



© 2017 Ginger Hertenstein  
SERMON TITLE: "The Best Partner in the World"  
SCRIPTURE: 2 Kings 4:1-7  
DATE: December 17, 2017  
Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).

READ 2 Kings 4:1-7

There are two times when Christians are particularly called: the first is when someone needs help, and the second is when you yourself need help.

You should be on the lookout all the time for those two calls.

In this case, our story is about someone who needs help. (Read 2 Kings 4:1-7 now if you have not yet read it.)

Elisha was Elijah's spiritual heir. He was a leader of the prophets. These prophets helped the poor. These prophets interceded to gain God's favor for someone. These prophets did miracles. They were not priests, but they were resourced for many things.

The woman's husband was a prophet in Elisha's company of prophets. He was a good man who was in awe of God. She refers to that and reminds Elisha that he knew that. But having died, he left his widow with credit card debt. Not everybody is a good manager. The creditors had already visited her.

Typically interest on debt at that time was exorbitant. Perhaps that is why the Old Testament restricted Israel's people from finance charges on loans. Nevertheless, creditors did exist and did charge interest.

In those days, you could not file for bankruptcy under Chapter 7, Chapter 11, or Chapter 13—or any other chapter! Debtors could not get a break on the rate or consolidate their loans by going to a debt counselor.

No, instead creditors took a debtor, or a debtor's children, away to work off the obligation. Simply put, they enslaved them.

So this woman was desperate. She turned to the prophet, a viable source. Elisha was part of her community.

He heard the call; the first call, that is, when someone needs help.

He did not turn her away. He did not pat her on the back and say *it will be okay*. He saw a woman who needed help and he took some ownership.

That's the first call. You do that all the time when you help each other.

We don't know if this woman was poor, necessarily, but in those times, becoming a widow was a life-changing crisis which would make her immediately poor because there would be no more resources coming in. The only resource she had was the people of God.

The communities were to take care of the widows.

That's the way God understands it.

One of God's chief complaints against God's people which is spoken through the prophets is when the community of faith ignores the needs of widows. It is called injustice. And, God does not expect His children to do something that God himself is not willing to do. The Psalmist says God is the "Father of orphans and protector of widows." (Psalm 68:5)

So Elisha stepped up.

He asked her, "What do you have of value?"

Now we enter the second step of call: what to do when you yourself need help. She probably would not have thought of what she had. She probably was only thinking of her problems.

"What do you have of value?" *What do I have? Well, not much. Let's see... Nothing!*

"Well, there is that bottle of oil. I've been saving it for a special occasion. I've had it for years."

*Okay, let's operate from the positive*, Elisha said. At this point, it seems that the Spirit of God might have taken over, because what he suggested had no reasonable explanation.

"Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbors." Now in Duncanville, that would be about 39,000 people. Her

town was probably quite a bit smaller. Let's say it had 600 people.

So she went to her neighbors; she and her two sons. Interesting. Children are given a significant role in solving this problem. Do you allow your children to take on responsibility corresponding to their age and abilities?

If not, how will they learn to solve problems?

The widow and her children had to communicate, ask, and learn how to make a business out of her meager but valuable possession.

They first were told to ask for not just a few, but a lot of jars. Now this second part of the call might be hard for some of us. Often people are afraid to let anyone know they have problems—particularly people in the church because sometimes we wear this air of “everything's all right all the time.”

The Bible directs us to be a little more authentic than that. (That does not mean that you tell every single problem.) But, part of the call is to lean on one another.

Secondly, she had to be willing to use the resources that she had, even down to the very last thing. She couldn't sock it away in a bank account somewhere or a vault that is untouchable.

Then Elisha gives another interesting detail. They are to come back in and shut the door. In private they are to pour oil into all the jars. After each is filled, they are to keep pouring into the next jar.

Why would that be the case?

Relying on God is not about displaying, as if it were some show, the process of God's miracles. Miracles are often quiet and hidden, happening step by step. To finish one jar and go to the next took faith, just as it took faith to go and ask for the jars. She could have said, for what? There's only one little jar of oil.

What if her sons said, “I'm not going out to ask. Nothing's going to happen with these silly jars.”

She was required to obey and take action. Her steps of faith gave her sons the example of acting in faith that is vital for your children's lives. You set the example. That gives God the opportunity He needs to instill faith in them.

Are you complaining at every little problem? Or do you “gird up your loins” and lean on your faith?

The boys kept asking, she kept pouring, and God kept filling. It's a partnership. Finally she asked for another and her son said, “There is not a jar left in town.” Only then did the oil stop flowing.

God was willing to go as far with His blessing as possible, in conjunction with the actions of this precious family of believers. Isn't God good?

She went back to Elisha and told him the story. Don't you think she had a big smile? “We did it!” She accomplished a lot, and her sons learned a lot.

Step by step, Elisha led this family into partnering with God.

Here are the steps:

- Believers must look for the first call. (What is it?) Someone who needs help.
- The one who needs help must look for the second call. (What is it?) Seek out help from God and God's people.
- Look at your resources, and be willing to use them.
- Humbly ask for help.
- Don't quit until it's quitting time. ☺

Coupled with what the community gave her and God miraculously extending what she had, she was able to pay all her debt and had enough to spare to support herself and her children—and perhaps she even started a new business!

How much do you think that community was lifted up when her children were not hauled off to debtor's prison but instead she triumphed in the face of this life crisis?

God collaborates with the community of faith. Our blessing comes from that partnership. When we work together we become a Community in Unity. That only comes from the willingness to answer the call. Answered calls change hearts. Changed hearts change actions. Actions of faith change the community—and changed communities eventually change the nation.

Let us work together to grow our faith, teach the next generation, and change the nation.

AMEN