

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 15: Elisha's Mighty Works

2 Kings 3:1–4:44

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Second Kings 3–4 is a rapid-fire sequence of miracles that can overwhelm a class with detail if the teacher does not keep the main purpose in view. The doctrinal center of these chapters is the authentication of Elisha as the true prophet of the Lord. Israel under the house of Ahab had been saturated with false prophets, Baal's messengers, and spiritual confusion at every level. God's answer was not an argument but a demonstration: He validated His servant through unmistakable acts of power over water, debt, death, poison, and scarcity. Every miracle was also a declaration: this man speaks for Me. The class should leave understanding that miracles in the prophetic era served a specific revelatory purpose, not a general pattern of how God normally operates in every age.

The doctrinal stakes of Q9 are crucial and must be handled with care and confidence. The church of Christ holds that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit served their purpose in confirming the apostolic word (Mark 16:20; Heb 2:3–4), and that with the completion of the New Testament that confirming work is complete. This is not a diminishment of God's power; He is no less powerful today. It is a recognition that the purpose of miracles was not entertainment but revelation and authentication. The completed, confirmed word is now our standard (2 Tim 3:16–17; 1 Cor 13:8–10). Teaching this clearly will help students lovingly but firmly engage claims of modern sign-working.

The formation aim is equally rich. Behind every miracle in these chapters is a person in genuine need: a widow, a grieving mother, hungry men, an army dying of thirst. God's power in these chapters is never cold or mechanical. It is warm, responsive, and compassionate. Students should leave this lesson not only with sharper doctrine about miracles but with a deeper conviction that the God who filled jars of oil for a desperate widow is the same God who attends to their needs today through prayer, through His word, through His people, and through His providential care.

Question 1

Student Question:

Read 2 Kings 3:1–20. When the allied armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom face disaster in the desert without water, Elisha is summoned. He calls for music, and the Spirit moves through him. He promises that the trenches will fill with water, not from rain but from God. What does Elisha's pointed refusal to acknowledge wicked Joram while honoring the presence of Jehoshaphat tell us

about the conditions under which God's word comes, and what does the miracle itself demonstrate about God's faithfulness even when His people are led by compromised rulers?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The military alliance of Israel, Judah, and Edom against Moab (3:1–9) is launched without seeking God. After seven days in the desert without water the situation is desperate, and only then does someone ask whether there is a prophet of the Lord nearby. Elisha is summoned, and his response to Joram is immediate and pointed: 'What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother' (3:13). This is not petulance; it is a theologically precise rebuke. Joram was still practicing idolatry. Elisha owes him nothing. The only reason Elisha will speak at all is the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, who maintained a genuine relationship with God.

The detail of calling for a musician (3:15) before the Spirit moves on Elisha is historically interesting. This is not a technique for generating prophecy; it is a specific, historically situated moment in which the Spirit of God moves through His servant to deliver a word. The miracle that follows, trenches filling with water from an unseen source, without wind or rain (3:17), is unmistakably supernatural and designed to be recognized as such by three kings and their armies.

The lesson has two dimensions. First, the moral dimension: God's grace flowed to the army not because Joram deserved it but because of the presence of one man who still inquired of the Lord. Jehoshaphat functions as an intercessory presence, and that principle is consistent with the broader biblical picture of God blessing communities through faithful individuals. Second, the revelatory dimension: the water was not primarily a logistics solution; it was God's endorsement of His prophet written in the landscape. The army would know that Elisha's God controlled creation itself.

The question of whether we inquire of the Lord before launching major projects and decisions is raised directly by this passage. Joram did not inquire. Jehoshaphat, to his credit, knew that the first question in any crisis is 'Is there a prophet of the Lord here?' rather than 'how do we engineer our way out of this?' That instinct, formed by years of faithfulness, made all the difference when the crisis came.

