

21.03 Elisha and the Widow's Oil (2 Kings 4:1–7)

✓ “*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.
- Note: Since there are so few pictures, the teacher might make paper or card stock jugs and other containers to place on a flannel board or in a pocket chart as the story states the containers are being brought to the widow by her sons.
- (optional) Pots and other containers placed around the room, including a pottery vessel or two
- A bottle of olive oil
- An oil lamp (if possible, one like those used in Biblical times)
- Psalm 23 visual (One is provided at the end of this lesson, but it has no pictures and has small print.)

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.

- *widow*: a woman whose husband has died
- *sons of the prophets*: men who learned at Elijah's and Elisha's schools and probably preached or helped the prophets
- *creditor*: someone who lends money and expects it to be paid back

Scripture (ESV)

2 Kings 4:1 Now the wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord, but the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves.” 2 And Elisha said to her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me; what have you in the house?” And she said, “Your servant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil.” 3 Then he said, “Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, empty vessels and not too few. 4 Then go in and shut the door behind yourself and your sons and pour into all these vessels. And when one is full, set it aside.” 5 So she went from him and shut the door behind herself and her sons. And as she poured they brought the vessels to her. 6 When the vessels were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another vessel.” And he said to her, “There is not another.” Then the oil stopped flowing. 7 She came and told the man of God, and he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on the rest.”

Introduction/Review:

I want to tell you about olive oil (not Popeye's friend). I enjoy eating olives, but something far more important than the olive itself is oil that can be gotten from olives. [Show a bottle of olive oil.] This oil is made by crushing the olives.

Olive oil looks like the kind your mom uses in cooking. In Bible times this was about the only kind of oil people had. They did use it for cooking (this oil is the most digestible of all oils) [students might dip a finger in a small amount of oil and taste it], but they used it for much more. For example, it could be a lotion [put some on the skin] or a medicine. Lamps in Bible times burned olive oil to give light. Olive oil was valuable for many other uses. One writer, Homer, who may have lived close to Elisha's time, said olive oil was “liquid gold” ✓ probably because it was so useful and could cost quite a bit of money.

Remember, schools for the prophets taught men how to be preachers of God's Word. Elijah had trained several of these men. Elisha, too, worked beside these men. Do you remember how Elijah and Elisha visited

the schools in Bethel and Jericho just before Elijah went to heaven? The men who learned at these schools were called “sons of the prophets.”

Another point to remember is that just before Elijah went to heaven, Elisha had asked for a “double portion” of the spirit of Elijah. Elijah had performed several miracles. Now Elisha also performed miracles.

Last week we learned how God provided water for the armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom and then gave them a great victory over their enemies, the Moabites. Today we will learn about another miracle.

Story:

The widow’s plight

One day a widow came to see Elisha. What is a widow? [A woman whose husband has died.] She cried out to Elisha, “My husband was one of the sons of the prophets. Elisha, you know that my husband loved and worshiped the Lord. Sadly, he owed a man some money, and that man wants me to pay my husband’s debt. He said he will take my two sons to be his slaves if I don’t pay back the money!!”

Do you understand what is happening? [Ask a student, with your aid, to summarize.]

I wonder what Elisha would do to help this poor widow. In fact, Elisha himself asked, “How can I help you?” ✓ Maybe Elisha didn’t quite know at first what to do, but then he inquired, “Tell me, what do you have in your house?”

This poor widow answered, “Your servant has nothing there at all . . . except . . . a little oil.”

Elisha’s plan

“Here’s what you can do then,” said Elisha. “Go to everyone you know and ask to borrow empty jars and bottles. Don’t get just a few: get a lot of empty jars. Then go inside your house; shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars.”

Would the woman do as Elisha said? Yes. She went to her neighborhood and asked for every empty jar she could find. I imagine her sons helped her too. [Students can gather from around the room the various pots and other containers that have been “pre-planted.”]

When she had gathered all those jars, she shut the door to her house with her sons inside with her, and she began to pour. First, one son brought a jar. She filled it. [Pretend to pour.] ✓ “Hmmm, this jar holds a lot more oil than I started with. What is happening here?” she might have said. Her other son brought another jar. She poured oil in it until it, too, was full. “Another jar.” Pour. Filled. “Another jar.” Pour. Filled. “Another jar.” Pour. Filled. The sons kept on bringing jars to her. She kept on filling them from her small jar of oil.

