

JUNE 2024



Bible Study | Faith in Action

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## Prepare

- Bible
- Journal
- Pen/pencil

## Get Started

There are a lot of reasons why you may show hospitality. Maybe it's to a family member; we do things for others just because they are family, right? Or maybe a friend helped you move into your house, so you have him or her over for dinner. It seemed like the least you could do. But what about showing hospitality with no consideration of a debt owed or repayment due? What about when the person truly cannot return the kindness?

- Can you think of a time when you showed kindness and hospitality to someone without expecting anything in return? Write an example in your journal.

## Study and Learn

### Read 2 Kings 4:8–10.

As the prophet Elisha went about his travels, he encountered a woman from Shunem. Verse 8 reveals this woman was prominent within her community, and she used her abundance to feed and house Elisha. She went out of her way to welcome Elisha into her home, and her hospitality would bless not only Elisha but herself as well.

### Read 2 Kings 4:11–37.

Though the Shunammite woman was not seeking special favor through her hospitality, God did honor her. Elisha recognized the woman's kindness, and he asked what he could do for her in return. She refused to ask for anything, so Elisha instead asked his servant, Gehazi, what he could do for her. Gehazi noticed she was childless, so Elisha promised the Shunammite woman she would have a son within the next year. The woman responded in disbelief.

The joy of this astounding proclamation and the child it resulted in was brief, however. The Shunammite woman cared for her child as he took his last breath in her lap. She grieved the sudden death of this promised son, but she did not lose hope.

Though her husband questioned why she would go to Elisha when it wasn't the Sabbath or a special holy day, the woman saddled her donkey and immediately left to find Elisha. When they met, the woman cried out in despair at the prophet's feet, and Elisha's compassion stirred him to heal her son. When she first welcomed Elisha into her home, she had no idea he would be healing her son years later. Her past hospitality and kindness came full circle to bless her entire family.

## Read 2 Kings 8:1–6.

A few chapters later, we find the Shunammite woman again, and this time Elisha initiated the interaction. He warned her of a coming famine and advised her to take her family to live elsewhere for a while. She agreed, and when she returned to her homeland seven years later, Elisha's servant Gehazi influenced the king to return her land to her. Once again, her acts of hospitality toward Elisha blessed her hundredfold. Her actions did not cause her to earn the favor of God, but they did place her within His will where she could benefit from the blessing of obedience.

## Apply

The Shunammite woman inconvenienced herself multiple times throughout her story for the good of her family and for Elisha. She gave of herself and her possessions without expecting anything in return.

- How can you inconvenience yourself to serve others?
- How does the way that the Shunammite woman served Elisha reflect the way Jesus serves us?

## Follow Up

- Read Mark 10:45. This verse describes Jesus' attitude of servanthood.
- In your journal, reflect on how the Shunammite woman's hospitable heart echoes the servant attitude of Jesus. Pray and ask God to give you a servant heart in your everyday life.

## Commit to Memory

Verse: **Mark 10:45**

Challenge: **2 Kings 4:8–10**

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# Faith in Action | Meet a Neighbor

By Reagan Jackson

I moved to Birmingham, Alabama, in 2015 when I was 27 years old. I was pursuing a new job opportunity and wanted to take advantage of a time in life when I could get up and move somewhere new and establish a life of my own.

As you can imagine, at this age and being somewhere new, my first few years in Birmingham included several living locations and roommates. I lived in four places in four years—both apartments and houses. While I tried to introduce myself to neighbors, I simply never got to know any of them during that time. I barely remembered names.

Then I moved into the home where I have lived for almost six years now, and for the first time, I know my neighbors. I didn't suddenly crack the code or discern a great new relationship technique. I met Sandy.

Sandy lives next door with her husband and dog. She walks her dog multiple times a day, and she uses that opportunity to speak to everyone she sees along the way. She learns people's names and what they do for a living, and she always meets you with a smile. But she goes beyond that. During the summer holidays (Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day), Sandy lets neighbors know anyone who is available can meet for lunch at our local barbecue joint. She even gave me a ride the first year. I was the youngest in attendance by far, but I loved having the opportunity to meet more neighbors and engage in meaningful conversation beyond the quick hellos while getting in and out of cars.

I live in a small complex of townhomes and fourplexes. One year, Sandy put up signs in our entryways inviting everyone to a come-and-go picnic with cupcakes. Other neighbors ended up grilling sandwiches and providing more food and sodas. We all simply gathered in a grassy area with pop-up chairs and visited and ate for about an hour.

Nothing Sandy does is complex or even takes much time. But the impact is monumental. Relationships have formed and spiritual conversations have been had. Neighbors can reach out to one another for support during difficult times.

I think Sandy's "great new relationship technique" is her dog, who gives her a reason to get out and about. If you don't have a dog, what do you have? One pastor shared how when he and his children play outside, sometimes he throws their toys into the neighbors' yard to give him an excuse to go talk to them. Maybe you can cook "too much" one night or bake "too many" cookies so you have to see whether a neighbor would like your excess.

It's never too late to start a relationship. You don't have to do anything grand or involved. Simply say hello, and consider a statement like, "I'm sorry. I've lived here for two years now and realize I don't know much about you! Would you like to have a cup of coffee on my porch?" Once you've established a friendship, you'll see how you can encourage fellow Christians and share the light of Christ with any nonbelieving neighbors.

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