

Message Extras

a little something extra to keep you connected to Jesus this week

Message Extras accompany the [weekly message](#).

The Almighty is AMAZING! Let me start by saying, it has been a very full week of work, and I feel like I have nothing left at all to give. But God... He is amazing, and my story this week is another example of how the grace of God is more than enough when we have nothing.

My work week started about a year ago, when my boss told me, "I am meeting with HR tomorrow, and we are going to fire you." The reason for my intended firing was basically because I was having a hard time fitting into the culture, and some of my professional behaviors were less than desirable.

But God... he led me to this verse. "If the ruler's temper flares against you, do not abandon your post, for calmness lays great offenses to rest." (Ecclesiastes 10:4) So, in the face of losing my job, I did the unthinkable, I stayed where I was, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I practiced calmness day after day after day.

One year later (yesterday), at an all-department strategy session, my old boss, now a vice president and head of our department, introduced me to speak on an important topic, culture. Tell me God doesn't have a sense of humor! I was speaking on the very thing I was going to be fired for a year earlier, being introduced by the man who was going to fire me! And did I mention, when it comes to public speaking, I used to be afraid (but my victory over fear is a story for another message extra).

Before I spoke, feeling like I had nothing to give, I prayed, "Holy Spirit, please give me the words." Then I did as my college speech professor instructed, "Stand up, speak up, shut up." Later in the day, at our department "fun" event, person after person came up to me and said, "your talk today was so good!" And "You really are a good public speaker." One person even said, "you have a gift for speaking." If they only knew, a few hours earlier, I felt like "I had nothing to give."

Then the strangest, most amazing thing happened. My old boss, the VP, walked over to me and said, "Nice job. You nailed it." Of course, I knew I had nothing to give, and the Holy Spirit gave me the words, but I quietly said, "Thank you," and in my heart gave all glory to God.

For the message extras, I simply want to point to a few statements in our passage this week.

*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." 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."*

*Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. **Don't ask for just a few.** 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."*

She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. 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. (II Kings 4:1-6)

How can I help?

The Lord will often put you in places where you have nothing to give to teach you the principles of 2 Corinthians 12:9 – God's grace is sufficient, and His power is made perfect in your weakness. Even though many times we feel we have nothing to give, God has gifted every person with unique skills and talents. In addition to this, God has gifted every follower of Jesus with gifts of the Holy Spirit. Let me be clear, God does not need our help, but He desires for us to approach Him with a humble heart that says, "Here I am Lord. Where do you need me? How can I help?" If you desire to be used by the Almighty, the single most important thing you can do is be available. God gave you your skills and talents, but He doesn't need them, and He may not want them for the work He has for you. He wants you! God is looking for those with lifted hands saying, "Here I am Lord. How can I help?"

A small jar

In Jeremiah 18, God says, "like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand." God is God, and we are not. When you approach God and say "How can I help," remember you are a small jar, and it is God who shapes you, forms you, and fills you up to overflowing.

Don't ask for just a few

God is BIG. Do you want to experience and know the power of the Holy Spirit in your life? When you go to God and say, "How can I help," Be bold and be humble. It has been said, "If you want to make God laugh, tell Him you have an idea." I am convinced, God wants us to use our God-given talents and creativity, His Spiritual gifts, and our "nothing to give," after

He has given us His vision. Don't go to God with jars that are half full. Don't go to God with a few small jars. When you go to God, bring every empty jar you can find. Get others involved and tell them to bring their empty jars. Then, be bold, be humble and pray, "God, here I am... here is everything I am... I want to help, fill me up with You, and let your fullness overflow and touch every life around me."

- Think of a time when you had nothing to give:
 - How did you respond?
 - Did you fall back in fear?
 - Did you power through in your strength?
 - Did God do something powerful through you?
 - What did you learn about yourself?
 - Did you experience the grace of God in that moment?
 - What did you learn about Almighty God in that moment?
 - What would you do differently the next time you find yourself with nothing to give?

- Small Group Bible Study Challenge - Read Jeremiah 18: 1-12
 - What can we learn from the potter and the clay about how God uses grace to form us?
 - What can we learn from this passage about the intersection of God's love, God's sovereignty, God's justice, and God's grace?
 - When God gives us grace, what is required of us to continue in this grace?
 - What insights can we learn from God's grace in the history of Israel compared to the history of America currently unfolding?
 - How do these insights prepare us for our culture when we say to God, "Here I am, I want to help?"

