

AWARENESS.SKILLS.KNOWLEDGE.

Intergenerational Women's Ministry and Study of Women In the Bible

St. Matthew AME Church

Reverend Melvin E. Wilson, Pastor|Teacher – Reverend Leslie Wilson, Facilitator

28 September 2024

This month provides an overview of how her

Spiritual Gifts

Personality (Presence/Perspective)

Experiences (Positions/Protection)

Cares/Passions

Interest

Abilities

Life Talents

contributes to her special God-given purpose, equipping her to **minister to all God's children.**



Mary Ellen Pleasant, born into slavery, became a Gold Rush-era millionaire and a powerful abolitionist. Pleasant was an American entrepreneur, financier, real estate magnate and abolitionist. She was arguably the first self-made millionaire of African-American heritage, preceding Madam C. J. Walker by decades. She identified herself as "a capitalist by profession" in the 1890 United States census. "My cause was the cause of freedom and equality for myself and for my people."

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From “All Women of the Bible” by Herbert Lockyer

Great Woman of Shunem

2 Kings 4:8-37; 8:1-6 (Pages 205-208)

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AWARENESS



So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When he saw her in the distance, the man of God said to his servant Gehazi, “Look! There’s the Shunammite! Run to meet her and ask her, ‘Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is your child all right?’”

“Everything is all right,” she said. 2 Kings 4:25-26 (NIV)

What We Know

- She was considered great and well known but remained nameless in Scripture.
- She was married, had no children and they were considered humble and devout worshipers of Jehovah.
- She had a record of hospitality and benevolence. Other values included generosity and righteousness.

Her Persuasion

- As a true daughter of Issachar (e-sa-car), she was faithful to the motto of her tribe, “Ready for the Burden”.
- Their home was used as a place for entertainment of God’s people who passed that way.
- Her husband and she were one, thus with her it was always, “Let us” (II Kings 4:10). It appeared that the “great woman” was much younger than her God-fearing husband. Her taking on an older partner in years and experience thus prepared her to care for the aged prophet Elisha when he came her way.

Her Perception

- From their window they could see the well-traveled road from Samaria or Carmel to Shunem. This is how they came to give attention to a man with a masterful countenance (look, expression), wearing a pastoral mantle (garment) and having a long staff in his hand.

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- Her perceptive ability told her that this man who often passed their way was in no ordinary man.
- Perceptiveness (see, hear, sense something) is indeed a useful gift and in this case resulted in true consideration for a weary prophet in need of gracious hospitality.
- When Elisha was a younger man, he could make the journey from his home in Carmel to Jezreel in a single day (30 miles). But as he grew older his visits became more tiring, and this was noticed by the wife.
- One day she went out and met Elisha as they noticed his approach and extended to him the generous hospitality of their home.

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Her Provision

- The decision to make provision – a guest room with a bed, table, stool, candlestick or lampstand - for the prophet was made before he was invited in. What a sanctum of health and peace for the weary man of God that prophet's chamber proved to be.
- Throughout the Bible there are many accounts of women in all the circumstances of domestic or public life – sister (Miriam); businesswoman (Lydia); wife (Priscilla); mother (Samson's), widow (Widow of Zarephath) – bought into contact with prophets and apostles, even with Jesus Himself and greatly helped them by ministering unto God's servants of their substance.

Her Perquisite (gain)

- Because of her affluent position the Shunammite needed no remuneration for the food and shelter she afforded Elisha.
- Appreciating all she had done, the prophet felt that she should have some return for her kindness and made an inquiry through her servant Gehazi. Her reply was characteristic of the humility of her nobility, "I dwell among mine own people... my husband and I are humble commoners, quietly living in the country and do not seek the company of exalted personages."
- When Elisha received the report he asked, "what then is to be done for her?" to which Gehazi said, "Verily, she hath no child and her husband is old." Immediately he called her and when she appeared he said her barrenness was to end and she would embrace a son in a year. The miracle happened!

