

JOKE: A woman's husband dies and she has only \$20,000 to her name.

After everything is done at the funeral home and cemetery, she tells her closest friend that she has no money left.

The friend says, "How can that be? You told me you still had \$20,000 left just a few days before your husband died. How could you be broke?"

The widow says, "Well, the funeral home cost me \$5,000. And of course, I had to make the obligatory donation to the church, so that was another \$5,000. The rest went for the memorial stone."

The friend says, "\$10,000 for the memorial stone? Wow, how big was it?"

Extending her left hand, the widow says, "Three carats."

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### **Unlikely yes, usable for sure**

God always uses what most would consider unlikely people to do the things that He's called us to do

1 Kings 17, verse 7 says, "7 Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land."

The prophet Elijah had gone to King Ahab, and said to him, "There is going to be a drought in the land. There is not going to be any more rain until I say there's going to be rain," the reason for this mainly was because...well lets read it.

Scripture tells us, in the chapter before this . .

1 Kings 16:33 (NIV) - 33 Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to arouse the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him.

The KJV says it best I think it says, he did more to provoke

“He did more to provoke ... the Lord, the God of Israel, [to anger] than [did all] of the ... kings of Israel before him.”

How about that for a resume?

So, Elijah turned up, he said, “There’s not going to be any more rain.” And so, God had sent him to a place where the ravens had looked after him, but now that brook had dried up.

Let’s continue. . .

1 Kings 17:8–9 (NIV): 8 Then the word of the Lord came to him:  
9 “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.”

This is awesome. He had ravens at the brook, and a widow in the city.

1 Kings 17:10 (NIV): 10 So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?”

1 Kings 17:11 (NIV): 11 As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.”

And she turns around, and she says:

1 Kings 17:12 (NIV): 12 “As surely as the Lord your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”

She looks at the man of God. . .and she says, I don’t even have enough for my son and I and you want me to do what?

Isn’t that like some of us. God wants us to be obedient. And we come up with all kinds of excuses to not do what we are asked to do.

I mean think about it. She’s like, “I don’t have what you want. I’m about to do this, and then we’re going to go and die

But look what happens. . .

1 Kings 17:13–14 (NIV): 13 Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. 14 For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.’ ”

1 Kings 17:15–18 (NIV): 15 She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. 16 For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah.

17 Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. 18 She said to Elijah, “What do you have against me,

man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

Remember I told you I didn't have any extra. What, you just wanted to prolong the inevitable? Now look my son has died.

But look what happens. . .

1 Kings 17:19–22 (NIV): 19 "Give me your son," Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. 20 Then he cried out to the Lord, "Lord my God, have you brought tragedy even on this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?" 21 Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried out to the Lord, "Lord my God, let this boy's life return to him!" 22 The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived.

What a story. I love reading Scripture. This book some have said is boring, but they must not have read these stories. And when you have a relationship with the author it is far from boring.

So, there's the prophet who's declared a drought on the land. Because of the drought it's also a time of famine. And because of the famine there isn't enough food or water for everybody.

So, what God does is, He sends the prophet to a town to meet one of the most common of people, someone that I wouldn't have chosen to provide for me if I was in the area. I would have looked for the one that was the wealthy, the one that stocked up during the rough time. Not a widow

God provided this widow to provide food and water for the prophet. And then, asks her to provide this in a very unusual way.

No wonder Scripture tells us, His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways.

And then, because of her obedience to the man of God, the whole thing ended up producing a result that was so not what most would expect.

There are all sorts of stories of God using people that are so not who I would have chosen.

David – A shepherd boy, to defeat a giant

Moses – one that had all sorts of excuses, to deliver the Israelites

Peter – one who denied the Lord three times to be an anchor of the church

Judas – a thief, to be the keeper of the money bag

Saul – a persecutor of the church, called to be an apostle name changed to Paul

So, the Lord sends this prophet to Zarephath. He sends him to the place that Jezebel is from, and He says, “I’ve given a widow there. I’ve talked to a Gentile. I’ve talked to somebody that is not one of us, and I’ve told her to provide for you.”

Listen church you never know where, or by whom God will provide your need from. It may be in a barren place, by a non-believer but God will supply.

One thing that I’ve discovered about God is that, often, the place that we think is the most unlikely of places is the place that bears the seeds of a miracle.

John 1:48 (NIV): 48 “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

Luke 19:3–5 (NIV): 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”

Sometimes it's in the most barren of places where the miracle happens.