The teacher should help the class see the consistency of the pattern: God meets people in genuine crisis even when that crisis is partly of their own making, as long as there is genuine turning toward Him. The grace here is not permissive of Joram's wickedness; it is responsive to Jehoshaphat's faith. God distinguishes between the two men even while He provides for the whole army.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's word coming through a prophet even in an era of royal compromise and deep idolatry

- The presence of one faithful person as a channel of God's grace to a larger group
- Elisha's refusal to serve wickedness for its own sake: the conditions and integrity of prophetic ministry
- Miracles as authentication of the prophet's authority in a time of spiritual confusion and false prophecy
- The pattern of crisis prayer as a last resort versus the discipline of seeking God first in all things

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think Elisha agreed to help the allied kings at all, given how strongly he rebuked Joram?
- What does Jehoshaphat's consistent habit of inquiring of the Lord teach us about the relationship between daily faithfulness and the ability to seek God in a crisis?
- What would it have required for Joram to have Elisha's word on his own terms, without depending on the presence of a more faithful king?

Question 2

Student Question:

The allied kings were in a crisis of their own making, a campaign launched without seeking God, yet God provided water because of the presence of one man, Jehoshaphat, who 'still inquired of the Lord' (3:11). Is there a place in your life right now where you have been operating on your own plan and find yourself in a kind of desert, and what would it look like to stop and genuinely inquire of the Lord as Jehoshaphat did?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The transformation question builds on the doctrinal ground of Q1 and presses it into honest self-examination. The allied kings launched a campaign without asking God, then scrambled to find a prophet when the consequences arrived. This is a pattern most people recognize in their own lives if they are honest: the decision made, the project launched, the relationship committed to, all without prayer, and then the discovery that things are not working and the sudden urgency to seek God's help.

The phrase 'desert without water' (3:8) is worth lingering on as a metaphor. A person living on their own plans, without the sustaining word of God, will eventually find themselves in a kind of interior desert. The absence of spiritual nourishment is not always immediately obvious; the army marched seven days before the crisis became acute. But it becomes acute eventually, and usually at the worst possible time.

The teacher should not let this question become purely a guilt session. Jehoshaphat himself entered into this alliance unwisely (he had done something similar with Ahab's son in a previous battle). He asked the right question once the crisis hit: not 'how did we get here' but 'who

speaks for God here?’ The grace of the story is that God still answered through Elisha. The instinct to seek God, even when late, is better than continuing without Him.

Practically, this question invites students to identify a specific area where they have been operating on their own plan and find themselves in a dry place. The point is not shame but reorientation: what would it look like to stop, inquire of the Lord, and receive His word even at this point in the journey?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The pattern of seeking God only in crisis rather than as the first and constant recourse
- Recognizing the interior desert that results from sustained self-reliance rather than God-reliance
- The grace that welcomes late-coming, honest inquiry rather than punishing those who come tardy to prayer
- The difference between getting God’s help with my plan and genuinely submitting to God’s plan
- Daily prayer and Scripture as the practices that form the habit of inquiring of the Lord before the crisis

Discussion Prompts

- Is there a project, relationship, or decision in your life right now that you launched without genuinely seeking God, and how is that going?
- What makes it hard to stop in the middle of a plan you have already committed to and genuinely ask God what He thinks?
- What would a lifestyle of consistently inquiring of the Lord before major decisions look like in practical terms for you this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Read 2 Kings 4:1–7. A prophet’s widow is in debt, her sons are about to be taken as slaves, and she comes to Elisha with nothing but one small jar of oil. Elisha asks what she has in her house, instructs her to gather borrowed vessels, close the door, and pour. The oil multiplies until there are no more vessels. What does the way God worked here, through what she already possessed, through her own obedient action, and through borrowed vessels, teach us about how God typically provides for those who come to Him in genuine need?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The widow’s story in 4:1–7 is one of the most carefully crafted short narratives in 2 Kings. She comes with a crisis that is economic (debt), social (imminent loss of her sons to debt slavery), and deeply personal (her husband, a son of the prophets, has died, leaving her with nothing).

