A Godly Mother

Text: 2 Kings 4:18-37 – **(God had given a child to a Shunammite woman who used to host Elisha when he would pass through the area.)** When the child had grown, he went out one day to his father among the reapers. 19 And he said to his father, "Oh, my head, my head! **(possible sunstroke?)**" The father said to his servant, "Carry him to his mother." 20 And when he had lifted him and brought him to his mother, the child sat on her lap till noon, and then he died. 21 And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God and shut the door behind him and went out. 22 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." 23 And he said, "Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath." She said, "All is well." 24 Then she saddled the donkey, and she said to her servant, "Urge the animal on; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you." 25 So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehazi his servant, "Look, there is the Shunammite. 26 Run at once to meet her and say to her, 'Is all well with you? Is all well with your husband? Is all well with the child?'" And she answered, "All is well." 27 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." 28 Then she said, "Did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me?'" 29 He said to Gehazi, "Tie up your garment and take my staff in your hand and go. If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not reply. And lay my staff on the face of the child." 30 Then the mother of the child said, "As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So, he arose and followed her. 31 Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the face of the child, but there was no sound or sign of life. Therefore, he returned to meet him and told him, "The child has not awakened." 32 When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. 33 So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord. 34 Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. 35 Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. 36 Then he summoned Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So, he called her. And when she came to him, he said, "Pick up your son." 37 She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground. Then she picked up her son and went out.

Introduction: I like to begin by wishing every lady in our congregation who works so hard to care for your (or someone else's) children throughout the year a Happy Mother's Day. As an observant husband and father, I know that your role isn't easy. Sometimes, I suspect some of you might even have considered throwing in the towel in defeat. **It was probably during one of these moments that the mother of three unruly youngsters was asked whether or not she'd have children if she could do it all over again. She thought about it for a moment and then said, *"Yes, I would, just not the same ones."*** Well, anyways…this is the day when we celebrate you and acknowledge all your contributions to our lives, knowing that this kind of sacrifice certainly takes its toll on a person, both emotionally and physically. For your labor of love, we are indebted to you for your faithfulness in this incredibly rewarding and occasionally demanding role. **Perhaps you've heard the story of the little girl who was watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that the middle-aged woman had several strands of white hair intertwined with many other strands of brown hair. She looked at her mother and inquisitively asked, "*Why are some of your hairs white, Mom*?" Her mother replied, "*Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or cause me to be unhappy, one of my hairs turns white*." The little girl thought about this revelation for a while and then asked, "*Momma, how come all of grandma's hairs are white*?"** Some children are better off seen than heard!

This morning, I invite you to join me as we look at some of the work that a godly mother must engage in if she is going to raise children whose **hearts are for the Lord**, which I suspect is the desire of every mother in this

room. So, keep your Bibles open to **2 Kings 4:18-37** as we consider the story of a Shunammite woman and the ***three characteristics of a godly mother*** that she models for moms everywhere.

A Godly Mother Trusts the Lord Regarding Her Children (**See 2 Kings 18:18-25a**). In **verses eight through ten**, we learn of the kindness of this wealthy woman from Shunem, a small village in Israel, as it was directed toward Elisha, the man of God. She not only fed him every time he passed through the area, but also had a spare bedroom constructed so that he would have a place to rest. Her hospitality did not go unnoticed. **In exchange, Elisha asked and received from the Lord the blessing of opening her womb so that she could bear a son**. A year later, that is exactly what happened, and she was filled with joy. However, as her son grew into a young man, her joy suddenly turned to sorrow.

- **Her Trial**. Several years later, the Shunamite woman had to face the worst possible scenario, the one that every parent dreads: the sudden death of her son, whose very birth had been the result of a miracle (**See 2 Kings 4:14-16a**). I'm sure she was thinking, "**How could the Lord have given her such unanticipated and immense joy, given that she never asked for a child — 2 Kings 4:13 – (Elisha) said, "What then is to be done for her?" Gehazi answered, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is old**) – ***only to take it away when the boy was old enough to work with his father in the fields***?" ***I suspect all of us know what it's like to get an unexpected blessing and then have it suddenly taken away*****.** Her heart was surely broken. So, she had her dead son placed on the bed of Elisha and then did what any desperate mother would do, she hurried to find the prophet.
- **Her Trust**. The Shunamite woman hid the fact that her son had died from her husband. Instead, she requested a servant and a donkey, indicating that she had some sort of travel plans. When he inquired as to the reason for her journey, she replied, "**All is well**." This begs the question, "**Why did she say a thing like that when her child, only moments before, had died tragically and unexpectedly in her arms?" Probably there were two reasons**: (**1**) She didn't want to delay by having to explain everything to her husband; and (**2**) MORE IMPORTANTLY, BECAUSE HER HOPE FOR HER SON HAD NOT YET BEEN EXHAUSTED! SHE UNDERSTOOD THAT A MIRACLE WAS STILL WITHIN HER REACH. Someone once said, "***The distress that drives the unbeliever to despair drives the believer to God***." **That's what happened with this woman. With great haste, she took off for Mt. Carmel** (about a 15–20-mile ride) **in order to see Elisha the prophet**. **She knew that he was the only person who could once more give life to her son. Elisha was her only hope**.

  Let me stop here for a moment and ask this question. **What does a mother have to trust the Lord for when it comes to her children? (1)** Their health? **(2)** Their safety? **(3)** Their emotional and intellectual well-being? **(4)** Their salvation and subsequent spiritual development? **(5)** Their provision in life? ***Yes! All of these and often, they are packaged in such a way that when one need is met, others are too***.

