

ELIJAH'S SUCCESSOR



+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

Those who seek to be faithful to God's call do so empowered and equipped by His Spirit.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGES:**

1 Kings 19; 2 Kings 2

+ **SETTING:**

Elijah had been a faithful prophet, obedient to God and consistent in calling Israel to repentance and their own obedience to God. He spoke directly about the sins of the people and performed miracles that demonstrated the Spirit of God was with him. Now the end of Elijah's time on earth was near. He was still following the Lord faithfully, and his protégé, Elisha, was right by his side. The nation of Israel still needed a prophet, still needed someone to declare God's truth to them. God had said it would be Elisha, but how would Elisha fill Elijah's rather large shoes?

DAY 1

READ:

2 Kings 2:1-6

FOCAL PASSAGE:

2 Kings 2:6

NOTES

Being faithful can be difficult for many of us. With divorce rates at an all-time high, people leaving employers, people leaving churches—faithfulness seemingly is not a natural trait for us.

But sometimes God does call us to move on to different things, in which case a lack of faithfulness can be assumed incorrectly. Perhaps someone is being faithful to God by leaving a job or neighborhood to become a missionary. There are plenty of scenarios of following God and needing to leave something.

Though lack of faithfulness can sometimes be difficult to label, faithfulness isn't. Being a good friend, good spouse, and faithful disciple is someone who stays the course no matter the circumstances. This is one of the greatest challenges in the Christian life.

We face so many things that tempt us to look away from the Lord. The road is indeed narrow in following Christ. It can be tempting to wonder if following Jesus is really worth it sometimes. Our hearts can grow faint and weary when the trials of life come our way, such as poverty, illness, slander, loneliness, abuse, or any other pain in this life.

When the world feels like it is caving in and you are uncertain whether or not you can handle all that is being thrown your way, you have a choice: You can walk away and declare that you do not trust God, or you can lean on Him and believe that He will carry you to the end.

Elisha knew that Elijah was going to be taken away from him and that the road of a prophet was dangerous at worst and tumultuous at best. Yet he stayed on the road with Elijah and with God until the very end. This is a great example to us that even when it is difficult, faithfulness to God is always the right and most rewarding path.

What are some ways you need to demonstrate your faithfulness in the coming days, months, and years?

DAY 2

READ:

2 Kings 2:7-8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

2 Kings 2:7-8

NOTES



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #85: 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.

The devil is a powerful being. Sin is a mighty force against humanity. Idolatry is destroying the world. When you stop to think about these realities, you might shudder at how powerful and mighty is the darkness in the world.

In Elijah and Elisha's day, idolatry and sin were beating down the doors of Israel, and Elijah was ready to leave the world. The people still had a long way to go to show their obedience and faithfulness to God. The powerful schemes of the devil and the Israelites' own sin seemed to be ravaging them. Thus, a display of power was necessary to demonstrate who was really in charge—namely, the One who created the heavens and the earth and who holds all things together with His word.

Thus, we arrive at the river. There God displayed His power. Sometimes God displays His power to convince the nations and the people to return to Him in urgency. Sometimes He displays His power to encourage and comfort His people with His presence.

When God divided the waters of the Jordan River and Elijah and Elisha crossed on dry land, God encouraged both of them to continue walking, even knowing Elijah's time had come to an end. Both needed that encouragement: Elijah needed to be assured that God was present in his last days; Elisha needed to be assured that God was present as he replaced the great prophet Elijah.

The God who brought His people out of slavery in Egypt and who brought Israel to their promised land by crossing this same river on dry land—this was the same God present with Elijah and Elisha in His power. Nothing can come against this God; all other powers cower in the light of His glory. And that in itself brings comfort to all who believe.

What are some ways you can regularly remind yourself of God's demonstrations of His power? How should that affect your daily life?

DAY 3

READ:

2 Kings 2:9-15

FOCAL PASSAGE:

2 Kings 2:14

NOTES

“Where is the LORD?” asked Elisha. What are we to think of this question?

There are two ways we can interpret this question from Elisha. Either he was saddened by the loss of Elijah and questioning if the Lord was even present with him in his mourning or he realized he had taken the baton of being prophet and needed assurance that this was from the Lord, asking, “Lord, are You with me on this?” Maybe it was a little of both, with Elijah needing God to display His power through him to assure him of God’s presence.

Have you asked God something similar? In desperation during struggles: “Where are You, God? Are You listening? Do You care about me?” During times of needing direction: “Lord, is this the right path? Did I make the correct choice? Are You equipping me for this next role?”

In the face of uncertainty, it is common for us to wonder where God is, if He is present, and if He will direct and equip us.

It is easy to wonder if God even hears our prayers when we do not hear Him speak audibly back to us or see Him act by parting a river. But God doesn’t take our prayers or questions lightly. Rather, He is longing for us to seek Him in prayer and through His Word to help us find the answers to our questions.

When we ask, “Where is the Lord?” we can look to the Bible and see stories like this one, where God answers very clearly that He is near and present. Be assured that God will always answer us when we are looking for His presence or His empowerment in ministry. It might not be through parting the Jordan River, but it will be clear if we truly seek Him.

If you are wondering where the Lord is, how does the story of Elijah and Elisha help answer that question?

DAY 4

READ:

Romans 8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Romans 8:12-17

NOTES

The Spirit of God—when you think about Him, what comes to mind?