She is not royalty, not a warrior, not a person of worldly significance. She is a widow with one small jar of oil and two sons about to be taken from her.

Elisha's first question is crucial: 'What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?' (4:2). God's provision, through Elisha, begins not with a grand gesture but with an inventory of what the widow already has. The jar of oil is almost nothing, a remnant. But it is what she has, and it is the instrument God uses. This is a pattern throughout Scripture: Moses has a staff, David has a sling, the disciples have five loaves and two fish. God habitually begins with what you already have in your hand, not with what you wish you had.

The instruction to borrow vessels is theologically rich. The widow must act in faith before any multiplication occurs. She must approach her neighbors (requiring humility), ask for empty vessels (exposing her need), close the door (private, not performative), and begin pouring (active trust). The oil multiplies in the context of her obedient action, not as a passive reward for her grief. The miracle engages her whole person: her relationships, her humility, her privacy, and her faith.

The oil stops when there are no more vessels. This detail is not incidental. The supply was not exhausted by God; it was limited by the number of vessels the widow gathered. Elisha's command to 'borrow vessels, and not too few' (4:3) was a hidden invitation to expect generously. She gathered what she gathered, and the oil filled every vessel she brought. The ceiling on the miracle was, in a sense, her own expectation expressed in the number of containers she collected.

The application points to God's provision for those who come to Him in genuine need. He provides through what they already have, through their willing cooperation, through their community involvement, and in proportion to their capacity for receiving. This is not a formula for getting everything you want; it is a portrait of how God's grace characteristically works: meeting people where they are and working through what they bring.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's habit of beginning provision with what is already in hand rather than with something entirely new
- The faith required to take obedient action before the miracle becomes visible
- Humility and community involvement as part of how God provides: borrowed vessels required neighbors
- The relationship between expectant faith expressed in action and the scope of God's provision
- God's particular care for the vulnerable: widows, orphans, and the poor as a consistent biblical theme
- The difference between passive expectation and actively cooperative faith that moves and pours

Discussion Prompts

- What do you make of the fact that the oil stopped exactly when the vessels ran out? What does that tell you about the relationship between our expectation and God's provision?
- Why do you think Elisha asked 'what do you have in your house' rather than simply performing the miracle directly?
- Where in your own life might God be waiting for you to bring what you actually have, even if it seems like very little, rather than waiting until you have something more impressive to offer?

Question 4

Student Question:

The widow's oil stopped flowing the moment she ran out of borrowed vessels: 'when the vessels were full, the oil stopped' (4:6). The supply was not exhausted by God but limited by the widow's capacity to receive it. Where in your own life have you found that your capacity to receive God's provision was the limiting factor rather than God's willingness to give, and what might it look like to bring more 'empty vessels' of faith and expectation to Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question takes the theological insight of Q3, that the widow's faith set the ceiling on the oil's flow, and moves it from doctrine to personal examination. The statement that the oil stopped precisely when the vessels ran out is one of the most quietly confrontational lines in the chapter. It invites the reader to ask: what would have happened if she had borrowed more vessels? The text implies the answer: the oil would have continued.

This is not a mechanical formula for prosperity theology, as if believing bigger automatically guarantees more. The context is a specific miraculous act of God through His authenticated prophet in a unique era. But the principle embedded in the narrative is genuine and consistent with New Testament teaching: 'You do not have because you do not ask' (James 4:2), and 'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you' (Matt 7:7). The limiting factor in our experience of God's provision is often not God's willingness but our willingness to ask expectantly, to bring genuine empty vessels of prayer and faith.

The practical dimension of this question is about the texture of our prayer lives. Do we come to God with the prayer equivalent of two or three vessels, small, safe, easily disappointed requests, or do we come with a room full of borrowed containers and a willingness to pour until God moves? This is not a performance of confidence for God's benefit. It is an honest reckoning with whether we actually believe He is who He says He is.