Isaiah 41:18–20 (NIV): 18 I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs. 19 I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive. I will set junipers in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together, 20 so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.

You see, most of us, we think, If things were just different ... if I were just married, my life would be so much better. Or if your married, If I was only single, my life would be so much better. If I just had children, then ... If I just didn't have any kids, then ... If I just had more money, then I'd be able to give more. If I just had a better job, then I would be more ... If I just ... If ... If ... If ...

We always feel like the grass is greener on the other side – this other place, any place but where I am. That's where we normally think “there” is.

But here's the thing church, you will never be there, because once your there you're here. So you only can deal with the here. What do I do while I'm here.

Here in this barren place, here in this desert moment, here in this rough storm, here in the midst of the pain.

So, God says, "What are you going to do while you are in this place.

What are you going to do with it here, in this place – in this difficult season, in your marriage, in the challenging situation with your kids, with the challenging finances, with that challenging co-worker at work. What you do in this place that may seem barren, that may seem dry, that may seem like the place of no provision ... God says, "That's the only place you've got: here."

So, what are you going to do with your time here? Because truth is what you do with it here will decide whether you ever end up over there.

Here we are at The Potter's House a community of believers not great in number, an unlikely place to come to see the hand of God in the miraculous. Used to transform our community, our city.

But in this place I see God doing great things. In this place God has allowed us to see His goodness, His grace, and His mighty hand.

In this place. . .

Where there has been lack, abundance is coming

Where there has been sorrow, joy is coming

Where there has been confusion, peace is coming.

Where there has been loss, God says restoration is coming

I don't know where you are right now, but maybe you're thinking God's provision is going to come from somewhere else. God said, "I'm sending you to Zarephath. At the place you are right now the

miracle is about occur. Hold on to the Word of God, He is bringing your provision.

Maybe you feel right now that in the place your at, God can't use you, won't use you because of what you've been through or what you have done. I'm here to tell you that right now in that place God is saying yes to you, yes to your calling, yes to the destiny that He has given you. It may seem that it's not much, but if you will trust in Him He will see you through.

He fed a multitude with just a few fish and loaves. He can use what may seem insignificant to you and multiply it for the multitudes to see.

1 Corinthians 1:26–29 (NIV): 26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him.

Think about our text, God uses a widow out to get enough for her last supper and He tells the man of God. Her, yes that one over there, her the widow she is providing your provision.

She was at first having a problem a lot like the problem we have as well. We look at what we lack, rather than trust in Him to provide.

But Scripture tells us, that my God will supply all my needs according to His riches in glory.



The prophet shows up, and he said, "I want you to give me some bread." She's like, "Are you out of your mind, I don't have any for my son and I.."

What she didn't recognize is, she had the ingredients for a miracle in her midst. But she was so busy looking at what she didn't have that she didn't recognize what she did have.. And that's what we do.

But the good news is God says, "I'm just using ordinary people.

You're that person. The seeds of greatness are in you. You're created in His image, the Spirit of God lives inside of you, and He uses holy, imperfect people to do extraordinary things. He took a widow and said, "You're going to provide for the prophet."

He loves to use those that by the world's standards seem weak. Because in our weakness He is made strong.

He took Moses, who says, "I can't speak." And I could imagine God thinking, wow Moses I never noticed that. Let me think about someone else because you might be right after all you do need to eloquently speak to the sea so it will roll back.,

What happens is that we think I've only got ... and we get crippled, and we hold back, and we think, I'm just going to take this and die. But when you understand the power of seed, you go, I've got. . .I've only got a little, but I can't wait to plant this in the ground. What many don't understand is that in that seed is the ingredients for a miracle.

The devil wants us to look at what we don't have, but God just says, "What have you got?"

There's another woman that helped out the prophet we find her in 2 Kings chapter 4, let's look at her for a moment.

2 Kings 4:1–7 (NIV): The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves." 2 Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a small jar of olive oil." 3 Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. 4 Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side." 5 She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. 6 When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing. 7 She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left."

This woman was desperate: She had reached what she considered the critical point, if she was like most of us she had tried everything she could think of but nothing changed. (like the woman with the issue of blood who had tried many physicians, and spent all she had, and was nothing better but in fact grew worse Her desperation brought her to Jesus.

She reached the place of desperation and cried out to the prophet

There comes a point where you don't have time to be cute anymore, and you don't care who sees you cry, desperation has a way of getting rid of foolish pride.

