

# IT IS WELL: MOTHER'S DAY 2011

## 2 KINGS 4:25-26

And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, "Look, the Shunammite woman!

Please run now to meet her, and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?'" And she answered, "It is well."

**"It is well."** *How could it possibly be well with this woman?* Her only son is dead for crying out loud! Elisha and his servant, Gehazi, should've been ashamed for even asking such an insensitive question.

This mother's problems started the day her little boy went to work with his father. Dad was a farmer, and the two were in the fields when the boy complained about a severe headache. It was harvest time which meant dad was extremely busy with the hired hands, and temporary laborers. So when his son screamed out, "My head, my head!" - this father did what any other concerned, conscientious dad would do... he sent his boy to his mom. A servant picked him up and carried him back to the house. We're told in 4:20, "When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died." What an ordeal for this mom! She sat there all afternoon, and watched her son's condition deteriorate. She was helpless! By sundown the boy had died on her knees. I honestly cannot imagine any mother suffering a more terrible fate...

*The break in your heart for this mother would be even wider if you knew the whole story...* This was the woman's only son. She and her husband tried for years to conceive a child, but to no avail. After all the fertility treatments, and long sessions of prayer, the miracle happened when it was least expected... The baby was born shortly after they'd befriended Elisha. They noticed that when the prophet made his rounds he always walked right by their house. The couple had a spare bedroom, and one day the woman suggested to her husband they offer it to the Prophet Elisha. It wasn't much - just a bed, a table and chair, a lamp - but it was a place where Elisha could stopover either for the *night*, or for a *nap*. It was an act of kindness on their part - and certainly, a service to God.

And Elisha appreciated the gesture - so much so, he wanted to do something nice for the lady and her husband. In verse 13, the prophet said to his servant Gehazi, "Say now to her, 'Look, you have been concerned for us with all this care. What can I do for you? Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?'" She answered, "I dwell among my own people." In other words, "thanks, but no thanks". The family had ample provision and protection. The last thing they wanted was a government hand-out, or an military look-out.

Gehazi though, had been observing the couple's lifestyle. He noticed there were no toys or swing set in the yard - no baby blankets on the clothesline - no strollers or diaper bags in the garage. He even saw that they drove a sporty, two-seater rather than a mini-van.

Gehazi had concluded in verse 14, "She has no son, and her husband is old." A-ha! Here is a way Elisha can return the generosity and hospitality of this couple. He can pray, and ask God to provide them a child. Elisha was obviously confident that God approved of his intentions... The prophet made a bold prediction. In verse 16 he tells the woman, "About this time next year you shall embrace a son." What a promise!

And can you imagine the joy and elation a year later when this child was born? It was a miracle! A barren couple had been blessed with a baby boy! After the baby's birth, I'm sure Elisha must've thought, "What in the world have I done?" His nap-times were no longer as peaceful with a baby around. But Elisha was delighted God had brought such joy to this house!

Everyone who knew their story viewed this little boy as God's miracle child... yet now this fact only added to the mother's grief and confusion... I can hear this mom cry, "God, this was my miracle! He was Your gift to me. To take him so young is cruel. He's a flower yet to bloom - a butterfly still in his cocoon. Why lay him in my arms, only to snatch him away?"

Imagine, a woman convulsing tears, slumped over a small, lifeless corpse - the limp little head bobbing up and down on her quivering knees. *What an awful picture...*

But after this woman gains her composure she performs an amazing act of resolve and faith. With the little strength she has left she picks the boy up, and takes him to Elisha's room. She lays him on the bed, and closes the door. Apparently, she's the only person who knew what had happened. Next, she calls for a donkey... She's going to see the prophet. As she saddles him up she tosses the keys to her servant, and tells him, verse 24, "Drive, and go forward..." *I told you they had a two-seater.* This woman was too upset to drive. She says to her chauffeur, "Do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you." In other words, *step on it, man!*

Before they leave, the servant wants to know why they're going to see Elisha. He asks the woman in verse 23, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath." It was like getting up on a weekday morning to go to church. *Why go to Calvary Chapel on Monday? There're no Bible Studies, no worship services. If you just want to see Elisha, he'll be by in a few days?* And it's weird how she responds. The remainder of verse 23 reads, "And she said, 'It is well.'" It's as if she's answering another question... "It is well" is not a rational response to the query, "Why are you going to him today?" It's as if another issue is on her mind. As if she's answering a totally different question...