The teacher should be careful not to imply that all unanswered prayer is the fault of insufficient faith. That error is both cruel and unbiblical. God answers prayer according to His will and His wisdom (1 John 5:14-15), not as a vending machine triggered by the right amount of faith-

pressure. The point is the posture of genuine, open expectation versus the posture of going through the motions of prayer without really expecting much.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The relationship between expectant faith expressed in action and the experience of God's provision
- Avoiding both fatalism (God will do what He will do regardless of my asking) and prosperity theology (enough faith guarantees the desired outcome)
- The biblical pattern of expansive asking versus small, self-protective prayer
- Honesty about whether our prayer lives reflect genuine expectation or merely religious habit
- The communal dimension of faith: the widow borrowed from neighbors, enlisting others in her need and her expectation

Discussion Prompts

- If the oil stops when the vessels run out, how many vessels are you currently bringing to God in your prayer life?
- What is the difference between genuine expectant faith in prayer and a kind of spiritual presumption that demands God perform on our terms?
- Has there been a time when you look back and realize you limited what God could do in a situation by the smallness of your expectations or the scarcity of your prayer?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read 2 Kings 4:8–37. The Shunammite woman builds a room for Elisha and asks for nothing in return. Though her husband is old, she is given a son. When the boy dies, she goes to Elisha with urgency and remarkable composure, saying only 'It is well' to those who ask. Elisha prays and stretches himself over the boy, the boy is restored to life, and the woman receives her son again. What does the Shunammite woman's faith demonstrate about the relationship between genuine grief and confident trust in God, and how does Elisha's persistent, prayerful effort model the nature of intercession?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The Shunammite woman's story (4:8–37) is one of the longest and most emotionally layered narratives in 2 Kings. She is introduced not as someone in crisis but as someone of generosity: she persistently urges Elisha to eat when he passes by and eventually builds him a furnished room on the roof. She asks for nothing. When Elisha presses his servant Gehazi to find out what can be done for her, Gehazi identifies what the woman herself has not said aloud: 'she has no son, and her husband is old' (4:14). The deepest grief in her life is one she has not voiced as a request.

Elisha's promise that she will hold a son at this season next year produces her most revealing response: 'No, my lord, O man of God; do not lie to your servant' (4:16). She has made peace with her barrenness. She has decided not to hope, because hope deferred is too painful. The birth of the son is God's generosity exceeding what she was willing to want for herself.

When the son dies, the Shunammite woman's response is extraordinary. She lays him on the prophet's bed, saddles a donkey, and rides to Elisha at Mount Carmel. When her husband asks why, she says only 'It is well' (4:23). When Gehazi runs to meet her, she says again 'It is well' (4:26). But then in verse 27, reaching Elisha, she falls at his feet and catches hold of them, and Elisha discerns that 'her soul is in bitter distress' (4:27). She is not pretending the grief away. Her 'it is well' is not denial; it is defiant, directional trust. She has decided that if any answer exists for this grief, it is through this prophet and his God.

Elisha's response models persistent, earnest intercessory prayer. He first sends Gehazi with his staff, but when that produces no result, he goes himself. He enters the room, prays to the Lord, stretches himself over the boy, prays again, and stretches himself over the boy a second time. The boy sneezes seven times and opens his eyes (4:33-35). This is not a formula or a technique. It is fervent, repeated, embodied prayer by a man who knew that the boy's life depended entirely on the God he was addressing.

