



Unit .13

Session .03

The Gifts of God's Power

Scripture



1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2:6-15

19 So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him. **20** And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" **21** And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him. ... **6** Then Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. **7** Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. **8** Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground. **9** When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha

said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me." **10** And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so." **11** And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. **12** And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. **13** And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. **14** Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over. **15** Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.

Intro Options



Main Point:
**God empowers His
people to carry
out His mission.**

Option 1

Succession is important in various spheres of life. We see good succession plans emphasized in businesses, sports, and the government just to name a few. As Christians, we enjoy the benefits of faithful brothers and sisters in previous generations who have handed down the faith to the next generation. How did the gospel get from Jerusalem to you? It was this: Christians didn't let the gospel die with them. They passed it down to the next generation. So here we are today, bearing that same responsibility.

▪ What are some ways your church is passing the truth onto the next generation?

Elijah had been discouraged, but the Lord was gracious to him. God provided the prophet with sleep and food. He also spoke to Elijah, giving him a new assignment, which included the call to anoint Elisha as his prophetic successor. In 1 Kings 19:19-21 and 2 Kings 2:6-15, we read of this taking place. God is not finished speaking in Israel. And one of the main ways He will continue working is through this prophet, Elisha.

Elisha is a great model for us in a number of ways. Like Elisha we have been given a mission to continue—the Great Commission. And like Elisha, we can't complete our mission in our own strength. By the power of the Spirit, we minister in word and deed in an idolatrous world.

Option 2

Imagine your church is about to start a major drive of some kind. It could be that you're about to start a major missions drive, or a capital campaign, or you want to start a ministry to the homeless in your community. To kick off this initiative, the pastor has asked your group to create a video with the theme "All In." Your students should create a skit showing what it means to be "All in." It doesn't have to be a church setting. They could show athletes being "all in" for their sport, or musicians being "all in" for their band, or students being "all in" for their school, or a combination of all the above. The goal of the video is to get everyone in the church, from the toddlers up to the senior citizens, to get fired up and fully commit to whatever the initiative your church is about to start.

Let them prepare the skits and then perform (video) them. In today's session, we'll see someone who was "all in" for his mission: Elisha, who would be fully committed to carrying on Elijah's mission. If you see parallels between their skits and Elisha's actions (leaving his family and his farm, sticking close to Elijah, getting Elijah's cloak, etc.), bring those up as the lesson unfolds.

TEACHING PLAN

Read 1 Kings 19:19-21.



Elijah anointed Elisha, God's chosen prophet, in verses 19–21. Elisha then proceeded to follow God's call. But who was Elisha? His name means "God saves." Elisha was a farmer, and apparently a wealthy one, since he had several teams of oxen (v. 19).

Elijah placed his cloak on this farmer, symbolizing the transference of prophetic power (v. 19). Elisha's commitment is evidenced in what follows. He left his team of oxen and followed Elijah (v. 20a). Then Elisha asked to first kiss his family good-bye before following Elijah. Elijah permitted him to do so (v. 20c). Then we read of Elisha's total abandonment of all things for God's will.

Elisha kissed not only his family good-bye, but he also kissed the world good-bye. He destroyed all of his old means of sustenance in verse 21. He told everyone publicly that he was following God's will, and it seems he threw a party to tell everyone. He wasn't reluctant; he was excited.

- **Is there something in your life you need to abandon to follow God's call?**
- **What is something you have given up in order to follow Jesus wholeheartedly?**

Read 2 Kings 2:6-12a.



We pick up the story with Elijah going town-to-town trying to shake Elisha (vv. 1-6). Two of the towns were places known as centers of pagan worship. Bethel was where Jeroboam set up the golden calf (1 Kings 12:28b-30). Jericho was the place that had been cursed by Joshua (Josh. 6:26). In these towns, we're introduced to "the sons of the prophets," who were pupils of the prophets and part of a prophetic community. The sons of the prophets seem to have been set up strategically in these cities that are deeply entrenched in idolatry. These prophets witnessed the passing of the torch to Elisha.

Elisha did not let Elijah shake him. Scholars believe that the point of Elijah trying to lose Elisha was to test whether Elisha would count the cost of discipleship, to see if he would persist in ministry.

Elijah, as a new Moses figure, then parted the Jordan with language similar of the Red Sea crossing in Exodus, and Elijah and Elisha went across on dry land (v. 8). Once they crossed, Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. The meaning here might convey more than just a double-portion of power. It may also carry the idea of the inheritance of the first-born, a double portion of the inheritance (Deut 21:17), which would imply Elisha would live as though he was Elijah's firstborn and carry on his work.

