

Elijah & Elisha II Kings 2

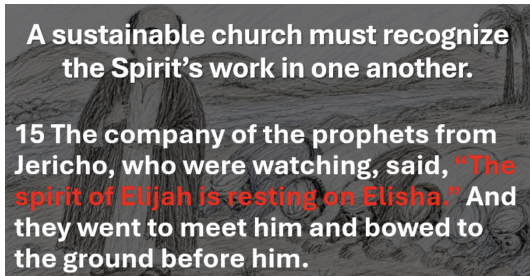
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After the Old Testaments kingdoms were divided, the prophets Elijah and Elisha spoke mainly to



the Northern Kingdom. We are also called to be like these men in their prophesy in how we strengthen, encourage, and comfort the community of God and point them to Jesus. Elisha in particular was exemplary because he has a lot of big moments while he is in the dirt with the people. Notice the quote to the left: ordinary and difficult describe our lives as well in a world not fully aligned under King Jesus.

Today we will walk through the rest of the story of Elisha who just took on Elija's mantel and ministry. I want you to ponder a couple of questions after we read the story from **II Kings 2**:

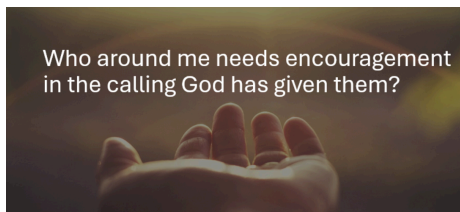


The company of prophets **doesn't participate but instead watches**. They want to see that Elijah's spirit is really on Elisha.

It is important to recognize the Spirit of God's work on one another. When you see someone offering something good, tell them. This is our job to recognize the Spirit's work and call it out **over and over again!**

The reason I'm standing in front of you today is because people did this to me. Once in 7th grade, I was at a new church and the pastor asked me to narrate the church play because he said I had a "beautiful narrating voice."

Children who grow up in church do not leave if they feel they are needed and offer good things to others. Part of the prophetic call of the church is to notice how the Spirit of God is in the 5 and 10 year-olds in our midst. We need to recognize and honor others in this way. **Prov 25:11 "Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a ruling rightly given."** Well timed words are powerful.



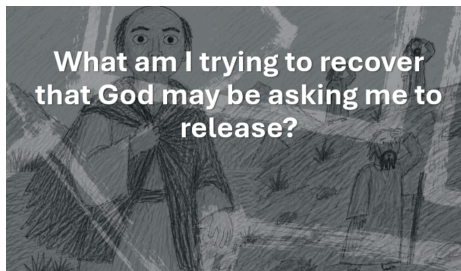
Consequently, here is the first question I want to ask you: **Who needs me to encourage them in their calling?** To answer this, I must look for God's calling in others' lives. "

The story continues in **II Kings 2:**

16 "Look," they said, "we your servants have fifty able men. **Let them go and look for your master.** Perhaps the Spirit of the Lord has picked him up and set him down on some mountain or in some valley." "No," Elisha replied, "do not send them." 17 But they persisted until *he was too embarrassed to refuse*. So he said, "Send them." And they sent fifty men, who searched for three days but did not find him. 18 When they returned to Elisha, who was staying in Jericho, he said to them, "Didn't I tell you not to go?"

It is interesting that the prophets see what is going on in Elisha but they aren't very willing to let go of Elijah. He was THE prophet who called fire down on altars and people. Maybe the Spirit of God took him away and dropped him somewhere else? This causes Elisha some degree of consternation: He just wants them to go and figure things out for themselves

It's hard to let go of the things that we once thought of as our identity. As a young pastor, I took a lot of pride in being a Gen Xers, who were way better than the Boomers. This was out of pride and anger and angst. I applied this to doing things differently. However, now I'm 54 and Gen X is not cool any longer: **aging is a process of letting go of what really mattered.** Now I'm facing the task of letting others do things differently. These prophets were in a similar situation. Elisha burns ox plows and has parties: they were unfamiliar with him.



Here is the next question we have to ask in response to this: Elijah took Elisha on a journey to review the different parts of his ministry. Now he's in a different stage. We are in different stages of life which usually require us to **let go of things that were once valuable.** That is what God was asking the prophets to do.

Curses

19 The people of the city said to Elisha, "Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the **water is bad and the land is unproductive.**"

Why is the land bad? This is the curse Joshua put on Jericho:

Curses

Joshua 6:26 At that time Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: "Cursed before the Lord is the one who undertakes to **rebuild this city**, Jericho: "At the cost of his **firstborn son** he will lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest he will set up its gates."

Let's talk about curses: we often think of witches. But in the Bible, curses have to do with relationship with God in places where he has removed himself.

Curses

1 Kings 16:34 In Ahab's time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken by Joshua son of Nun.

Elijah crosses the Jordan to a place that was cursed: God was not there.

Healing and Blessing

20 "Bring me a new bowl," he said, "and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. 21 Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, "This is what the Lord says: 'I have **healed this water**. Never again will it cause **death** or make the land **unproductive**.'" 22 *And the water has remained pure to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.*

Why does Elijah handle the curse of the land with salt? This will not fix anything! He sprinkles salt in a place where the relationship of God had been removed. The Covenant of God with Israel was the Salt.

Recently, I tried making an Italian recipe I got online with chickpeas, garlic, and rosemary. However, I had to add salt because it was very bland. This was like a curse: you put salt in the dish and it was uncursed. Elijah was symbolically saying God was moving into relationship again and bringing back the flavor.

Galatians 3:13: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. Where do I need Jesus to bring healing to the my inner-being?

Consider this question: **Where do I need Jesus to bring healing to my inner being?**

As believers, we were once the under the curse. We could not do what we knew we should do. Jesus became the salt in our life but this requires our cooperation.

Where are the places of cursing in my life? Where do I need Jesus to bring inner life and healing in my life? It is easy to be an external person, doing the right things. But think about what is going on inside and where I might have become bland? Where do we need salt?

The story continues in II Kings 2:23: For those who grew up in church, you probably think of these bullies as children. But children don't organize themselves like this. More likely, these were youths in Bethel, the place of Ba'al worship, so they were really most likely Ba'al prophets. They treat Elisha with contempt, as though he was beneath them.

Contempt often protects the idol.

23 From there Elisha went up to **Bethel**. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and **jeered at him**. "Get out of here, baldy!" they said. "Get out of here, baldy!"



You have contempt with something you are protecting, usually an idol. These youths didn't want Elisha to get rid of their altars but he has no patience with them.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Gal 6:7

24 He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. 25 And he went on to Mount Carmel and from there returned to Samaria.

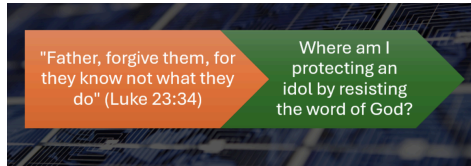
Gal 6:7

⁷Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

God's people do lots of things that have no consequences but notice this: when you mock God and decide to violate the first commandment, there are often very swift consequences.

When you carve little idols and create entire worship services around them, there will be consequences.

When we ask about where we need salt in our lives, look for contempt and what you are protecting.



When Jesus is on the cross, he was mocked. There he would die to save you from death. Therefore, you can ask what you are protecting and resisting. **Romans 7 and 8** tell us we aren't bound by the law and therefore can ask these questions.

Elisha's renewal ministry calls us to ask these three questions:

Who around me needs encouragement in the calling God has given them?

What am I trying to recover that God is asking me to release?

Where do I need Jesus to bring healing to my inner being?