Two emphases matter for the teacher. First, the Shunammite's faith is the kind that moves toward God in the worst moment rather than away from Him. She goes to Elisha even without knowing the outcome. Second, Elisha's intercessory effort is a model of prayer that does not give up at the first attempt. James 5:16 says 'the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.' That active, working quality is vivid in Elisha's doubled, determined engagement over this boy.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Grief and faith as compatible realities: trusting God while fully feeling loss without pretending either away
- The Shunammite's 'it is well' as defiant directional trust rather than spiritual denial
- Moving toward God in crisis rather than away from Him as the distinguishing mark of mature, tested faith
- Persistent intercessory prayer as modeled by Elisha: not a formula but earnest, repeated, embodied engagement
- God attending to unspoken grief: the son given before the woman had asked for him
- The raising of the boy as an authentication of Elisha's prophetic authority, pointing forward to the greater resurrection works of Christ

Discussion Prompts

- What do you think the Shunammite woman meant by 'it is well' when her son had just died? What kind of faith makes that possible?

- Why do you think Elisha's first attempt through Gehazi with his staff did not work, and what does it tell us that Elisha then went himself and prayed at length?
- When you face genuine grief or loss, what is your instinct: to move toward God and toward the community of faith, or to withdraw? What forms that instinct?

Question 6

Student Question:

The Shunammite woman said 'It is well' while her dead son lay in the prophet's room, before she had any guarantee of restoration. She felt the grief fully, as the text makes plain (4:27), but she moved toward God rather than away from Him. When you are in genuine grief or loss, is your instinct to move toward God or away from Him, and what makes the difference?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The transformation question of Q6 takes the Shunammite's 'it is well' and presses it into honest self-examination. The statement is one of the most striking confessions of faith in the Old Testament precisely because it was made in the worst possible moment: her son was dead, she had not yet reached Elisha, and she had no guarantee of any outcome. She was choosing to call it 'well' before she could see any evidence that it would be.

This is not positive thinking or spiritual denial. The text is explicit that 'her soul was in bitter distress' (4:27). She felt the full weight of the grief. But she also made a decision about where to take it, and that decision expressed itself in movement: she saddled the donkey and rode. The 'it is well' was not a description of her emotional state; it was a declaration about God's character. He is the kind of God with whom all things are ultimately well, even in the valley of loss.

The teacher can help the class distinguish between two crisis responses. The first is the retreat: 'Where was God? Why did He let this happen? I cannot pray. I cannot go to the assembly. I cannot face the people who will say the wrong things.' The second is the Shunammite's response: 'I am going to the prophet. I am going to where God speaks. I am staying connected to the source of life even though I do not yet understand what is happening.' The second does not eliminate grief; it carries grief toward God rather than away from Him.

Practically, the teacher should help students identify their crisis-response instinct. Do they reach for the phone to call a brother or sister in the church, to ask for prayer, to get to the assembly? Or do they go quiet, stay home, stop reading their Bible, stop praying? Both responses are understandable. Only one follows the Shunammite's example and opens the door to the encounter with God that she found at the end of her ride.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The distinction between feeling grief fully and allowing grief to drive us away from God and His people

- Defiant directional trust as a form of mature faith that confesses God's character before seeing the outcome
- The community of believers as the place to bring crisis rather than a place to hide from
- The danger of spiritual isolation in grief and the grace of the assembled body for the suffering member
- Developing the crisis-response instinct before the crisis arrives through daily faithfulness and community investment

Discussion Prompts

- Describe a time when your instinct in grief or loss was to move away from God rather than toward Him. What pulled you in that direction?
- What would it take to develop the Shunammite's instinct, that immediate, deliberate move toward God and His people in the worst moments?
- How can this group of believers become the kind of community where people instinctively come rather than hide when things fall apart?

Question 7

Student Question:

Read 2 Kings 4:38–44. Two miracles close this section: the poisonous stew made wholesome by a handful of flour, and twenty loaves of barley bread feeding a hundred men with food left over. What do these two miracles share in what they demonstrate about God's power over both death and scarcity, and why do you think God worked through Elisha in such tangible, physical ways among the community of the prophets?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The two miracles at the end of chapter 4, the healing of the poisonous stew (4:38–41) and the feeding of a hundred with twenty loaves (4:42–44), are easily read as afterthoughts following the dramatic account of the Shunammite's son. They are not. They are carefully placed to extend the portrait of Elisha's ministry to the community of the prophets and to reinforce the twin themes of God's power over death and His power over scarcity.

