant. The lady had always been so proper, but now she was actually touching the man of God! He came over to push her away, but Elisha knew that something was desperately wrong.

“Leave her alone!” he commanded. “She is in great distress, but the Lord has not shown me what is wrong nor told me why something has happened.”

“Did I ask you for a son?” cried the woman. “Didn’t I tell you, ‘Don’t raise my hopes’?”

Still Elisha did not know the whole story; he just realized something was wrong with the son.

“Gehazi,” he called. “Gird up your robe so that you can run. Take my staff in your hand and run. As you run, if you meet someone, do not even say hello to him nor say hello to anyone who says hello to you. Lay my staff on the boy’s face. Now, go!”

Gehazi took off, reached Elisha’s room, found the boy, and put Elisha’s staff on the boy’s face. But the boy did not respond. He was dead. Gehazi turned to go back to Elisha.

Meanwhile, rather than go with Gehazi back to her son, the woman did not move. She clung to Elisha’s feet and said, “As surely as the Lord lives and you live, I will not leave you,” meaning, “You, Elisha, must come, not just Gehazi.” So Elisha followed the woman back to her house.

On the way they met Gehazi, who said, “The boy did not awaken.”

When Elisha reached the house, ✓he realized the enormity of the problem, for he found the boy lying dead on his bed. He went in, shut the door on the two of them, and prayed to the Lord. Then, much like mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, he placed himself over the boy’s body—eyes to eyes, mouth to mouth, hands to hands. [Teacher, facing the students, hold your hands up even with your head as if they were touching the boy. Pause to show time passing. Then show a wondering look as if there is a change in the boy’s body.] What was happening? Why, the boy’s body was growing warm! [Resume your teaching stance.]

Elisha turned away from the boy and walked back and forth in the room. Then he again placed himself on the boy’s body. This time, the boy sneezed—[Teacher, with your eyes closed, “sneeze” seven times, counting each sneeze with uplifted fingers]—seven times and opened his eyes. [Teacher, slowly open your eyes.] He was alive!

“Gehazi!” summoned Elisha. “Go get the Shunammite!”

When the woman came—✓eagerly, I imagine—Elisha said, “Take your son.” Seeing her son was alive and being full of gratitude, the woman came in, fell at Elisha’s feet, and bowed to the ground, ✓in praise to God. Then she took her son and went home.

What a mighty God we serve! He is the true God who can make a dead person live. The Bible says we are all born “dead” in trespasses and sins—spiritually dead, unable to do anything to merit God’s approval. It takes just as much power for God to raise us from this spiritual death as it took to raise this boy and Christ from the dead, but God is able. Repent of your sin. Trust Christ to give you spiritual life.

Lessons from This Lesson:

- We see Jesus:
Jesus raised the dead to life by a mere command because He is God.

Activities:

- Play dough: a house with a room on the roof. More creative students may also build stairs
- Snack: Sugar cookies in rectangular shape (for Elisha’s room) with knife marks for a door
- Sing “What a Mighty God We Serve” found below.
- Try walking in a long robe and then run with one tucked into a belt. (Pretest this activity and do it with care.)
- Discuss “Why did this boy die?” Was it because of sin? [No. It was for the glory of God.]
- Discuss why the woman said, “All is well.” Was she lying? Did she have great faith that all would be well?

Here is a more likely explanation: The Hebrew word is merely *peace*. In other words, the woman was

saying in one word, "Trouble me not with inquiries, only let me do as I wish. My going will not be troublesome to Elisha. Peace be to you; farewell. Be content and let me go" (Albert Barnes in his *Notes on the Bible* and Matthew Poole in his *Commentary* at [2 Kings 4:23 Commentaries: He said, "Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath." And she said, "It will be well."](#) ([biblehub.com](#)).

- Make houses with a room on the roof using boxes.
- Review Questions: (Game: A student who answers a question correctly may pretend to sneeze. If all the questions are answered correctly, all the students may in unison pretend to sneeze seven times.)
 1. Describe the wealthy woman in Shunem. She was _____, meaning she made Elisha feel welcome in her home. [Hospitable.]
 2. What did the woman and her husband make for Elisha? [A room on the roof of their house.]
 3. What did God give to the woman of Shunem? [A son.]
 4. What happened to the son? [He died.]
 5. What did the woman do after her son died? [Put him on Elisha's bed and went to look for Elisha.]
 6. How did God bring the boy back to life? [Elisha lay on him, sort of like mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, and the boy became warm, sneezed seven times, and opened his eyes.]
 7. What did the woman do when she found her son was alive? [Fell at Elisha's feet and then took her son home.]