Which brings us to our text... When the grieving mom reaches Elisha, he sends out Gehazi to greet her. In verse 26 he asks her three questions: "Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?" *And as I read this story the answer to all three questions has to be "NO!" Of course, it's not "well!"*

**It's certainly not well with this mom.** Her heart has been ripped out. She's cried so much she her tear ducts are dry. She's become dehydrated. **It's not well with this husband, either.** Suddenly she realizes she's married to an insensitive lug. She's embroiled in an all day vigil, overseeing her little boy's death – while her lamebrain, calloused husband can't pry himself away from work. He's still in the field when she leaves for Elisha. **And of course, it's not well with the child.** She left her son at home – his cold corpse is lying on a bed – it's been taken over by rigormortis.

If I'd been this mom, and Elisha's servant had asked me, "Is it well?"... I would've gone ballistic! Lost it! Blown a fuse. *Is it well... is it well... I'll show you if it's well...!* I would've bristled up and cold-cocked Gehazi. But in verse 26, the Shunammite woman answers, "It is well."

This morning, I want to ask all the mothers here three questions... **Mom, is it well with you?... Is it well with your husband?... Is it well with the child?...** And ladies, in the time we have left I want us to work through all three of these questions before you reach a final answer.

*First, if you're a mother, "Is it well with you?"* Most of you have never had a child die on your knees, but if you've been a mom for long you know motherhood has other taxing challenges! I'm thankful the closest Kathy and I ever came to losing a child was not being able to find one in the neighborhood. Not all mothers have lost a child... but all moms have at times felt like they were *losing their mind!*... I know you've lost your patience - or sanity – or energy – or figure...

Listen to a poem. It's called, "A Mom's Prayer"... *Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray my sanity to keep... For if some peace I do not find, I'm pretty sure I'll lose my mind... I pray I find a little quiet. Far from the daily family riot... May I relax, not have to think, about what they're stuffing down my sink.. Or who they're with, where they're at, and what they're doing to the cat... I pray for time all to myself (did something just fall off a shelf?) To cuddle in my nice, soft bed (Oh no, another goldfish – dead!) A silent moment for goodness' sake (Did I just hear a window break?) And that I need not cook or clean (why not, I've got the right to dream).* Yes, now I lay me down to sleep. I pray my wits about me keep. But as I look around I know – I must've lost them long ago!"

Here are a few entries in the "Dictionary of Motherhood"... **Grandparents** – The people who think your children are wonderful even though they're sure you're not raising them right. **Impregnable** - A woman whose memory of labor is still vivid. **Prenatal** - When your life was still somewhat your own. **Sterilize** - What you do to your first baby's pacifier by boiling it in water, and to your last baby's pacifier by blowing on it. **Temper tantrum** - What you should keep to

a minimum so you don't upset the children... And I know I'll get in trouble for this last one... **Weaker Sex** - The kind you have after the kids have worn you out.

Did you hear about the mother of several preschoolers who sent out thank-you notes for the new gifts she got at her most recent baby shower? One read, "Many thanks for the play pen. It use it daily. From 2:00 to 3:00 in the afternoon I get in it to read and the children can't get near me." Have you ever notice when a gold minor strikes the main vein - he hits the rock with the heaviest portion of precious medal – it's called the *mother load*? Well, I'm telling you, *a mother's load can get awfully heavy at times.*

*Is it well with you, mom?* Perhaps you'll answer, "Not really. I'm tired and burned out. I love my children, but I've about concluded I'm just not cut out for *the mommy gig*. I haven't lost a child to death, but I feel like I've lost them in other ways... I've lost my kids to a busy, hurried lifestyle that gives us little time to talk and pray... I've lost them to ungodly friends, and to worldly influences... There've been nights when I've tucked them in bed, and close the door, and I've wondered if I was losing them... or if they were losing me."

If the question was posed to you, "Is it well?" You'd have to respond, "No, I'm not well. I wear a smile, but I'm tired, and not sure I can carry on." Mom, in a moment I'll show you how the Shunammite was able to feel everything you're feeling, *plus some*, yet still be able to respond, "It is well!"