The stew story has an earthy, even slightly comic texture. The prophets are hungry, someone goes to gather herbs, and a well-meaning but botanically ignorant gatherer throws in gourds of a poisonous wild vine. 'There is death in the pot,' someone shouts (4:40). Elisha throws in flour and declares it safe. This is not a dramatic public miracle before kings; it is God's quiet intervention in the ordinary domestic life of a community that serves Him. It says something important about the scope of God's care: He is not only interested in the grand moments of Elijah-versus-the-prophets-of-Baal. He attends to the soup pot.

The feeding of the hundred men (4:42–44) is significant in its prophetic resonance. A man brings twenty loaves of barley bread and fresh grain to Elisha. The supply is hopelessly inadequate for a

hundred men. Elisha's servant essentially asks the question the disciples will ask centuries later: 'How am I to set this before a hundred men?' (4:43; compare John 6:9). Elisha's response is a precise pre-echo of Jesus' words: 'They shall eat and have some left.' And that is exactly what happens: 'according to the word of the Lord' (4:44).

The connection to Christ's feeding of the multitudes is deliberate and significant. The same God who worked through Elisha, the same character of overflowing provision, the same surplus beyond the need, the same word that makes it happen, all of this is on display in both stories. God was not merely feeding a hundred men in 4:42-44; He was establishing a pattern of generosity that would reach its fullest expression when the Son of God took five loaves and multiplied them for five thousand.

For the teacher, these two miracles together underscore a central truth about both Elisha and Jesus: the word of God spoken through the authenticated prophet carries inherent power, and that power extends to the most basic human needs. Death in the pot, not enough food: the same problems humanity has faced since Eden, and God, through His servant, answers both. The miracles are also building a community of eyewitnesses whose testimony about Elisha's ministry will be preserved and eventually woven into the whole story of God's redemptive purposes.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's care extending to the ordinary and domestic as well as the grand and public
- The feeding of the hundred as a deliberate prefiguring of Christ's feeding of the multitudes
- The power resident in the word of the Lord spoken through the authenticated prophet
- Both miracles addressing the two oldest human fears: death and hunger, and God's sovereignty over both
- The community of prophets as a preserved remnant through a time of national apostasy
- The consistency of God's character across both Testaments: the same generous God in Elisha's flour and Jesus' broken bread

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to the community of prophets that God would attend to both the poison in their stew and the inadequacy of their food supply? How would that have shaped their confidence in Elisha's word?
- How does noticing the deliberate parallel between 4:42-44 and John 6:1-14 change the way you read both stories?
- In what areas of your life are you facing the equivalent of 'death in the pot' or 'not enough for a hundred men,' and how does this passage speak to those situations?

Question 8

Student Question:

The feeding of a hundred men with twenty loaves prefigures Christ's feeding of the multitudes (Matthew 14:13–21; John 6:1–13), the same impossible arithmetic, the same incredulous servant, the same surplus, the same word of the Lord bringing abundance from scarcity. How does recognizing God's consistent character across both Testaments, always generous, always more than enough, shape the way you trust Him in your own areas of scarcity?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The feeding of the hundred prefigures Christ's feeding of the multitudes with unmistakable precision. The same impossible arithmetic, the same incredulous servant's question, the same surplus after all have eaten, the same explanation: 'according to the word of the Lord.' When Jesus fed five thousand with five loaves and two fish (Matt 14:13–21) and four thousand with seven loaves (Matt 15:32–38), He was not merely performing a kind act. He was presenting His credentials in a pattern that any student of the prophets should recognize as the signature of God authenticating His messenger.

