

Seizing Your God Story



Gary Wilkerson April 18, 2011

Many Christians right now are dealing with the biggest obstacles of their lives. In my own congregation, people are facing what seem like impassable mountains. They're dealing with job loss, bills piling up, future needs fast approaching. Marriages are under stress, loved ones are sick, children are struggling with faith.

Our church could easily be a picture of what's happening across America. People are having a hard time making ends meet — not just financially, but emotionally and spiritually. Many think, "I can't see past the mountain in front of me. It's too big." They can't help wondering, "How is this story going to end?"

I have a message for you. No matter how bleak things may look in your life, there is a "God story" taking place in the midst of it. This is true for anyone who loves the Lord and puts their trust in him.

What exactly is a God story? Here are four characteristics:

It's an event that can only be described in terms of God showing up to act on our behalf.

It has a positive outcome made possible only by God's clear intervention.

That outcome can only be explained in terms of God's power and love.

There is a complete transformation of circumstances, events and people — all made possible only by God.

Where do we see God stories taking place? They take place in our lives. It's one way God chooses to speak to the world. He loves to show that everything happening in the lives of his servants isn't just a random series of events — but a God story.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the life of the prophet Elisha. I want to talk about four things God does for his people when we're facing impassable mountains.

1. God has unlimited resources to provide for our lack.

The first miracle of Elisha's story takes place in 2 Kings 4. A poor widow was left in a frightening situation. Her husband had died, leaving her with two children to support on her own. When she couldn't meet her obligations, creditors began to threaten. In those days, creditors didn't just take your belongings — they also took your children.

This woman was desperate, and she appealed to Elisha: "The wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried to Elisha, 'Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord, but the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves'" (2 Kings 4:1).

Elisha was head of a troupe of prophets, men young and old who ministered throughout Israel. This woman pleaded with Elisha, "My husband was in your school. He was always faithful to God. Please have mercy and help me."

Elisha might have aided her in that moment. He could have said, "When I go to the temple I'll ask for assistance from the storehouse. There's a fund designated for widows. I'll tell your creditors that I'll bring your funds with me next time I pass through."

That certainly would have been an answer to her prayers. But God led Elisha in another way. The Lord was up to something very powerful in this woman's crisis. He was about to reveal the God story taking shape.

The fact is God uses our dilemmas to glorify his name. And for that reason, our own God story may be formed through pain or delay. One in ten Americans is unemployed. Others have had to take a reduction in pay. In some homes both spouses work two jobs to keep from losing everything they own.

Perhaps you've reasoned in your own dilemma, "If I don't have a breakthrough it's over. I need a miracle just to survive." I picture this widow having those very thoughts.

Elisha asked her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" (2 Kings 4:2). He wasn't asking her to sell her valuables for cash; she didn't have any valuables left. Elisha was saying, in essence, "God can meet you just as you are, in your present condition. If you have faith, he can multiply even the smallest thing you have."

The widow answered, "All I have is one jar of oil." We know from Scripture that oil represents God's blessing and provision. At this point Elisha gave her a strange instruction: "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few" (4:3).

She did as the prophet instructed. Then Elisha instructed, "Go inside and shut the door behind you... Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side" (4:4). Once more she followed Elisha's word. And as she poured oil from her own jar, it filled a borrowed jar. The same thing happened with the next borrowed jar; it was also filled. So was the next. And the next. It was an endless supply of oil!

Here's the point: When God tells us he has our needed supply, it isn't just a meager amount. God has *everything* we need. His ability to meet our situation is endless.

The jars in this story represent our capacity for faith. The more "jars" we bring to God the more he'll fill us up. Of course, at times our need can become so desperate we're tempted to turn to our flesh. But God gives us this event in the widow's life to remind us he is our supply. He may use a person to meet our need, but in the end our crisis will undeniably be a God story.

That's the testimony God gave to the widow. Not only was her need filled, but now she had a powerful testimony for her neighbors: "This jar was empty when you loaned it to me. But God himself has filled it!"

