

1  **Stewardship: It's not just for rich people**

2 Kings 4

2  **Stewardship**

- There are many inappropriate theologies and beliefs regarding money, prosperity, and how to think about prosperity and poverty.
- God's way for dealing with the question of wealth is stewardship:
- Stewardship is using God's blessing in a way that reflects the character and nature of the giver.

3  **2 Kings 4:1-7**

- An impoverished widow comes to Elisha with a problem: Her husband has died, leaving an enormous amount of debt which she is unable to repay.
- If she does not repay the debt, her sons will be taken and made indentured servants for 7 years in order to pay off their fathers' debts.

4  **2 Kings 4:1-7**

- Elisha's instructions are simple: Go borrow vessels from your neighbors (and get your sons to help!)
- Then, go into the house and shut the door and start pouring oil into the empty vessels. Pour until you can't pour anymore.
- The widow does so and gets enough oil to repay all of her debts and live on the rest.

5  **Prosperity Theology**

- Prosperity theology considers those who are rich to be more righteous than those who are poor.
- At its core is a belief that it is God's plan for every believer to be healthy, prosperous, with a happy home life and no money problems.
- Extreme versions of this theology teach that those who are lacking in one of these areas are in sin or do not have enough faith.

6  **Poverty Theology**

- Poverty Theology is the belief that those who are poor are more righteous than those who are rich.
- It includes the belief that material wealth keeps you from serving God and that those who choose to live in poverty are more particularly devoted to God than those who do not.

7  **Biblical Prosperity**

- 1) Prosperity (or the lack thereof) is for God's glory
- 2) Prosperity (even supernatural blessing) comes through work
- 3) God's blessings are enough
- 4) God gives prosperity to meet needs, not egos

8  **Stewardship**

9  **2 Kings 4:8-17**

- *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. And she said to her husband, "Behold now, I know that this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way. 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."*

10  **2 Kings 4:8-17**

- *One day he came there, and he turned into the chamber and rested there. And he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite." When he had called her, she stood before him. 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."*

11  **2 Kings 4:8-17**

- *And he said, "What then is to be done for her?" Gehazi answered, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is old." He said, "Call her." And when he had called her, she stood in the doorway. 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." But the woman conceived, and she bore a son about that time the following spring, as Elisha had said to her.*

12  **5) Stewardship is hospitable**

- Hospitality is a "gift" that all Christians are commanded to practice – not just those who are well-off.
- "Cheerfully sharing food, shelter, and spiritual refreshment with those whom God brings into my life."
- Scripture is full of exhortations to hospitality.

13  **Hospitality**

- *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. (Heb 13:2)*
- *Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. (Rom 12:13)*
- *Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, (1Ti 3:2)*

14  **Hospitality**

- **Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.** *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies--in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1Pe 4:9-11)*

15  **Hospitality & stewardship**

- It is important to grasp the fact that Stewardship and hospitality apply to more than just money.
- They apply to all of the gifts and resources that we are given by God.

16  **6) Stewardship is rewarded**

- The Shunammite's faith is rewarded by the blessing of a son in her old age.
- The indication given is that she and her husband are well past child-bearing years, and that she will have no one to provide for her when her husband dies.
- Her hospitality (and thus her stewardship) is thus rewarded by the miraculous gift of a son.

17  **Stewardship rewarded**

- It is important to note that this is not the first example of such a reward in Scripture – in Genesis 18, Abraham plays host to God.

- It is during this display of hospitality that the miraculous conception of Isaac is prophesied by God Himself.

18  **Stewardship rewarded**


- This is not to say that showing hospitality will always result in the increase of material wealth.
- What it *does* mean is that faithful stewards are rewarded with additional blessings to faithfully steward.

19  **The boy dies**

- *When the child had grown, he went out one day to his father among the reapers. And he said to his father, "Oh, my head, my head!" The father said to his servant, "Carry him to his mother." And when he had lifted him and brought him to his mother, the child sat on her lap till noon, and then he died.*

20  **The mother acts**

- *And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God and shut the door behind him and went out. 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." (2Ki 4:18-22)*

21  **7) Gain & loss are equally for God's glory**

- The son of the woman dies.
- There are many examples given us in Scripture of godly people who experience tremendous pain and loss – some of whom are recompensed, some of whom are not.
- *And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21)*

22  **Gain & loss**

- To only see the hand of God in the good things we are given is to make two dangerous mistakes:
 - It denies God's ability to work through our difficult situations
 - It is to have a very limited, one-dimensional view of God that praises Him for the good things but then leaves us to "muddle through" in the bad times

23  **Gain & loss**

- *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; (Eph 5:20)*
- In doing so we are not charging God wrongly (Job 1:22).

24  **The Widow's response**

- The widow's response is less than perfect – this is actually reassuring.
- *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." Then she said, "Did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me?'" (2Ki 4:27-28)*

25  **Parallel stories**

- Both Elisha and his predecessor, Elisha, have similar stories:
 - Both forged close relationships with widows who showed them hospitalities
 - Both women's sons were preserved or born through divine intervention
 - Both women's sons die
 - Both women react in anger rather than in faith

– Both women’s sons are restored to them

26  **Faith**

- Faith, Scripture tells us, is important to please God.
- And yet, in each of these instances, God acts miraculously *despite* a lack of “superhuman” spirituality on both of these women’s part.
- This is a direct repudiation of prosperity theology, which hinges God’s blessings on the faith or righteousness of a person.

27  **Making stewardship real**

- The principle of stewardship has its foundations in Adam (given the care of the garden) and Abraham (gave the first recorded tithe).
- The tithe is intended to be a constant reminder of the fact that all that we have truly belongs to God.
- It is intended to teach us the fear of the Lord.

28  **Making stewardship real**

- Practice the tithe to teach the fear of God to yourself and your family.
- Replace covetousness with contentment.
- Contentment: Realizing that God has already given me everything I need to be joyful (1 Timothy 6:8).
- Look for God’s hand to work, especially in difficult situations.