

A LIFE LIVED IN FELLOWSHIP, PART 5

“Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.” (2 Kings 4:1, NIV)

FOR A LONG TIME I KEPT A VERY HARD ARTICLE IN MY FILES. It may still be there, but I have waited far too long to go back and look.

The article was the first-person account of a woman living in desperate poverty—in America, the land of promise. She wrote of dirty water, pitiful meals, insects, drugs. Her story was the very definition of squalor, and it was nearly impossible to read. Don’t think me a bleeding heart for often returning to such a story; I did so in hopes that I would retain a heart at all. In time, it proved to be the same heart that Jim Hiskey and others brought to Links Players from the beginning. It was a heart to understand and help the poor and needy. I’ll confess I’m still not very good at it. No surprise, but I’ll probably always prefer a dining room seat overlooking the eighteenth green.

The account of the widow in 2 Kings 4 is no less desperate than the woman in my article. Though God-fearing, this mother was not experiencing “the blessing” many prosperity preachers would profess should be hers. Her husband had died, her children were in line for slavery, and she cried out to Elisha the prophet for help.

Now recognize that Elisha was no tycoon. He was, as far as we can uncover, much like Jesus, “without a place to lay his head.” He couldn’t reach into his purse and pull out the silver or gold that would save the mother from her awful straits. But Elisha had the Spirit of God, so he turned to the Lord for the answer to the woman’s troubles, which came via a miracle: a little oil was poured into jar after jar without running out until the last jar was filled. The woman sold the oil and saved her sons.

I don’t know where you find your place in this story. Perhaps, like PGA Tour Champions winner Esteban Toledo, you grew up on dirt floors and God has moved you a million mercy-filled miles. Maybe you are like Elisha, having witnessed true miracles in which God intervened in a way only he could. Maybe you have served in a rescue mission, or talked with authentic interest with a panhandler on the street. Maybe, like Judge Tim Philpot in today’s video, you have walked the grueling path with a drug addict. It doesn’t matter. Just find a way to cross over to the other side, to understand what the desperate face, and to use the resources God has given you—be they plentiful or meager—to help someone who is crying out in great need.

Opening questions How closely have you touched poverty in your life? Do you have any experience paralleling that of those mentioned in today’s devotion? • Who is the most compassionate person you know?

READING 2 Kings 4:1-7; Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

The woman and the miracle (2 Kings 4)

In what way was the miracle in this story also perfectly practical? What does this teach us about the way God meets our needs?

Jesus in the poor (Matthew 25)

How do our compassionate acts also minister to Jesus? How would you say this passage rests up against the doctrine of salvation by grace and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9)? What compels us to reach out?

An increasing store, an increasing generosity (2 Corinthians 9)

Define generosity as this passage does. Where does your giving come from and where should it go? What kind of heart facilitates such generosity?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available at <https://youtu.be/TYQH59jSsVk>.