But there's another question to ask, "Is it well with your husband?" Please now - please, muffle your laughter. I know what most of you want to say, "Are you kidding! Sure, everything is well with my husband. Why wouldn't it be – he lives with his head in the sand. He doesn't know what I'm going through. The kids are lost, I'm dying inside, and he's still at the office harvesting a paycheck. Is it well with my husband? Of course it's not! He needs to get his act together and care for us instead of that job!" There's another definition in the *Dictionary of Motherhood*... "**Bottle Feeding** – An opportunity for Daddy to also get up at 2:00 in the morning."

Once a mother was out walking with her four year old daughter. The little girl picked an object up off the ground, and started to stick it in her mouth... Her Mom told her not to do that. The little girl wondered, "Why". Mom replied, "It's been laying outside. It's dirty. It probably has germs." The girl was astonished, "Wow mom, how to you know all this stuff?" This was a mother good at thinking on her feet. She answered, "It's the mommy test. You have to know it, or they don't let you be a mommy." As they continued down the path the mother noticed her little girl had delved into some serious thought. After a few minutes the little girl blurted out, "I get it! Then if you flunk the mommy test, you have to be a daddy!"

My purpose today is not to trash and bash dads. Men, I'm on your side! I'm an advocate for *two-parent families*. A child needs both a mom and a dad. A father isn't just a figurehead. A good dad is an active dad. All dads need to take the leadership in the training and discipline of their kids. I love dads. I am a dad. I'm just pointing out that no matter how hard a dad tries – at times his wife is still going to think he's not doing enough.

And mom, this is where you need to be careful. Men are like yarn. Push the yarn, and it goes nowhere. To move a piece of yarn it has to be pulled. Thus, to cultivate a good man a wife has to learn to pull the right strings. Ladies, you'll move your husband to be the man God wants, and you need, by pulling him along with your example and encouragement, rather than pushing him with harsh words, angry tones, and constant badgering.

Years ago, I had a friend tell me, the best thing I could do for my kids is to love their mom. And that's true! But the reverse is just as valid... Mom, this is not readily observable from where you're sitting, but it's true nonetheless. The best thing you can do for your kids is to love, and honor, and support their father. Understand, you can't put dad down in front of your kids, then expect those same kids to respect their father.

On rare occasion, Kathy and I will get upset with each other. We'll disagree on a decision or argue over an action – and she'll say to me, or I'll say to her - "Wait a minute! Let's remember we're both on the same team!" You know the old saying about teamwork, "Teamwork is like a waterfall. It's a lot of drips working together." Every mom needs the cooperation of her child's dad. Ladies, that's why you need to encourage, not defeat, him. Ladies, here's a new recipe, "Husbands can be spoiled by improper cooking. Some women keep their husband in hot water, or let him freeze, or keep him in a stew, or pickle him. No husband will be tender and good when so managed, but they're really delicious when prepared properly."

A mom does herself a favor by building up her children's dad.

Ladies, "Is it well with your husband?" I can't say, but I know if he's anything like Kathy's husband, the answer is "NO!" He's a pile of problems. Just like the Shunammite's husband, he gets too wrapped up in the harvest. There're times when his wife needs him to help shoulder the burden, and he's still in the field. At times, the guy is downright insensitive. But even if your husband is like Kathy's, or the Shunammite's, I'm going to show you how you can say of him, "It is well." There was a reason she answered as she did... but before I disclose it, there is one more question.

Mom, "Is it well with the child?" *Sometimes you wonder, don't you?* The comic strip, "For Better For Worse," chronicles family life, and occasionally there's a strip with which I can really relate. The first three frames show mom and dad lying in bed worrying about their child... They ask questions like, "Are we too tough on Mike? Or not tough enough? Do we give in too often? Do we listen? Do we understand? Do we nag too much? Are we good parents? How do we know what to do?"

The final frame pictures 10 year-old, Mike, in his bed, thinking, "Trouble with parents is they think they know it all." So often we really don't know... Sometimes kids are sweet, nice, respectful – then other times they act like they just came down from a tree. If you're married, and contemplating kids, the Mind Bender at Six Flags is a good preparation for parenthood.

Once a mother was hurried, and hassled, preparing dinner for her husband's family. That night at dinner she asked her little girl to say grace. The daughter was reluctant, "Mom, I don't know what to say?" Mom should've left it alone, but she was proud of the sweet prayers her daughter usually prayed. Finally, the mother suggested, "Honey, sure you know what to say, just say the last prayer you heard mommy pray?" The little girl bowed her head, "O Lord, why did I invite all these people to dinner?" As a mom you never know what to expect from your children.

