

# Where Do I Go when the Dream Becomes a Nightmare

8.17.25

Message 2

Cast of Characters

2 Kings 4:8–37 (CSB)

## THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN'S HOSPITALITY

<sup>8</sup>One day Elisha went to Shunem. A prominent woman who lived there persuaded him to eat some food. So whenever he passed by, he stopped there to eat. <sup>9</sup>Then she said to her husband, "I know that the one who often passes by here is a holy man of God, <sup>10</sup>so let's make a small, walled-in upper room and put a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp there for him. Whenever he comes, he can stay there."

## THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN'S SON

<sup>11</sup>One day he came there and stopped at the upstairs room to lie down. <sup>12</sup>He ordered his attendant Gehazi, "Call this Shunammite woman." So he called her and she stood before him.

<sup>13</sup>Then he said to Gehazi, "Say to her, 'Look, you've gone to all this trouble for us. What can we do for you? Can we speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?'"

She answered, "I am living among my own people."

<sup>14</sup>So he asked, "Then what should be done for her?"

Gehazi answered, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is old."

<sup>15</sup>"Call her," Elisha said. So Gehazi called her, and she stood in the doorway. <sup>16</sup>Elisha said, "At this time next year you will have a son in your arms."

Then she said, "No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your servant."

<sup>17</sup>The woman conceived and gave birth to a son at the same time the following year, as Elisha had promised her.

## THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON RAISED

<sup>18</sup>The child grew and one day went out to his father and the harvesters.

<sup>19</sup>Suddenly he complained to his father, "My head! My head!"

His father told his servant, "Carry him to his mother." <sup>20</sup>So he picked him up and took him to his mother. The child sat on her lap until noon and then died. <sup>21</sup>**She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut him in, and left.**

<sup>22</sup>She summoned her husband and said, "Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, so I can hurry to the man of God and come back again."

<sup>23</sup>But he said, "Why go to him today? It's not a New Moon or a Sabbath." She replied, "It's all right."

<sup>24</sup>Then she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, "Go fast; don't slow the pace for me unless I tell you." <sup>25</sup>So she came to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

When the man of God saw her at a distance, he said to his attendant Gehazi, "Look, there's the Shunammite woman. <sup>26</sup>Run out to meet her and ask, 'Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is your son all right?' "

And she answered, "It's all right."

<sup>27</sup>When she came up to the man of God at the mountain, she clung to his feet. Gehazi came to push her away, but the man of God said, "Leave her alone—she is in severe anguish, and the LORD has hidden it from me. He hasn't told me."

<sup>28</sup>Then she said, "Did I ask my lord for a son? Didn't I say, 'Do not lie to me?' "

<sup>29</sup>So Elisha said to Gehazi, "Tuck your mantle under your belt, take my staff with you, and go. If you meet anyone, don't stop to greet him, and if a man greets you, don't answer him. Then place my staff on the boy's face."

<sup>30</sup>The boy's mother said to Elisha, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So he got up and followed her.

<sup>31</sup>Gehazi went ahead of them and placed the staff on the boy's face, but there was no sound or sign of life, so he went back to meet Elisha and told him, "The boy didn't wake up."

<sup>32</sup>When Elisha got to the house, he discovered the boy lying dead on his bed. <sup>33</sup>So he went in, closed the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD. <sup>34</sup>Then he went up and lay on the boy: he put mouth to mouth, eye to eye, hand to hand. While he bent down over him, the boy's flesh

became warm. <sup>35</sup>Elisha got up, went into the house, and paced back and forth. Then he went up and bent down over him again. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

<sup>36</sup>Elisha called Gehazi and said, "Call the Shunammite woman." He called her and she came. Then Elisha said, "Pick up your son." <sup>37</sup>She came, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; she picked up her son and left.

## A Place Prepared

A. Elisha was a traveling prophet.

1. He didn't stay in one place.
2. His journeys regularly took him through the ancient city of Shunem.

B. One day, a wealthy woman noticed Elisha and invited him to eat with her family.

1. That one meal became a regular stop.
2. Whenever he came through, he would stop for a rest and eat with this anonymous woman and her husband.
3. This woman took her hospitality to another level and made him a small apartment to use when he visited.

C. The room was an addition, probably walling off a space on the roof for the prophet.

1. Notice the details here.
  - a. It had a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp.
  - b. It had everything he needed.
  - c. It will be ready for him whenever he comes.
  - d. Scripture didn't have to record these details, but does so that we can grasp the level of preparation and hospitality the woman had.
2. The upper room was a gift of hospitality and honor.

a. Where God's people are welcoming and honoring of God and His servants, He is sure to visit.

b. Jesus said it like this:

Matthew 10:41 (CSB)

<sup>41</sup> Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. And anyone who welcomes a righteous person because he's righteous will receive a righteous person's reward.