The consistency of God's character across both Testaments is one of the most sustaining convictions a Christian can hold. The God who filled the widow's jars, raised the Shunammite's son, neutralized the death in the pot, and multiplied twenty loaves for a hundred is the same God who multiplied five loaves for five thousand and who conquered death in the ultimate raising of His own Son. Hebrews 13:8 declares 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.' That sameness is not merely a doctrinal statement; it is a promise about the character and faithfulness of the God to whom we pray.

For the class, this question presses on areas of personal scarcity. What does it mean to trust a God of consistently demonstrated generosity in a place where the math does not add up? It means bringing what you actually have, whether that is twenty loaves or five loaves or one jar of oil, and placing it in God's hands, then watching to see what He does with inadequate supply when it is offered in genuine dependence.

The teacher should be careful not to promise that God will always multiply every gift into miraculous abundance in the same visible, dramatic way as these specific miracles. These signs served a specific revelatory purpose in a specific era. But the character of God they reveal, His generosity, His power over scarcity and death, His attentiveness to the ordinary needs of His people, is the same character that governs His providential care of believers today through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through the ordinary means of His grace.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The deliberate typological connection between Elisha's feeding miracle and Christ's feeding of the multitudes
- The consistency of God's character as the theological basis for trusting Him across all circumstances and eras

- The difference between claiming specific miraculous multiplication today and trusting God's providential generosity
- Bringing what you actually have to God rather than waiting until you have something more impressive to offer
- How recognizing Christ as the fulfillment of prophetic types deepens both our understanding of the OT and our faith in Jesus

Discussion Prompts

- When you compare 4:42-44 and John 6:1-14 side by side, what strikes you most about the similarities, and what does that tell you about who Jesus is?
- How does knowing that God has a long, consistent track record of providing in situations of apparent impossibility change the way you face your own areas of scarcity?
- What would you bring to God right now if you truly believed He could work with inadequate supply the way He worked with twenty loaves for a hundred?

Question 9

Student Question:

Looking across all of 2 Kings 3:1-4:44, these miracles were given in a specific era of deep apostasy when Israel desperately needed to know whose voice was the voice of God. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 13:8-10. How do the miracles of Elisha function as God's authentication of His prophet and His word in that era, and why does the church today rest on the completed and confirmed New Testament rather than on continuing miraculous sign-working as the basis for its confidence in Scripture?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal center of the lesson and must be taught with both care and confidence. The miracles of Elisha served a specific, historically located purpose: the authentication of the prophet and his word in an era when Israel could not distinguish the true word of God from the false. The Northern Kingdom under the house of Ahab had been saturated with hundreds of Baal's prophets, with court prophets who told kings what they wanted to hear, and with spiritual confusion at every level. God's answer was not a theological argument but a demonstration: He validated Elisha through acts that only the God of Israel could perform, writing His endorsement in water and oil and life.

The pattern of miraculous authentication runs consistently through Scripture. Moses' signs validated his commission before both Pharaoh and Israel (Exod 4:1-9). Elijah's fire on Carmel authenticated the true God against the Baals (1 Kings 18). Jesus' miracles authenticated His identity ('the works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,' John 10:25). The apostles' signs authenticated the gospel they proclaimed (Heb 2:3-4; Mark 16:20). In each case,

the miracles are not ends in themselves; they are God's endorsement written on the word and the messenger. The pattern always serves revelation.

With the completion of the New Testament, that authentication work is finished. The word of God has been confirmed with signs (Heb 2:3-4) and is now fully sufficient to equip the believer for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17). First Corinthians 13:8-10 declares that miraculous gifts (tongues, prophecy, revelatory knowledge) 'will cease,' 'will pass away,' 'will be done away' when 'the perfect' (the complete whole of revealed truth) comes. The church today rests on the completed and confirmed word, not on new miraculous authentication.

This is not a diminishment of God's power or His active involvement in His people's lives. He answers prayer. He works providentially. He heals through physicians and through the sustaining of human bodies according to His wisdom and will. But the age of revelatory miracles, miracles whose specific purpose was to confirm the identity of a new prophet or apostle and authenticate new revelation, belongs to a completed era. The New Testament gives no warrant for extending apostolic sign-working authority to the post-apostolic church.