  My mother was constantly concerned for me during the years that I was on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ. She was always worried if I would have enough money for the necessities of life. Though I trusted the Lord for His provision, her faith was not always up to it. That's why I constantly shared how God met my financial needs, especially when it happened in rather miraculous ways. I'm reminded of the time one December, when I received a notice from headquarters that my account was $1,350 in deficit. I needed to raise that money before I would get another paycheck in the mail. Miraculously, I received an extra $1,400 in support within two weeks of having to leave the field. **It turned out that the lion's share of it came from a man named Dave Ward and another fellow I never met in person and the rest from special gifts from my supporters**. It was during moments like these that she learned to trust in the Lord's gracious and tender care for my well-being. **Now let's return once again to the Shunammite woman and another observation regarding a godly mother**. Not only does she trust the Lord regarding her children, but …

A Godly Mother Turns to the Lord On Behalf of Her Children (**See 2 Kings 18:25b-36**). Making haste, the Shunamite woman hurried to the place where she could find the only person who could help her, Elisha.

- ***Her Request***. When Elisha saw her coming from a distance, he sent his servant, Gehazi, to check on her. "**Is all well with you? Is all well you're your husband? Is all well with your child*?***" he asked. For the second time in this story, the Shunamite woman replied, "**All is well.**" While some commentators suggest that she gave this response because she did not trust Gehazi, having seen some sort of flaw in his character (later revealed in **2 Kings 5**), it seems more likely that she was in a hurry to get an audience with Elisha and did not wish to explain herself to his servant. Coming to the man of God, she poured out her heart to him. "***Did I ask my Lord for a son? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me***?'" Evidently, her desperate plea was understood by the prophet, so that he instructed his servant to hurry and take Elisha's staff and lay it on the face of the child, which Gehazi did. Still, this did not satisfy the Shunammite woman.
- **Her Response**. She was unwilling to leave the fate of her only son to Gehazi, and so remained with Elisha. "**As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.**" Elisha returned with the woman to the village of Shunem. As they approached the town, Gehazi informed them that though he had indeed carried out Elisha's orders, nothing had happened. The boy was still dead. Undeterred, the prophet … **went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord. Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. Then he summoned Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." *This godly woman had turned to the Lord by seeking the prophet and her request was heard and answered.***

  Perhaps this would be a good time to stop and ask w*hat moms should take from this story when it comes to praying for their children*. First, I would suggest two things when it comes to HOW TO PRAY for your children … **(1)** Don't stop praying until you have an answer (**Romans 12:12 – Paul says that when facing tribulation – be constant in prayer**) and **(2)** Don't doubt when you pray, but trust that God will provide an answer (**Matthew 21:22 -- And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith**). If you're wondering WHAT TO PRAY for your children, here are three thoughts: **(1)** Pray that God will watch over them (**Psalm 121:7 -- The Lord will keep you from all harm — he will watch over your life**; **(2)** Pray that your children will not fall into temptation (**Matthew 6:13 -- And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one**); **(3)** Pray that they will grasp how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is and experience it daily (**Ephesians 3:17-19 -- And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God**).

  I thank God for praying mothers. They are the Lord's best helpers and a nation's greatest treasure. Nearly every person whose life has been a blessing to humanity has been supported by a mother on her knees. One mother whose children had grown into outstanding Christians was asked the secret of her success in training them. She said, "***This was the secret. When, in the morning, I washed my children, I prayed that they might be washed in the fountain of the Savior's mercy. When I put on their clothes, I prayed that they might be arrayed in the robe of the Savior's righteousness. When I gave them food, I prayed that they might be fed with manna from Heaven. When I started them on the road to school, I prayed that their faith might be as the shinning light, brighter and brighter to the perfect day. When I put them to sleep, I prayed that they might be enfolded in the Savior's arms***." In others words, her heart was continually going out to God in prayer for her children, even while she did her work. (**Review: A godly mother trusts the Lord regarding her children and turns to the Lord on behalf of her children**.)

A Godly Mother Thanks the Lord for Her Children (**2 Kings 18:37**). While it is clear in the text that her gratitude was directed toward the prophet, I assure you the Shunamite woman was ultimately expressing her thanksgiving to God, for she recognized Elisha to be "***the holy man of God***."

- **What did she do?** Immediately after restoring the boy's life, Elisha told his mother to "***Pick up your son***." Yet before the Shunamite woman would attend to the needs of her child, she did something else first. ***She gave thanks***. Of course, that makes sense, doesn't it? Whenever God does something good in your child's life so that His hand is evident, take the time to express your gratitude for His blessing.
- **How did she do it?** She fell at the feet of the prophet, bowing to the ground. In Old Testament times, this act was reserved for those who were recognized for their greatness. Frequently, this was the posture of those who came before God. In fact, it is translated "***worship***" in **Jeremiah 7:2**. I suspect this was in the heart of the woman as she bowed before Elisha. She was expressing her thanks to the prophet and her worship to the Lord (*He is the only One who deserves it*—**See Deuteronomy 6:13 NASB**) for delivering her son from death.

I've given enough applications for those of you who are moms (**trust the Lord/turn to the Lord/give thanks to the Lord**), so now I'd like to finish by providing two for all of us when it comes to our moms.

- ***Today, tell your mother that you love her***.
- ***Today, thank your mother that she loves you***.

Conclusion: **A little boy had forgotten his lines in a Sunday school presentation. His mother was in the front row to prompt him**. She gestured and formed the words silently with her lips, but it did not help. Her son's memory was blank. Finally, she leaned forward and whispered the cue, "***I am the light of the world***." The child beamed and then with great feeling and a loud clear voice said, "***My mother is the light of the world***." Well, we all know that Jesus is the light of the world, but **I wonder if He ever shines more brightly than in a mother who trusts the Lord when it comes to her children, turns to the Lord on behalf of her children and thanks the Lord for the lives of her children**.