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Her Pang (painful emotion)

- The Shunammite had 3-4 years of happy motherhood.
- One day the child cried out to his father, “My head, my head!” and was taken to his mother when he eventually died. She then took the dead child and laid him on the bed in the chamber for the man of God. Why do you think she did this?

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Her Pilgrimage

- In her great grief she thinks only of God and of the man of God through whose instrumentality the blessing of motherhood came to her.
- Seeking the cooperation of her husband, she sets out on an ass accompanied by one of the male servants who was urged to ride without restraint.
- Recognizing the woman in the distance and sensing some calamity, seeing her visit as unusual, Elisha sent his servant Gehazi to inquire if all was well with her and her husband and child, to which she replied, “It is well”.
- She had come to see Elisha and not his servant and approached him, falling at his feet. When Gehazi went to thrust her aside Elisha intervened and said, “Let her alone; for her soul is vexed (bitter) within her; and the Lord hath hid it from me and hath not told me.” Thoughts on this?
- “Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say do not deceive me (raise my hope?)” (v28)
- Elisha sent Gehazi with his staff, but she would not leave Carmel until the prophet accompanied her. Along the way they meet Gehazi who says “the reaper whose name is death” had visited the hospitable house of the godly parents.
- Intersession and vigorous action were with Elisha as he gathered the lifeless body to his bosom and pressed its face to his. In the caress and kiss of life, all the energy of the prophet's love and faith were focused and so “the flesh of the child waxed warm”. He told his servant to go get the Shunammite who saw her boy alive and heard Elisha say, “Take up thy son.” The funeral became a feast.

Her Penury (poverty)

- It had been revealed to Elisha that there would be a famine that would last for 7 years as divine judgment upon its idolatry, so he advised the Shunammite to leave her home with her son and escape by seeking exile on the south seaboard. Because of her faith she left and “sojourned in the land of the Philistines”.

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- She returns home later husbandless and petitions restoration of her property which she eventually is given by the king who had heard about the miracle of the prophet Elisha in raising her son from the dead. (2 Kings 8:1-6)

Two Lessons From the Author

- First, in this nameless woman we have the personification of the hospitality the New Testament exhorts us to manifest. Hospitality is defined as “the practice of entertaining strangers gratuitously – kindness to strangers” derived from the word “hospes” meaning a guest, and also a host who entertains the guest. From this word names have come describing institutions like:
 - hospitals for the sick
 - hospice for the benefit of religious travelers (today also noted as a facility for the care of the terminally ill)
 - hotel is also related.
- Second, is the Shunammite's reply to Gehazi's question, “is it well with the child?” Although the child was dead, her answer expressed an unfaltering faith in God's overruling providence and its immortality. When death robs our home of a treasure do we share the Shunammite's secret and confess, “All, all is well!”?

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BLESSINGS OVERFLOW!!

October 26, 2024: WOMAN OF THE MONTH – Babylon The Queen

Revelations 18: 7-8 (Book Pages 267-269)

November 23, 2024: WOMAN OF THE MONTH – Orpah

Ruth 1 (Book Page 119-120)

December 28, 2024– Christmas Break

January 25, 2025: WOMAN OF THE MONTH – Peter's Wife

Matthew 8:14-18; Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41 (Book Page 220)

February 22, 2025 – WOMAN OF THE MONTH - Naomi

The Book of Ruth (Book Pages 116-118)

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SKILL

Step Thirty: Radical Hospitality

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM THE GREAT WOMAN



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1. Hospitality is shared generosity: Hospitality is defined as “the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers.” The Shunammite woman was not stingy with her God-given wealth. She didn’t stop at an occasional meal, but generously provided a room for Elisha. And not just any old room, but one created specifically for him with comfortable furnishings. Going “above and beyond” could be the definition of generosity when it comes to the giving of your resources. The Shunammite woman did just that. Do you, would you do the same?

