

Hospitality makes her memorable

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In a day when so many strive for personal recognition, there is a simple beauty in the story of the woman of Shunem. Even though her name is not recorded, her hospitality makes her one of the most memorable women in the Bible.

Her account is recorded in 2 Kings 4:8-17 (NIV) and is: 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 Shunamite." 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.

This woman recognized Elisha as a prophet of God and understood her responsibility to minister to him. Her first display of hospitality came when

people and was well thought of there. She did not feel that she was disadvantaged to have an aged husband or that she did not have a son. She knew her people AND God would take care of her.

Elisha wanted to repay this woman—not monetarily, but with something of far greater value. He told her that she would have a son within the year—and she did. Because of her loving and hospitality, the woman of Shunem was blessed with a son. Someone that she could teach these valuable lessons to and that one day could take care of her and minister to others as his mother had done.

Each of us should strive to be as generous with our time and our possessions. How many of us today would give up a room in our home permanently or go to the trouble and expense to build a room for a visitor, whether they were a man of God or not.

Why and how should we practice hospitality?

ourselves up spiritually also and will be blessed in doing so.

The woman of Shunem is remembered for her actions of

endless hospitality shown to Elisha—how wonderful if we would be remembered in the same way. Our names will fade in time, but our actions will outlive us.

and if performed with love, prove to be an ageless example for our families to follow.

1. We are commanded to practice hospitality (Romans 12:12,13) and to do so "...without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9).

2. We are to be hospitable to strangers (Hebrews 13:2), to the poor (Luke 14:13,14), and even to our enemies (2 Kings 6:22,23 and Romans 12:20).

3. Hospitality is an edifier (Luke 14:14). By helping and encouraging others we build

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