Sometimes desperation is a good thing. Desperation pushes you to do things you wouldn't normally do. Desperation pushes you

past your comfort zone.

When you get desperate for a miracle, you don't worry if someone likes the way you shout or not, you don't care if they roll their eyes at you.

Desperate people do desperate things.

As the saying goes desperate times call for desperate measures.

Desperate people will run red lights, break speed limits, break religious traditions, risk their lives, climb a tree, jump in a lake, crawl on their hands and their knees, get their fingers stepped on and their feelings stepped on and keep on coming.

When you get desperate your willing to look stupid. Desperate people aren't worried about being dignified, if you've ever been in an emergency situation you know that when it's a matter of life and death dignity is no issue.

By the time people reach desperation they're willing to try anything. Desperation is the breeding ground for miracles.

It was her desperation that brought her to the prophet. The prophet represents the Word of God. What you need is a word from God; one word from God can completely change your world, get you out of your mess and transform your life.

The prophet didn't give her anything except a Word.

She underestimated what she had in her house:  
She said (nothing except a pot of oil)

If you are not careful you could miss this revelation: Every empty vessel that was filled produced a total lifestyle change for this

woman and her sons came and it all came from a little pot of oil that was already in the house.

Then he said, go, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, empty vessels; borrow (not a few).

If this woman was like us, most of the time all we're really concerned with is to get out of trouble, to get out debt, get out of a bad relationship, get out of pain, get out of conflict, we just want relief.

But God is wanting to do more than just get you out of your mess; he wants to do more than just get the devil off your back, the creditors off your back.

God wants to bless you, to change you, to turn you around, and plant your feet on solid ground.

Every door they knocked on, and every empty vessel they borrowed declared their desperation and their emptiness, but it was also prophetic, because every empty vessel prophesied of a potential blessing. Every empty vessel said I'm getting ready to be filled.

2 Kings 4:4 - Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons.

Let me pause here and say: When you need a miracle, when you need a breakthrough, you need the right people around you. You have to know who to shut in with you and who to shut out, It isn't every brother that wants you blessed, your greatest opposition to going to the next level in God will come from religion. Religious people that can't see what you can see and they can't hear what you can hear, so they can't believe that God can do what you are believing for.

The wrong people will rob you of your miracle, talk you out of your prosperity, ridicule you out of your healing.

In Numbers 13 and 14 negative spies talked an entire nation out of their God given inheritance.

When you are desperate you can't afford to have negative people around you, you have to create an environment for faith to grow and develop.

Shut the door:

I know it's hard for some of us to be that bold and that aggressive, but Jesus did it, and Peter did it. And you will have to do it also. Your life depends on it.

Let me go a step farther and say: you need people around you that believe in you, and even if they can't see what you see, they believe that you see it and they will encourage you to go for it. You need people around you who will stay with you even when it looks crazy and doesn't make sense.

2 Kings 4:4-5 - Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side." 5 She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring.

Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side  
In other words, don't just put a little bit in each vessel, fill up each vessel one at a time, and don't stop till it's full. Fill it up before you start on another one.

2 Kings 4:5-7 - She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. 6 When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring

me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing. 7 She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left."

Her whole lifestyle changed that day. There was a shift in atmosphere.

We've got to understand, don't minimize the potential of the seed because of the size of the seed! Seeds never look like much – they're seeds!

A mustard bush gets on average between 6 to 20 feet tall and can be as wide as 20 feet. In real ideal situations they can grow to be as much as 30 feet in height. Yet the seed is tiny. . .

The only way to reach the potential is to sow the seed.

Back to the widow in 1st Kings. . .

He says to her, "But first, bring me the bread," because the first is a sign of trusting God. It's saying, "God, I'm giving You the first, and then I'm trusting that all the rest is going to go a lot further than it ever would have, because I've given You first."

And if the body of Christ, could understand the power of the first, then we wouldn't withhold anything anymore; we would give it first.

Give of ourselves to God...first  
Offer the sacrifice of praise...first  
Worship God...first.

And what's going to happen is you will be surprised and in awe over the provided provision. What the widow had, never ran out!

She was going to have enough just for her and her son to die!  
But the prophet ate, she ate, her son ate, and it never ran out!

Check this out:

Matthew 14:13–21 (NIV): 13 When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. 15 As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.” 16 Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” 17 “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered. 18 “Bring them here to me,” he said. 19 And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 20 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 21 The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

When you give to God what you have...He can enlarge it to bless multitudes.