2. Hospitality is offered graciously: Hospitality is welcoming! She was intentional in offering hospitality and accommodated the receiver with reassurance that she was indeed sincere in her desire to provide it. I want to not only offer hospitality, but also make it easy for others to take me up on it.

3. Hospitality cheers on and support those doing God’s work: Hospitality is helpfulness! By referring to Elisha as “a holy man of God,” the Shunammite woman revealed her esteem for God Himself and also for the prophet God uniquely called to ministry. Her ministry would be to support this man God had called. How did she do that? She lifted his burdens, made his work easier and provided sustenance, comfort, rest, and fellowship. In all of this she affirmed that Elisha’s call was crucial and sought to help him fulfill it as best she could. Are you be one who recognizes the call of God in others and responds with encouragement and support?

4. Hospitality is not forsaken even in suffering: Hospitality inspires kindheartedness! When Elisha wanted to return the favor of her hospitality, he promised her a child. Through her response “*No, my lord, O man of God; do not lie to your servant.*” (v.16) we come to understand that she had been childless and still longed for motherhood while

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bearing the pain of her infertility. The fact that Elisha was unaware of her barrenness revealed that her personal suffering had not stifled her willingness to serve others. In her personal pain, she resisted turning inward, focusing only on herself. Instead, she turned outward and toward others in sacrificial service. Would you consider her a victim who in the midst of her suffering was able to turn from self to others?

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5. Hospitality cultivate gratitude to God first and foremost: Hospitality is believing! In an astounding turn of events, the Shunammite woman gave birth to a child as promised, but, several years later, he died. With great distress, she went straight to Elisha for help who came and eventually revived the child. The Shunammite's first response? *"She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground."* Her second response? *"Then she picked up her son and went out."* (v. 37) Gratitude to God (via the man of God) came first. Then, and only then, she picked up her only child who had been dead just moments before. Even in times when conflicted, pause and give gratitude to the Giver of all things.

6. Hospitality speak eagerly and readily about God's work: Hospitality is Christ like! Because of her hospitality and their friendship, Elisha warns the Shunammite woman of a coming famine, and she should relocate for seven years. Upon returning, she finds herself before the king making a request for her previous home and land, when it is revealed to the king that Elisha once restored her dead son to life. 2 Kings 8:6 says, *"And when the king asked the woman, she told him."* We do not have to find ourselves before someone of power and/or influence to remember the gifts of God in our life. Always be ready to recount them whenever the opportunity, great or small, arises.

NOTE: The above was edited/adapted from a piece by Melanie Krumrey with Baptist Churches of New England who appropriately concluded with, "I came upon the Upper Room account from Luke 22 recently. Observing the words and actions of Jesus during that Passover meal made me think of the Shunammite woman. On the night He would be betrayed, Jesus offered hospitality to his disciples, he encouraged them in their ministry, served them in the face of great suffering, offered thanks to God, and eventually gave something more generous than any of them could ever repay: His very life for their own. As an Old Testament woman, the Shunammite woman did not have the example of Jesus nor the Holy Spirit, but she walked by faith in the one true God and was transformed into His likeness. How much more possible for us to imitate Christ when we have His grace to compel us and His very Spirit indwelling us?"

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KNOWLEDGE



Dear _____ (insert your name)

Today I engaged in a conversation about an unnamed woman in the Bible who showed radical hospitality to a stranger. Through her Ministry of Presence, we see a part of God’s plan. I know trusting God and being patient with God is best for my journey and testimony as an Ambassador of Christ. Because “God is doing something wonderful in me!” I must be aware of tools Satan will use (impatience, doubt, arrogance, distrust, strife, and division for example) to keep me from being friendly, welcoming, helpful, warm, kindhearted, neighborly, hospitable to serve the Lord in mind, spirit and heart. Because of what I heard, shared, learned, witnessed, thought about, I want to remember most for “spirited understanding” is,

In Jesus Name,

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

988

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