3. God does not move where He is not honored.

a. If you aren't honoring God at home, He won't visit you.

b. If your marriage doesn't honor God, His presence will be absent.

c. We cannot separate honor and love.

d. Where God is loved, He is honored.

4. God doesn't move where His servants are not honored.

a. I find myself in churches or talking to pastors whose church treats them as nothing more than an unwanted employee.

b. And then the people wonder why God isn't moving, why people aren't being saved, and why it feels like they are dying.

c. The church will usually blame the pastor.

d. Churches can't treat the servants of God like trash and expect God to bless them.

D. Because of this woman's honor and hospitality, the room she prepared for the servant of God became the most important room in the house.

1. It was from this room that Elisha asked the woman what could be done for her.

2. It was in this room that she brought her lifeless son to be resurrected.

3. It was this room that became a place of miracles still talked about to this day.

## Where do babies come from?

A. In this woman's case, her only son came from an unexpressed desire and need.

1. Elisha wanted to repay her for her kindness.
2. He was willing to speak to the king or the commander of the army.
3. This would protect her family from taxes and guarantee her physical safety.
  - a. Was Elisha testing her to see what her motives were?
  - b. Her heart was pure: she was serving Elisha because she valued him and the God he served.
  - c. This is always the test of a faithful servant:
    1. Are we serving for what we can get, or
    2. Are we serving because the One we are serving is worthy of honor and respect?
    3. As we will see, the woman passes this test while Elisha's servant will ultimately fail.

Speaking of Elisha's servant:

B. It was Elisha's servant, Gehazi, who noticed the need.

1. This is interesting because Gehazi has a checkered story, which we will cover in another message.
2. Gehazi says aloud what the woman was probably thinking.
  - a. Without a son and no male heirs, she would lose it all when he passed.

b. "In that culture, the inheritance could not be passed on to the wife. So, without a son, she would be left with nothing."<sup>1</sup>

c. Gehazi says aloud what the woman was afraid to say:

d. I need a son but that is too much to ask of the Lord.

C. Do not lie to me.

1. Elisha offers her the opportunity to be a mother.

2. Like many women in Israel's history, she would conceive and have a child even though her husband was old and she was barren.

a. Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, Elizabeth, and many others all struggled and experienced God's intervention in this way.

b. Would this anonymous woman, known only by her town and her hospitality, be so blessed as to join these great women?

c. It was too much to ask and dream for, so her response is a respectful but firm:

d. Don't lie to me.

D. I feel **we all struggle with the fear of disappointment from God.**

1. God, don't lie to me about healing me.

2. God, don't give me false hope of my kids being saved.

3. God, don't put me in a position to have dreams crushed.

4. Do you find yourself in a place where you are afraid to dream again?

a. You're afraid to hope again.

b. You're afraid to love again.

c. You've had too many dreams become nightmares, and you aren't sure you can handle one more.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://devotionaryblog.com/2021/03/05/when-dreams-turn-into-nightmares/>

What are we to do when dreams turn into nightmares?

## When Dreams turn into nightmares.

A. It's harvest time, and the boy is old enough to help dad with the harvest.

1. He complains about a headache.
2. A servant brings the child to his mother.
  - a. The father doesn't come because there is no time to waste when the harvest season happens.
  - b. Besides, he's just a kid; he will be fine.
3. The mother put the boy on her lap, and there he died.

B. Can we sit with her in this for a moment?

1. We know he is resurrected.
2. She has hope that the Prophet of God, who brought him into her life, would be able to restore him to her.
3. But for the next several moments, there he sits on her lap, dead.
4. The dream has become a nightmare.

C. What do we do when the dream becomes the nightmare?

1. Where do we go when the blessing feels like it has been cursed?
2. What do we feel when the darkness descends, and it feels like God has abandoned us?

## She went back to where the dream started.

A. Notice verse 21: And I'm going to add the personal pronoun back into the text:

1. She went up, (she) laid him on the bed of the man of God, (she) shut him in, and (she) left.
  - a. She picked up her boy.

b. She laid him in the bed that she had made and kept for the prophet.

c. She shut the door behind her.

d. She left.