We can be tempted to minimize the Holy Spirit. We forget that this is the Spirit who brought Jesus back to life and that the Spirit is actually living in us and is just as powerful today as in the days of Jesus and the disciples and throughout time. Sometimes we don't actually believe that the Spirit is alive and powerful.

We can also be tempted to overemphasize the Spirit and believe that if we just have enough faith or pray hard enough or conjure up enough "Spirit gifts," we can have the power to do whatever we want by the Spirit. We treat the Spirit as a magical talisman to give us power and not as God who is all-powerful.

The Spirit of God is an equal Person of the Trinity, just as important as God the Father and Jesus the Son. The Spirit is who we have right now. The Spirit is alive and active in us! And this is what gives us life and allows us the ability to call out to God as Father, being adopted into His family.

Our adoption as sons and daughters is sealed by the work of the Spirit, and thus, we are heirs and co-heirs with Christ. Therefore, we serve and minister for the kingdom in glory and in suffering.

As we choose to follow Christ and bring peoples and nations into God's kingdom, we are empowered by and equipped by the Holy Spirit to accomplish the will and purposes of God. We need not fear. We need not doubt. But giving God all the glory, we continue in the work set before us until the end of our lives or until Jesus returns to restore all things and make things new.

Do you tend to overemphasize or underemphasize the power of the Spirit? How will you seek to understand the Spirit more fully today?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Come, Holy Comforter,
Thy sacred witness bear
In this glad hour! Thou, who
almighty art, Now rule in
ev'ry heart And ne'er from us
depart, Spirit of power."¹

—Anonymous Hymn,
"Come, Thou Almighty King"

DAY 5

READ:

Luke 9

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Luke 9:23-24

NOTES

In 2 Kings 2:12-14, we find Elijah had been taken away. Immediately after, Elisha tore his own clothes, picked up Elijah's cloak, and struck the water with it as Elijah did.

In Luke 9:23, Jesus says if we want to come after Him, we must deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Him. Do you see the similarity there? What an example Elisha is for us!

Elisha left his old self behind, his old clothes behind. He took up Elijah's mantle, his cloak, a symbol of his prophetic responsibility, and followed in Elijah's steps and actions, performing miracles to display God's presence and power for the purposes of God.

In the same way, as disciples of Christ, we are called to do the same—to put our old self behind, pick up our cross, and follow Jesus. In picking up our cross, we know that this will not be an easy path void of trouble or turmoil. Jesus asks that every day, we ought to walk behind Him with a cross, with a burden in the sense of a heavy responsibility, to follow in Jesus's steps. When Jesus walked with His cross, He was beaten and bruised and bloodied. He took up His cross because He loved us and wanted to save us from our sins.

Following Jesus requires losing our life for His sake. It is the upside-down world. You die to live and you gain by losing. Not many believe this kind of life is worth living. We want comfort and ease, not pain and suffering. But the path Jesus walked was not too low for Him, so it ought not be too much for us.

Ultimately, we can follow Jesus because He is walking with us, being the One who really is carrying the load. He has already done the most difficult part by dying, so now we can live in obedience to Him. Jesus strengthens our steps and, in our weakness, helps us carry our cross.

How will you die to yourself today and follow Jesus?

GROUP

NOTES

POINT 1: Faithful to the Call (2 Kings 2:1-6)

Faithfulness involves remaining _____ to your calling. Elisha was called to be a _____ of Elijah and eventually to take his place, so he refused to leave his mentor's side.

? What are some ways disciples of Jesus should demonstrate their faithfulness to Him?

The mark of faithfulness is not a one-time event but a _____ of _____ over time.

POINT 2: Power for the Call (2 Kings 2:7-8)

Elijah and Elisha's journey brought them to the edge of the Jordan River, a place remembered for a display of _____ power to provide for His people and to affirm _____ as His chosen leader after Moses.

? What are some physical places that hold spiritual meaning for you?

Elijah, in the pattern of Joshua and Moses, struck the water so that it parted for Elisha and him to pass through, but the power for the miracle came not from Elijah but from God, the _____ and _____ of the world.

POINT 3: Equipped for the Call (2 Kings 2:9-15)

If Elisha was to succeed Elijah as the Lord's prophet, he knew he would _____ what Elijah had with _____, perhaps more, so he asked for a double portion as an inheritance.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Except the Lord endow us with power from on high, our labour must be in vain, and our hopes must end in disappointment."²

-Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #85: MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The church is a sign and _____ of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the _____ and risen King Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the _____ 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 _____ of God and the _____ of the world.



Why do we need the Holy Spirit to fulfill our gospel mission in the world?

MY RESPONSE

Because we have been given the Holy Spirit, we fulfill the mission Christ has given to us and share the gospel with the world, knowing that our strength comes from God's Spirit.

- **HEAD:** In the areas of life where you are struggling to believe God has a plan, what is the next faithful step you should take?
- **HEART:** How should knowing God is just as powerful today as He was in Elijah's day change the way you pray, speak, and act?
- **HANDS:** Who will you share the gospel with this week, knowing you have the power and comfort of the Holy Spirit?

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"As Elisha had his request granted on condition that he see Elijah at his ascension, so the faithful who see, that is, believe not only the incarnation and passion but also the resurrection and ascension of Christ into heaven, obtain their request to do greater things in the Spirit than Christ did, as he promised they would."³

-John Mayer (1583-1664)