Memory Verse[s]:

Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. 6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. 7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. 10 "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" 11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Handwork:

- Color walls furniture of an empty room found below. Cut out the furniture and glue in place in the room.

hospitality

room on the roof

death

to gird up

mouth-to-mouth resuscitation

ISRAEL

IN THE TIME OF ELISHA

Mount
Carmel

Shunem

River
Jordan

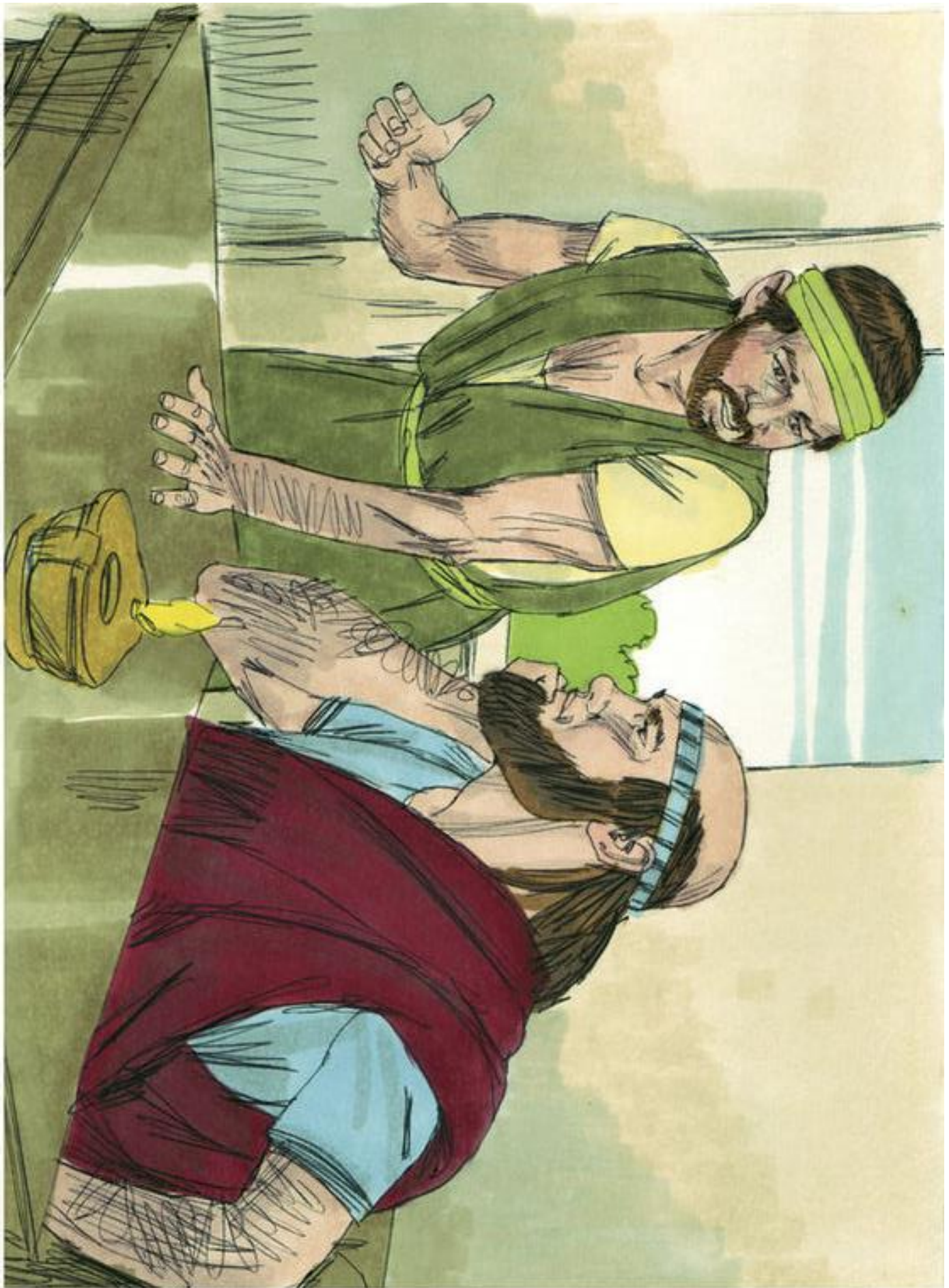
Lake
Galilee

• Samaria





[FreeBibleimages :: Elisha: A dead boy raised to life :: Elisha prays and a dead boy comes back to life \(2 Kings 4:8-37\)](#)