Elisha then told her, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left" (4:7). What an amazing deliverance. This desperate woman's crisis was now a God story — one of faith in God's power to supply all she ever needed.

2. By his intervening power God enables the weak to overcome all odds stacked against them.

Later in Elisha's story, the powerful nation of Syria moved to attack Israel. But God revealed to Elisha every move Syria was about to make. So the prophet was able to warn Israel's army, keeping them out of harm's way.

The Syrian military was comprised of mighty battalions, huge chariots and up-to-date weapons. Yet it was thwarted at every move because of one man, Elisha. This infuriated Syria's king, Ben Hadad. Finally, he gave up his attacks on Israel and turned his entire army on Elisha: "Go, find out where he is...so I can send men and capture him" (2 Kings 6:13).

At the time, Elisha was staying in Dothan. Scripture says, "(The king) sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city" (6:14). The next morning, Elisha's servant woke to see the enemy gathered at the gate. He cried out to Elisha in a panic, "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?"

Have you ever felt as this servant did? You see a tidal wave of problems coming your way, and you know you're in over your head. In a panic you cry, "There's no way out of this problem. It's too big. What can I possibly do?"

At such times, our prayers can turn into worry sessions. Faithful cries are suddenly filled with anxiety and panic. We tell ourselves, "There's no way God can pull me out of this. What's left to hope for?"

What did Elisha do here? He answered his servant, "Don't be afraid.... Those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (6:16). What a strange response. Elisha's servant must have thought he was crazy. But Elisha prayed for him, saying, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see" (6:17). Suddenly Elisha's servant saw what was invisible to the naked eye: "He looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (6:17).

During my years in Texas I saw some magnificent horses. But even the most powerful horse surely paled in comparison to the creatures Elisha's servant saw that day. God's story was intervening supernaturally!

Right now in your crisis, the odds against you may be 10,000 to 1. But as Elisha's story shows, 10,000 is a meager number when weighed against the infinite number of angels at God's service. You may feel overwhelmed and outnumbered — but God never loses. He never retreats, and he never negotiates. He's with you in the midst of your battle to deliver you supernaturally.

You may ask as Elisha's servant did, "What shall I do?" God has already answered you in Elisha's story: "Trust in the Lord." When all else seems to fail — when you feel there's no hope left, that you're about to fall in defeat — God's story enters and transforms everything.

Elisha prayed for God to blind all the Syrian soldiers surrounding them — and the Lord did just that. In an instant thousands of warriors were rendered powerless, groping for help. Elisha then safely led them away from the city. Here was the end result: "The bands from (Syria) stopped raiding Israel's territory" (2 Kings 6:23).

It was yet another faith-building lesson for Israel. Elisha was showing God's people, "Having the Lord on your side is better than the world's most powerful army. Trust in him!"

Indeed, through all of these events, Elisha was doing what any shepherd is called to do. He was building up the people's faith. He was showing Israel that in every crisis, no matter how hopeless, God was faithful to bring them through.

3. God provides a last-minute victory when defeat seems certain.

King Ben-Hadad of Syria may have stopped his attacks on Israel, but he didn't give up his assault on God's people. He decided, "I'll turn my sights on the other part of this nation — Samaria!" "Ben-Hadad king of (Syria) mobilized his entire army and marched up and laid siege to Samaria" (2 Kings 6:24).

At the time Samaria was enduring a terrible famine. The Syrian army strategically stopped any food from going in. Soon conditions were desperate. People sold all they had for any scrap of food: "A donkey's head sold for eighty shekels of silver" (6:25).

Samaria's king was horrified by what was happening. He laid all the blame on Elisha. He swore he would have the prophet's head by the next day and sent a messenger to kill him.

When the messenger arrived, Elisha's friends barred him from the prophet's dwelling. During the standoff the messenger shouted to Elisha, "The king said, 'This disaster is from the Lord. Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?'" (6:33). In short, the king had no faith. He was convinced God had abandoned Samaria and that they had to act on their own.

What was Elisha's answer? "Hear the word of the Lord" (7:1). Here is sage advice to any Christian who's facing a crisis. If your situation has gone beyond your control and you're facing certain defeat, that's exactly the time you need to be reminded of God's Word.