- **What are some ways we are called to carry on the work of the gospel in our own day and age?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God empowers His people to carry out His mission.

1 Kings 19

19-21. Elijah accepted the Lord's reassurances and anointed Elisha. Like the widow (1 Kings 17:24), the people on Mount Carmel (18:39-40), and Ahab (18:41-19:1), Elijah experienced the power and healing of God. So he set out to obey God, fully aware that God is his strength and His word will not fail. Elijah threw his cloak, or mantle, upon Elisha, a symbolic way of transferring the prophetic power from one man to the next. Elisha then said farewell to his family, then slaughtered his oxen and burned his plow, which demonstrated the clear break between his old and new lives.¹

2 Kings 2

9. When Elijah was about to be taken into heaven by the Lord, Elisha knew it. Three times Elijah said he would go on ahead alone, but Elisha would not let him. Elisha wanted to stay by his master's side. His desire to be like Elijah was so great that when Elijah asked what he could do for his disciple, Elisha asked for a double share of Elijah's spirit. 'Double share' is the allotment of the first-born son in the laws of Moses. In Jewish tradition, the eldest son was to take care of his parents for the rest of their lives. Thus, he received twice as much as other heirs. God granted Elisha's desire to be like his master, allowing him to perform great miracles. Twice as many miracles were recorded in the books of Kings from Elisha's ministry than were recorded from Elijah's ministry.²

11-12. Here we read of a war vehicle that came for Elijah, a "chariot of fire with horses of fire" (v. 11). Elisha called Elijah the "chariots and horsemen of Israel" (v. 12). The appearing of the chariot of fire symbolizes that these prophets were the power of Israel because God's power was with them. The chariot was an instrument of military might and Elisha was saying Elijah was like the army of God, the true defense of Israel because God was with him.

Elijah went on to his eternal reward without tasting death because it is God who is in control of death and He alone can overrule it. Elisha was saddened and showed signs of remorse over losing a mentor (v. 12b).



99 Essential Doctrines (p. 24, DDG)

Mission of the Church

The church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the crucified and risen King Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make disciples by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the lordship of Christ for the glory of God and the good of the world.

TEACHING PLAN

Read 2 Kings 2:12b-15.



God will not stop calling Israel to faithfulness. Elijah might have been gone, but God wasn't. The God of Elijah was still present in 2 Kings, which was what Elisha was saying when he struck the river with Elijah's cloak (symbolizing his prophetic call). Elisha asked where the Lord was (v. 14). Elisha believed that God had certainly not abandoned the people, and he was seeking God for power to minister to them. Elisha, like Elijah, operated with a great vision of God. They had great faith because they had a great God—as do we.

Elisha then parted the sea with Elijah's mantle and headed toward Jericho. Then he went to Bethel to root out the pagan worship. The company of prophets realized that Elijah had passed his prophetic work on to Elisha (v. 15). They showed Elisha reverence, as the new representative of God for Israel, who had the spirit of Elijah resting on him.


▪ **What do we learn from Elijah and Elisha about the necessity of living out our faith by the power of God?**


Elijah's life points us back to Moses. Both left behind disciples to take up the work after calling Israel to covenant faithfulness. We now see in Elisha a new Joshua. Both Joshua and Elisha continued the work of their predecessor, and both had names that mean "God saves." Further, Elisha came through the Jordan to Jericho and he came to root out Canaanite worship, which also has an echo of Joshua's leadership. Like Joshua, Elisha proved to be strong and courageous, as the Lord was with him.

But Elijah also points us forward to John the Baptist, another prophet who would wear the same clothes as Elijah. John the Baptist was a forerunner to the "greater Joshua," crying out in the wilderness against a national power seeking his life with a woman, akin to Jezebel. He too anointed his successor at the Jordan and saw his successor as the firstborn receiving the promised inheritance. Here, in 2 Kings 2, we see that God was orchestrating a plan for the salvation of His people, and He will never cease to have a man calling Israel to faithfulness.

▪ **As we see the whole story of Scripture unfold, why does it inspire us to worship and trust our God?**

The story of Elijah passing on the mantle to Elisha is exciting, challenging, and encouraging. These two prophetic leaders are major figures in Old Testament history and are important figures for seeing the grand narrative of Scripture, which climaxes in Jesus.

Elisha's call to follow Elijah is also similar to Jesus' call to His followers, who must deny self to follow the Lord. Following God's will is a privilege; however, it comes at a cost. But passing on the truths of God's Word to the world is worth it. 

Elisha was a human being, like Elijah, and was therefore in need of God's power to continue this prophetic ministry. We also share that in common with Elisha, for apart from the enabling power of the Spirit we will not fulfill the Great Commission. Finally, this portion of Kings reminds us of the faithfulness of our God, who will preserve a remnant until the promised King comes, the Lord Jesus. Because God is entirely trustworthy, we can trust Him. 