[FreeBibleimages](#) :: Elisha: A dead boy raised to life :: Elisha prays and a dead boy comes back to life (2 Kings 4:8-37)



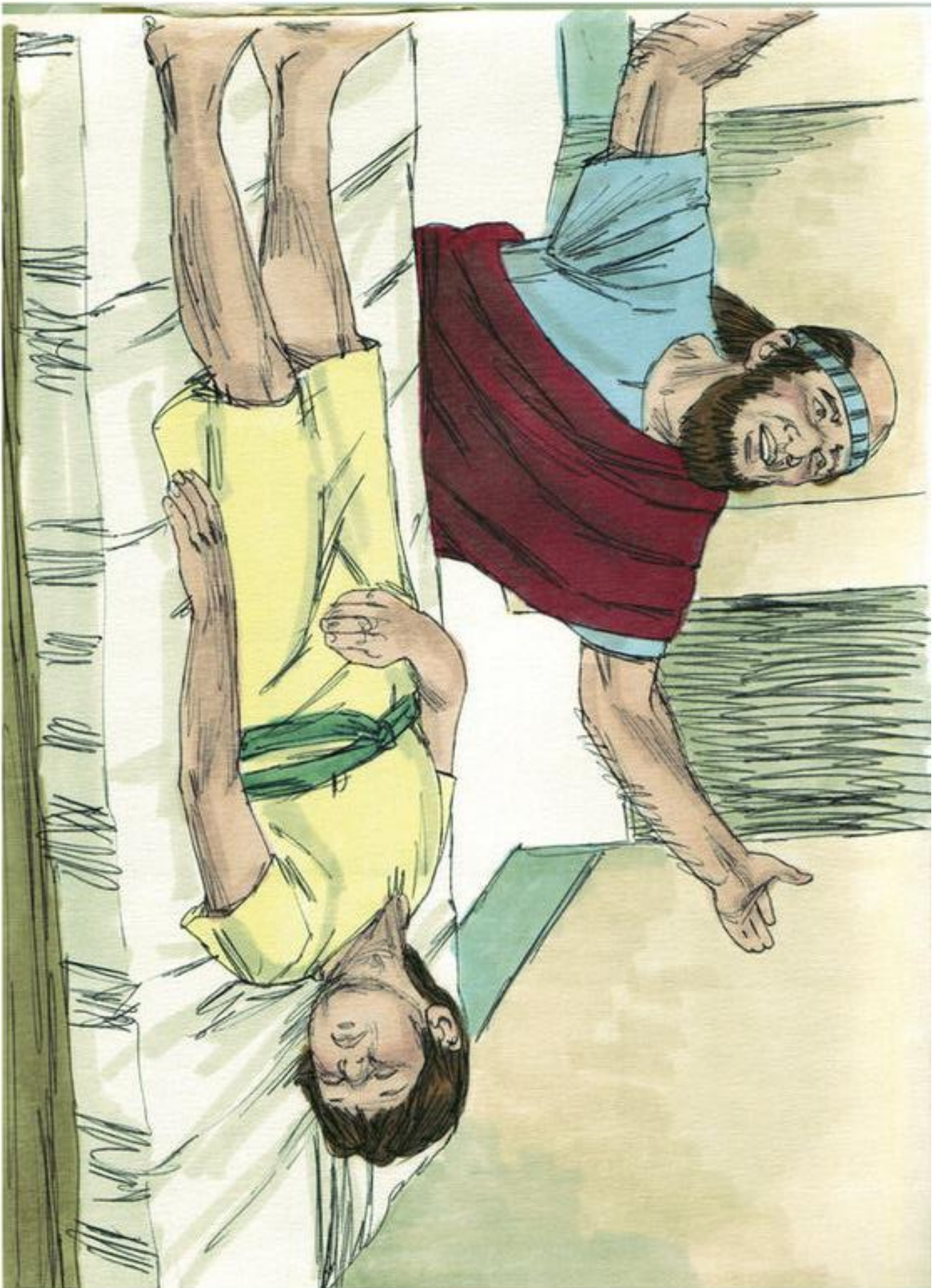
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478 WHAT A MIGHTY GOD WE SERVE

*The mighty one, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.
Psalm 50:1*

The musical score is written for a four-part setting (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of four systems of staves. The lyrics are: 'What a might - y God we serve.' (first two systems), 'An - gels bow be - fore Him. Heav - en and earth a - dore Him.' (third system), and 'What a might - y God we serve. I com -' (fourth system). The fourth system includes a first ending marked '1. Last time' and a second ending marked '2.' which is crossed out with a large 'X'. The lyrics 'I com -' are positioned below the second ending.