2. This sentence feels powerful and captures my attention.

3. The more I read, the more awestruck I am by this anonymous woman.

a. Is it faith that we sense?

b. Is it hope?

c. Is it love that laid her son in the room, on the bed of the prophet?

4. In a few more verses, she confronts Elisha. "Did I ask for a son? Didn't I tell you not to lie to me? Didn't I tell you not to get my hopes up?"

a. Is it desperation we sense?

b. Determination?

c. Expectation?

B. Notice what she did: In this nightmare, she went back to where the dream started.

1. Some of you may be living in what feels like a nightmare.

2. Your life is a wreck, or so full of pain who have lost hope.

3. I don't know where it all started for you, but I know where you can go.

4. I don't know where your nightmare began, but I know where it can end.

5. Whether you have been a believer for a long time or you're not a believer yet, please hear this:

a. Dreams begin and nightmares end at the Cross of Jesus.



b. Whatever you are facing, have you been to Jesus?

1. Jesus does not promise to resurrect everything that dies in your life.
2. Jesus doesn't guarantee that people won't hurt you.
3. Jesus doesn't guarantee a trouble-free life.

c. When all of life feels like it's falling apart, there is no better feeling and no better knowledge than knowing that Jesus is walking through this with you.

C. Some of us are like the youngest son in the story of the Prodigal.

1. We look up and realize we are in a faraway country and don't know how we got here.
2. He, too, knew the value of going back to where it all started.
3. He knew where his father was.
4. The Shunamite went and took the boy to the room where it all started, and then she went to find the Lord.

She went to where she knew to find the Lord.

A. Mountains were often places where God and man would meet.

1. Elisha had a place up on Mt. Carmel.
2. This Mount was pretty special.
3. There had been an altar to the Lord there, but it had been torn down and replaced with altars to false gods (1 Kings 18).
  - a. Elisha's successor, Elijah, had called down fire from heaven and killed 400 of Jezebel's prophets.
  - b. Now it was a sacred place again that Elisha visited regularly.
  - c. Somewhere up there, He had a cave or a place where he would go and spend time with the Lord.

B. This is where the woman journeys to.

1. Her husband is confused why she is going when it wasn't a religious holiday.
2. But, he's too busy focused on the harvest, so he sends a servant with his wife to navigate the journey.

C. Notice these details of the journey from a devotional I read:

But Mount Carmel is 15 to 20 miles away. The poor donkey, if spurred and whipped, can go about 5 miles per hour. The servant, if walking/running beside, could probably only go three or four miles per hour. If riding, the servant will slow the donkey even more. The woman cannot possibly arrive at Mount Carmel until 4 or 5 PM, maybe 6 PM. If she turns around and comes right back, it will be 9 PM to midnight before she returns to Shunem. That's no time for a young woman to be out, even if she has a single servant for "protection".<sup>2</sup>

D. This woman did what godly parents do:

1. Godly parents embrace the hardships to minister to their child.
2. This woman remembered that the Lord had given her this child, and it was to the Lord she would return.
3. For this woman, **Her child was dead, but her hope was not.**

E. What did she do when the dream became a nightmare?

1. She went to the Lord.
2. She crossed wilderness and mountains, rode donkeys and hiked the hills, all so that she could bring her request to the prophet of God.
  - a. My friends, I submit to you that most of us have lost our desperation in prayer.
  - b. Where are the tears, the seeking, the desire, the tarrying, and waiting within the church?

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<sup>2</sup> <http://davidatodd.com/2008/06/11/message-of-the-un-said-factors-of-time-and-distance/>

c. The great reformer, Martin Luther, who started the Protestant Reformation, declared, "I have so much to do I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.

d. We need to regain the seriousness of prayer.

3. Are we talking about God, or talking to God?

## Go and don't Stop.

A. When the woman arrives at the Mountain, there is a sense of confusion.

1. The woman doesn't respond to Gehazi.

2. We will talk about him more next week, but there seems to be something about this servant that is not right.

3. He's the servant of Elisha and is in a position to succeed Elisha someday.

4. But something is off about him.

a. The woman doesn't want to talk to him.

b. Gehazi pushes her aside, although it was initially he who told Elisha to prophesy for her to have a baby.

c. Even though Elisha commissions him to lay the staff on the boy, the boy isn't healed.

d. Later, Gehazi will chase after the money of a foreign commander and lose the opportunity to serve Elisha.