Finally, “Bring me another jar,” she said.

Her sons answered, “No more jars are left. We have filled every one that we have.”

Perhaps ✓ the woman tipped her jar of oil to see just how much oil was left, but not another drop came out. The oil stopped flowing when the last jar was filled.

The widow’s payoff

The woman went to Elisha and told him what had happened. ✓ “Elisha, Elisha!” she might have said. “Guess what happened! We had 74 (a pretend number) jars and just a little bit of oil. The little bit of oil filled all of those jars. It was a miracle!”

Elisha ✓ didn’t seem surprised but just told her, “Now, go sell that oil. With the money you get you can pay your debt. There will be money left over. With that money you and your sons will be able to live.”

So, did the sons have to become slaves? [No.] Did God take care of the widow whose husband had loved and served the Lord? [Yes.] Will God take care of us? [Yes.] “The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want,”

reads Psalm 23. Let's repeat the whole psalm. [Do so with a visual.]

Lessons from This Lesson:

- We see Jesus:

Jesus is our Shepherd, and His anointing our heads with oil (Psalm 23:5) signifies His abundant blessing to us. "The allusion is to the custom of the eastern countries, at feasts, to anoint the heads of the guests with oil" (John Gill in his *Exposition of the Entire Bible*). "The reference is to the unguents and perfumes which were the regular accompaniment of an Oriental banquet . . . not to the regal anointing [of kings and priests], for which a different word is used" (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*).

Activities:

- Play dough: mold jars, bowls, bottles from the clay lump or coil "snakes" and form them into these items
- Snack: Green and/or ripe black olives (these can be bought in individual packages); crackers
- Discuss pottery, its difference from our pots and containers, and its many uses in Bible times—storing items, including food, scrolls, even bones of dead people; carrying and storing water; cooking.
- (Optional) Demonstrate making olive oil by crushing olives with a pestle in a bowl and then pressing the oil out of them in a piece of cheesecloth, twisting the cloth until olive pulp comes through as in jelly making. [This activity might not work unless one has fresh olives and more instruction.]
- "Anoint" with oil, not doing it on the head but on the back of a hand. Have clean-up supplies available.
- Review Questions: (Game: Print, color, and cut out pots found at [\(835\) Pinterest](#) or make some out of wallpaper samples. Prepare these pots for a pocket chart or flannel board. Each correct answer enables a student to place a pot in the chart or on the board.)
 1. What had the husband of the widow been before he died? He was called a —. [A son of the prophets.]
 2. What did the creditor threaten to do if the widow did not pay back her husband's debt? [To make her two sons his slaves.]
 3. What was the only thing of value the widow had in her house? [A little oil.]
 4. What were the widow and her sons told by Elisha to borrow [Containers, not a few.]
 5. What did the widow do with the containers? [Filled them with oil.]
 6. What did Elisha say to do with the oil? [Sell it, pay off the debt, and live on the money left over.]

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:

- A coloring page may be found at [Joseph Helps Pharaoh \(weebly.com\)](#). [Title is incorrect; the clipart is of the widow and oil.]
- Using pots found at [\(835\) Pinterest](#) or making pots from wallpaper samples using a template, glue pots to a paper as shown at [\(835\) Pinterest](#) (the green page with one pot on the left side and an arrow pointing to several pots on the right).



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Second_Book_of_Kings_Chapter_4_\(Bible_illustrations_by_Sweet_Media\)#/media/File:Second_Book_of_Kings_Chapter_4-3_\(Bible_illustrations_by_Sweet_Media\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Second_Book_of_Kings_Chapter_4_(Bible_illustrations_by_Sweet_Media)#/media/File:Second_Book_of_Kings_Chapter_4-3_(Bible_illustrations_by_Sweet_Media).jpg)

**THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD
I SHALL NOT BE IN WANT.**

HE MAKES ME LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES
HE LEADS ME BESIDE QUIET WATERS

HE RESTORES MY SOUL.

HE GUIDES ME IN PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE.

EVEN THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE

VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

I WILL FEAR NO EVIL, FOR YOU ARE WITH ME

YOUR ROD AND YOUR STAFF, THEY COMFORT ME.

YOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME

IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES.

YOU ANOINT MY HEAD WITH OIL; MY CUP OVERFLOWS.

SURELY GOODNESS AND LOVE WILL FOLLOW ME

ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE, AND I WILL DWELL

IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER.

PSALM 23