For the church of Christ, this is a position of deep confidence, not skepticism. We do not need ongoing miraculous confirmation of Scripture because Scripture has already been confirmed, once and for all, by the signs that accompanied its delivery. We stand on a completed, God-breathed, fully confirmed word, and that word is enough to take us all the way home (2 Tim 3:17). Elisha's miracles were God saying 'this man speaks for Me.' The completed New Testament is God saying 'this book is My word, confirmed and sufficient.' The response in both cases is the same: hear it, trust it, and obey it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Miracles as God's authentication of His prophet and His word, not as a general pattern for every era of the church
- The specific historical purpose of sign-gifts: confirming new revelation in the prophetic and apostolic eras
- The completion and sufficiency of the New Testament as the fully confirmed word of God (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- First Corinthians 13:8-10 and the cessation of sign-gifts with the completion of God's revealed word
- The difference between God's ongoing providential care and the specific revelatory function of biblical miracles
- Why claiming ongoing apostolic miracle-working either oversteps scriptural warrant or confuses important categories
- God's power today is undiminished; its primary expression now is through the confirmed word, answered prayer, and providential care

Discussion Prompts

- Why was it so important for God to authenticate Elisha through miracles in this specific era in Israel's history? What would have happened without that authentication?
- How do 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and Hebrews 2:3–4 together make the case that the completed New Testament is the sufficient foundation for the church today?
- How would you lovingly but clearly explain to someone who claims ongoing apostolic miracle-working why the church of Christ understands the purpose and era of sign-gifts differently?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back over the whole sweep of 2 Kings 3–4, from the water in the desert to the bread that fed a hundred, name one specific truth God has shown you about His character through this passage, and describe one concrete step you intend to take this week in response to it.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question calls students to synthesis and specificity. After seven miracles across two chapters, the danger is that the lesson feels like a survey of impressive ancient events rather than a transforming encounter with the God behind them. The teacher's task is to help each student land on one truth and name one concrete step in response.

Encourage students to be specific about which miracle, which person, or which moment spoke most directly to their current situation. The widow with the jar of oil speaks to some. The Shunammite's 'it is well' speaks to others. The feeding of the hundred speaks to those living with inadequacy. The water in the trenches speaks to those who launched something without God and find themselves in a dry place. God's range in these chapters is wide enough to touch most people somewhere.

The step should be concrete and time-bound. 'I will trust God more' is not a step. 'I will bring the specific situation in my finances that I have been carrying alone to God in prayer every morning this week and ask a brother or sister to pray with me about it' is a step. The community character of this lesson, borrowed vessels, a hundred men fed together, a prophet's community sustained through drought, invites corporate response alongside personal commitment.

Close the lesson with wonder at the God who attends to a widow's debt and a dead boy and a pot of poisonous stew with the same unlimited care He brings to the redemption of the world. He is not too busy for your specific need. He is not too grand for your ordinary crisis. He is the God who fills jars and raises sons and heals soup and feeds communities and eventually, in the fullness of time, feeds a starving world by giving His own Son. That is the God of 2 Kings 3–4. He has not changed.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The discipline of moving from survey to synthesis: identifying what God said specifically to you through the passage
- Specificity in response: naming a concrete, time-bound step rather than a vague resolution
- The range of God's attention in these chapters: He cares for grand crises and ordinary ones alike
- Community response: how the group can hold one another accountable to the named steps
- The character of God revealed in these miracles as the same character that sent His Son to feed, heal, and raise the dead

Discussion Prompts

- Which person in 2 Kings 3–4 did you most identify with as you worked through this lesson, and why?
- What is the one specific thing God showed you about Himself through this passage that you did not see as clearly before?
- What is the one concrete step you are committing to take this week, and who in this group can you ask to check in with you about it?