Elisha told the messenger: "About this time tomorrow, a seah of flour will sell for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria" (7:1). In other words: "Do not surrender to Ben-Hadad's army. Food will be in such abundance a mere shekel will buy all you can eat."

Here was the message behind Elisha's words: "God is about to turn this around for you in a single day. You think

you're going to be devastated. But your 'defeat' is about to become a God story."

The messenger scoffed in disbelief: "Look, even if the Lord should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?" (7:2). He knew Samaria's king was ready to surrender. But Elisha wished to turn unbelief into faith. He knew God was already on the move on their behalf.

At the time, four lepers sat starving between Samaria and Syria's encampment. Finally, they said to each other, "Why sit here and die? Let's go to the Syrian camp and beg for food. They'll either kill us or have mercy on us. Who knows, maybe God will help us. But either option is better than dying here."

As the lepers approached the Syrian camp, they realized the enemy had fled. (They had been supernaturally scared away!) Best of all, the Syrians had left behind all their provisions. So the lepers had a feast. Then, after they stuffed themselves, they ran to Samaria to tell the king about the bounty of food available.

Incredibly, the king didn't believe them. He thought it was a trap laid for an ambush. But when the people inside the city heard about it, they acted in faith: "The people went out and plundered the camp of the (Syrians). So a seah of flour sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley sold for a shekel, as the Lord had said" (7:16).

Think of it. Samaria's king was less than a day away from surrendering to his enemy. Yet God had already won the victory for him!

You may be on the absolute brink of defeat. But God wants to do for you what he promises in his Word. If you hold on to his Word in faith, he'll be faithful to bring it to pass.

4. God doesn't give partial victories but total triumph.

Here is the final lesson from Elisha's life. And what a lesson it is. The famous prophet was on his deathbed. The king of Israel, Jehoash, wept aloud that Israel's great prophetic light was about to go out. He recalled Elisha's great works of faith, "My father! My father...The chariot and horsemen of Israel!" (2 Kings 13:14).

Elisha rallied briefly to bring the king hope. He instructed the king to shoot arrows into the air. Jehoash did so, and Elisha told him to take the arrows and strike them into the ground. Jehoash complied, striking the ground with the arrows three times.

What Elisha did next was surprising. He got angry at the king. He told Jehoash, "You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated (Syria) and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times" (2 Kings 13:19).

This may seem like one more strange scene from Elisha's life. But the fact is God's prophet was still all about faith-building. He was telling the king, "How dare you expect so little from God! You could have defeated Syria five or six times, but you'll settle for only three."

Elisha's words here apply to every Christian today. Our Lord wants us to go beyond limited victories. Through the God stories he provides, we're to build faith upon faith...victory upon victory...to be continually hungry for him to act and not to settle. Elisha tells us, "God will give you as many victories as you're willing to lay hold of. Keep striking the ground in faith!"

This isn't some heartless demand. It is deeply compassionate. God wants every spouse in a hurting marriage to know, "I don't want you to settle. I want every rift to be fully healed, not partially. I want you to know the fullest joy in loving each other. That is my design for you."

There is a God story for every struggling couple...for every financial crisis...for every alienated parent and child.

No matter your situation, pray with me: "Lord, open our eyes to your story in our crisis. In the midst of our need, fill our jars. In our difficult battle, show us your chariots of fire. And on the brink of defeat, remind us you're already driving away our enemies. Stir our faith so that we keep striking the ground with belief. And remind us to seek rest in you. We know every trial is an opportunity for the world to be transformed by *your* God story."

May God open your eyes to the miracle he has begun in your family's struggles...in your financial problems...in your

hurting loved ones. Your bills aren't bigger than God's provision. Your sickness isn't stronger than his might. He has surrounded you with chariots of fire. All the forces of heaven are at his disposal to protect you. He is already bringing your victory. Amen!

[Download PDF](#) [1]

Links

[1] <http://worldchallenge.org/printpdf/534/>