5. In Jewish Rabbinic teaching (legend), Gehazi is unsuccessful in healing the boy because he considered the whole act a joke and denied the resurrection of the dead.<sup>3</sup>

B. There's a contrast between Gehazi and the Woman.

1. If this is true that Gehazi didn't believe, then notice the difference.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6557-gehazi>

2. A woman, a person without legal rights in her culture, lives as a person of honor, hospitality, hope, and faith.

3. The servant of the Prophet Elisha is faithless, unbelieving, and going through the motions.

C. Gehazi was on his way, but his work was ineffectual.

1. I feel like this describes the Church of today.

2. We have been empowered, but we are going through the motions.

3. We have something greater than the staff of Elijah and Elisha; we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and empowering us.

4. But we are about as effective as Gehazi: We are weary from running, but the dead are still dead.

5. Too often, we are a lot like the Disciples left at the foot of the mountain of Transfiguration, unable to cast out the demon from the child.

## No Easy Miracles

<sup>32</sup>When Elisha got to the house, he discovered the boy lying dead on his bed. <sup>33</sup>So he went in, closed the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD. <sup>34</sup>Then he went up and lay on the boy: he put mouth to mouth, eye to eye, hand to hand. While he bent down over him, the boy's flesh became warm. <sup>35</sup>Elisha got up, went into the house, and paced back and forth. Then he went up and bent down over him again. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

A. We read the miracle stories in the Old and New Testament, and they all seem so easy.

1. Then we wonder why our own experience is so much harder.

2. There is no such thing as an easy miracle.

B. Why are there no easy miracles?

1. First, because the need for a miracle means there is something terribly wrong.

2. Second, we don't see the preparation.

a. Our story is a great example that **spiritual preparation precedes miracles.**

b. Gehazi couldn't do what Elisha told him to do because he wasn't spiritually prepared.

c. This was true for the disciples at the Mount of Transfiguration, where Jesus said this kind comes out only by prayer and fasting.

d. The Sons of Sceva in the Book of Acts tried to cast out demons in the name of Jesus and Paul, but got whipped by the demonic.

e. Modern readers do not assume the preparation.

1. It is like watching an Olympic athlete who, for a short period, performs at the highest level for all the world to see.

2. What we don't see is that the person has given their entire life for those few short moments.

3. We see the highlight reels and not the practice.

f. Again, we are like Gehazi, expecting to do the work of the Man of God without trying to be a man of God.

3. Third, miracles is always a realm of struggle.

a. To pray for a miracle is to confront natural and spiritual forces.

b. To seek the Lord's will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven always comes with a spiritual battle.

c. Elisha, here, is engaged in a conflict with the natural.

d. The boy is dead, so Elisha prayed to the Lord (Verse 33).

<sup>33</sup> So he went in, closed the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD.

e. The power for miracles is the Lord's, and he chooses to use people like us to be conduits of his power.

## The Room prepared became a place of miracles.

A. The Shunamite woman had prepared the room for the Man of God.

1. It was his to use.
2. It was reserved for him to have a comfortable place and to encounter God.
3. And she had laid her dead son on the bed of the Man of God.

Notice how this ends:

<sup>36</sup>Elisha called Gehazi and said, "Call the Shunammite woman." He called her and she came. Then Elisha said, "Pick up your son." <sup>37</sup>She came, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; she picked up her son and left.

B. I'm going to add the pronoun back into the sentence like I did earlier:

1. She came, she fell, she bowed, she picked up her son, she left.
2. Earlier: She went up, (she) laid him on the bed of the man of God, (she) shut him in, and (she) left.

C. The woman responded with worship and honor.

1. Most parents would have grabbed the kid first.
2. Not her: the first thing she did was worship.
3. The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and it is where we must begin.

## What do I do when the Dream has become a nightmare?

A. I go back to where new life begins: the worship of Jesus.

1. If you aren't a believer, it begins with you talking to Jesus and confessing that you are a sinner and Jesus is the Savior.

2. If you believe, but you are not living the way you should, it begins by repenting and worshipping Jesus again.

3. If you are a believer and it feels like the dream is becoming a nightmare, you begin again to worship Jesus.

B. I Prepare a place for Him in my life, my home, and my routine.

1. Schedule a time with Jesus on your calendar.

2. Get away from the chaos and get alone with God for as long as you can.

3. Refuse to give in to the excuses of a busy life.

a. Embrace some hardship to journey to be with Jesus.

b. Pray, fast, worship, and abstain for the sake of drawing near to Jesus.

C. I Prepare for the gathering of the Church.

1. If you don't honor the Assembling together, you won't experience the presence of God.

2. We show up, but are we prepared for the Spirit to move?

3. Is the room prepared for the presence of the Lord?