What a might - y God we serve.

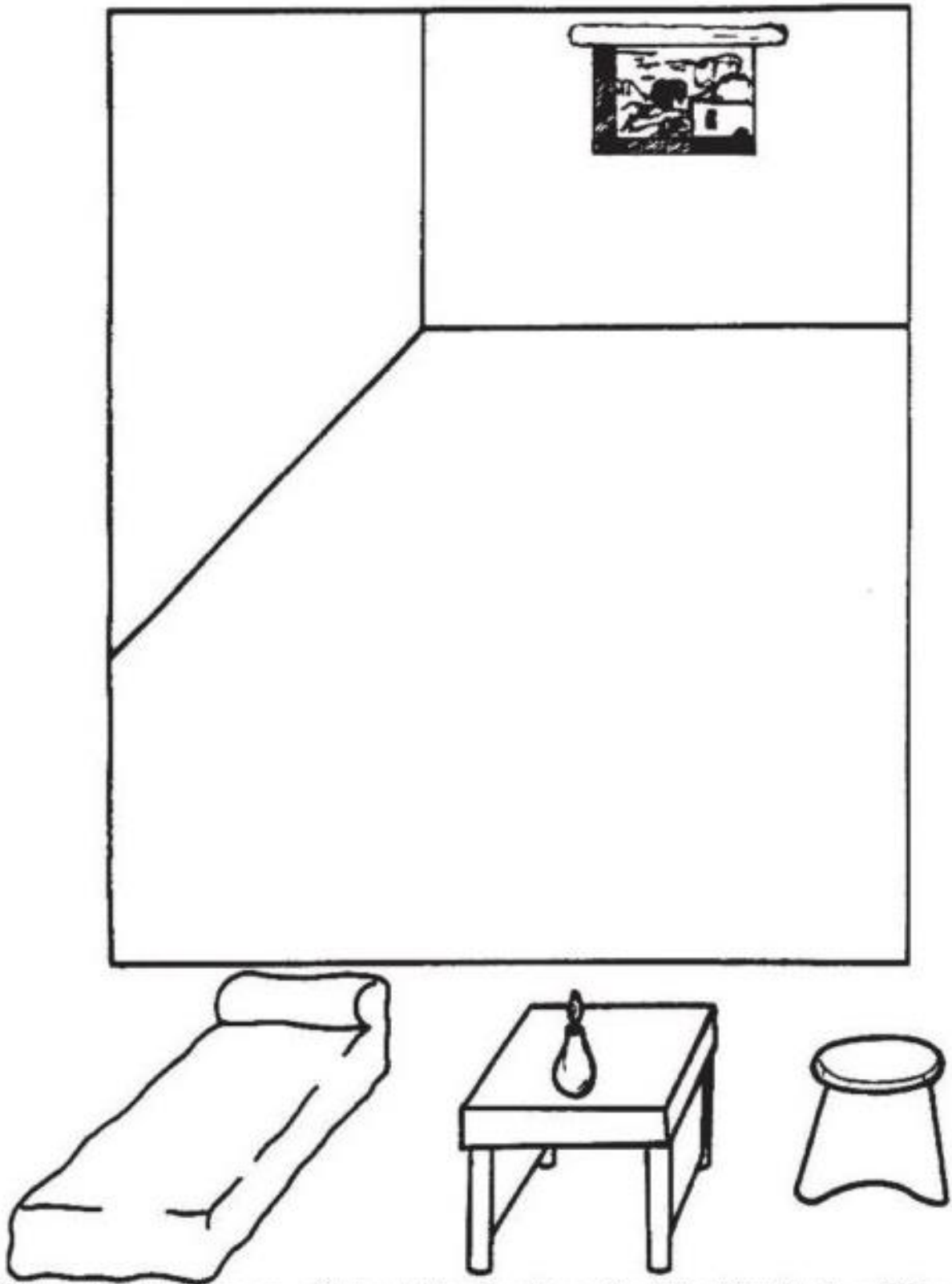
What a might - y God we serve.

An - gels bow be - fore Him. Heav - en and earth a - dore Him.

What a might - y God we serve. I com -

I do not sing the second part. (<http://www.hymnary.org/hymn/AAHH2001/page/737>)

The Kind Woman of Shunem



Colour Elisha's room. Cut out the furniture that the kind lady of Shunem put in Elisha's room and glue them into place.