Here are a few more entries in the Dictionary of Motherhood...

**Defense** – What you'd better have around de yard if you let de kids out.

**Look out** - What it's too late for your kid to do by the time you scream it.

**Top bunk** - Where you never put a child wearing Superman jammies.

**Two Minute Warning** - When the baby's face turns red and he or she begins to make those familiar grunting noises.

**Non-verbal** – The ability to whine without words.

**Whoops!** - An exclamation that translates roughly into "Get a sponge."

A mom knows her child's ups and downs. A mom understands her kid's moods and hormones. A mom can distinguish the difference between what's a *rite of passage*, and what's a *departure from the right path*... A mom takes it all into consideration, and then answers the question... "Is it well with the child?"

If anyone knows the heart of a child, it's his or her mom. God gives a mom a sixth sense. A mom is to the soul of her child what Kurt Mellious is to the weather. She can read the signs... She knows the thoughts... If a mother slows her busyness, and spends time with her brood... If she really watches, and listens, she'll be able to answer the question... She'll know if it's well, or if there's a problem with her child.

The Shunammite's son was dead as a doorknob! You would expect her to answer, "No it's not well!" But she did something about his deadness... She boarded a donkey, and went to the person with the power to help. The Shunammite mom went to the man of God, Elisha - and was so confident God through Elisha could help her son, that she considered it already done – the help already received – the boy already alive! That's why she replied, "It is well." Her answer to Gehazi was a statement of faith.

I believe three truths motivated this mom. And if you're a mom you need to write these truths down on a piece of paper, and consult them often... **First, The child was promised. Second, God was powerful. Third, Help was present.** I believe the same three truths apply to every mother's situation.

First, **your child is just as much a miracle as this mother's son.** Every child is a miracle. The psalmist says, we're all "**fearfully and wonderfully made.**" None of us are an accident. We're all a promise. God had shaped us and fashioned us in our mother's womb. Mom, God has a divine plan for your son or daughter.

Second, **God is the one with the power to restore a lost child.** 2 Kings 4 goes on to describe how Elisha returned with the woman. He entered the room where the boy's dead body lay. Then he robbed the grim reaper. Elisha restored the Shunammite's son from the clutches of death. Mom, God can deal with the deadness in your child. If He can resurrect a child from the dead – God can deliver your child from distraction, or defiance, or deception. God has the power to restore.

And a third truth, **this woman believed that God's help was present.** That's why she saddled a donkey - order the driver to push the pedal to the medal – then made a beeline straight to the man of God. And mom, I suggest you do the same. Don't delay. The woman's servant was wrong, you don't have to wait for a New Moon, or a Sabbath, or even a Sunday morning to pay God a visit. He's ready to help you at your point-of-need. God hears a mother's prayers.

All moms, hear ye, hear ye... Because your child is **promised** – and your God is **powerful** - and His help is **present**... *I suggest you not give up!* I exhort you to have faith. God can help you – *even you* – who carry a mother's load. The God who delivered this mom from *her grief*, can deliver you from *your grind*. If you're a mom in need of help... *God can be your strength!*

And God can help your husband – *Yes, even your husband.* Ladies, when you're done *pushing*, and *picking*, and *pecking*, and *pestering* – why don't you try *praying* for the ole boy. The God who raised a boy's corpse off Elisha's bed, can raise your husband off his couch!

And God can help your child – *Yes, even your child.* Your child may be a *wayward child*, but he's still a *promised child*. *Perhaps, he or she is a miracle marred, but they're a miracle nonetheless.* The Shunammite mother didn't hesitate - she immediately went to God for *His help* with *her child*. Mom, I encourage you to do the same!

If you read the rest of the chapter you'll learn how God used Elisha to raise this woman's son from the dead. But never forget this woman's faith! This was a mom who believed all along, even at the height of the crisis, that God would help her family. That's why she answered, "**It is well.**" In her heart of hearts - a heart of faith - all was well. God would work. Even though her son sat lifeless in her lap she knew God had not abandoned her. Her son's illness was no surprise to God. It was a test of her faith. Would she trust God, or succumb to her feelings of despair?

Mom, I want to encourage you today... Hold on to God's **promise**... Rely on God's **power**... Rest in His ever **present** help in time of need... In spite of how your situation might appear... Rise up in faith, and utter with the Shunnamite her declaration of faith, "**It is well with my child! It is well with my husband! It is well with this mom!**"