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
**God empowers His
people to carry
out His mission.**

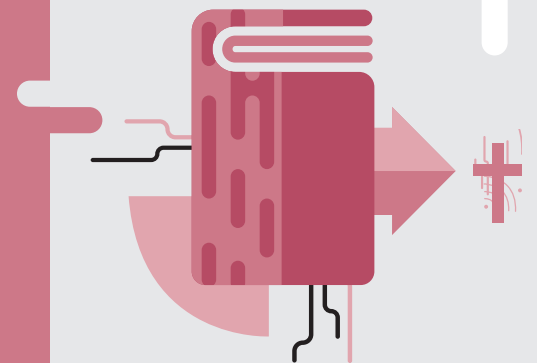
2 Kings 2

13-14. Only Elijah's cloak remained. Elisha took it back to the Jordan and asked where Elijah's God is—the God who caused drought, brought fire from the sky, raised the dead, and took Elijah to heaven. When Elisha struck the water with the cloak, he discovered that while Elijah was gone the Lord was not, for the water parted again. The prophets who witnessed the whole scene understood that Elijah's spirit, the spirit of zeal and power, now rested on Elisha. Still, they sought for Elijah for three days, then returned to the new master prophet. Apparently there was still some doubt about whether Elisha could really replace Elijah, though it seems that he had at least laid claim to the status once reserved for Elijah among the company of the prophets.³

The Spirit who empowered Elijah had now come upon Elisha, and miracles immediately followed. As Elijah's true successor, Elisha was able to repeat Elijah's action in parting the waters (vv. 13-14). There is also a kind of parallel in the life of Joshua, for Joshua also crossed the Jordan in Joshua 3 and entered the land of Israel near Jericho, 'repeating' Moses' action in parting the waters (Ex. 14)."⁴

(p. 26, DDG) Christ Connection

When Elisha succeeded the prophet Elijah, he asked for the same spirit that was in Elijah to be given to him. God granted Elisha's request and revealed His presence through a miracle. Years later when Jesus prepared His followers to begin their ministry, He instructed them to wait for the Holy Spirit, who came upon them and confirmed His presence in miraculous ways.



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



What can we learn about the importance of godly relationships as we consider the lives of Elijah and Elisha?

Who is like an Elijah to you? Who is your Elisha?

Heart



Read Luke 9:57-62. What are the similarities between this passage and the calling of Elisha?

Why do you think Jesus didn't agree to the request in Luke 9:61 to go say good-bye before following Him?

Hands



What lessons do we learn from this account about the importance of passing on the truth of God's Word to the next generation?

How can you pass God's truth on to the next generation?

Main Point: **God empowers His people to carry out His mission.**



Head

The relationship between Elijah and Elisha recalls the importance of having and maintaining godly friendships. Godly relationships are capable of both challenging us and spurring us on to greater holiness in our lives. They can help identify remaining sin in our lives, as well as provide the encouragement and help to address any sin that may hinder growth as a believer. The Christian life is never meant to be lived alone, and any person wanting to become more like Jesus and reflect Him in all he or she does will need the sustaining help of godly relationships.



Heart

In Luke 9, Jesus called a man to follow Him, but the man said, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me go and say good-bye to those at my house” (Luke 9:61). Notice the man seemed to say the same thing Elisha said, but instead of allowing it like Elijah, Jesus said, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (9:62). The reference to the plow sounds like 1 Kings, and so does this call. But notice Jesus didn’t accept this request. Why? For this reason: Jesus is greater than Elijah, and His call takes precedence over everyone and everything. Jesus demanded immediate obedience and wholehearted allegiance. Elisha was asked to follow a prophet, but we have been called to follow the Lord of glory. We must follow Him at once, and then deal with the other details later. A devoted disciple is ready to say, “You can have the world, but give me Jesus!”



Hands

In the case with Elijah and Elisha, we see a clear picture of what it looks like for one generation to pass down the truths of God to another generation. Of course, this responsibility isn’t limited to merely passing along truth as information, but rather the passing along of what it means to live out the truth of God’s unchanging Word in an ever-changing world. Elisha wasn’t merely receiving head knowledge from Elijah but truth that resulted in a change of heart, a change of lifestyle, and a changed purpose in living.

We, too, have a similar calling in our day and age. We are to pass God’s Word onto the next generation. For many of you, that may involve serving in the children’s ministry or being actively involved in the discipleship of someone else. Whatever form it takes, the call is clear: fulfill the Great Commission.