The Gifts of God’s Power

**SESSION IN A SENTENCE:** God empowers His people to confirm their calling and to carry out His mission.

**BACKGROUND PASSAGE:** 1 Kings 19–2 Kings 2

Succession is important in various spheres of life. We see good succession plans emphasized in business, sports, and 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 shared it with others and passed it down to the next generation. So here we are today bearing that same responsibility.

? How have you been discipled by others in your life?
Group Time

Point 1: The successor commits fully to the mission (1 Kings 19:19-22).

19 Elijah left there and found Elisha son of Shaphat as he was plowing. Twelve teams of oxen were in front of him, and he was with the twelfth team. Elijah walked by him and threw his mantle over him. 20 Elisha left the oxen, ran to follow Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and mother, and then I will follow you.”

“Go on back,” he replied, “for what have I done to you?”

21 So he turned back from following him, took the team of oxen, and slaughtered them. With the oxen’s wooden yoke and plow, he cooked the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he left, followed Elijah, and served him.

Elisha showed his commitment to follow Elijah by destroying all of his old means of sustenance. He then threw a party to tell everyone he was following God’s will. Elisha was excited to abandon everything he knew for the call of the Lord.

How would you gauge your willingness to sacrifice in order to follow God’s call?

Prideful Refusal

Joyful Surrender

ELIJAH (1 Kings 19:19-22)

Allowed Elisha to Say Goodbye? ______  Allowed Man to Say Goodbye? ______

A ______________ of God

Called Elisha as a ______________


The ______________ of God

Calls Disciples to Make ______________

Mission of the Church: Go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make disciples by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus, calling people to respond in ongoing _______________ and _______________.

What must we give up in order to follow Jesus wholeheartedly?
Point 2: The successor requests God’s power to complete the mission (2 Kings 2:6-12a).

6 Elijah said to him, “Stay here; the LORD is sending me to the Jordan.” But Elisha 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 from the sons of the prophets came and stood observing them at a distance while the two of them stood by the Jordan. 8 Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water, which parted to the right and left. Then the two of them crossed over on dry ground. 9 When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken from you.” So Elisha answered, “Please, let me inherit two shares of your spirit.” 10 Elijah replied, “You have asked for something difficult. If you see me being taken from you, you will have it. If not, you won’t.”

11 As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire with horses of fire suddenly appeared and separated the two of them. Then Elijah went up into heaven in the whirlwind. 12 As Elisha watched, he kept crying out, “My father, my father, the chariots and horsemen of Israel!”

When the time came for Elijah’s departure, he initially tried to shake Elisha (vv. 1-6). This likely was a test to see if Elisha would count the cost of discipleship, and he passed. Regarding our own call to forsake all for the glory of God, will we persist and persevere?

What are some important characteristics of a disciple of Jesus?

Temple of the Holy Spirit: As the temple of the Holy Spirit, we live our lives ________________ than before, bearing the virtuous ________________ that comes only by the indwelling work of the Spirit, which also ________________ individual members of the church with gifts for the work of the ministry.

Elisha asked for a “double portion” of Elijah’s spirit. He recognized that he would need great help as God’s representative to fulfill his calling. The God who sent the chariot and horses of fire for Elijah is that help, and He would be with Elisha in power.

How is the power of God evident in the life of the believer in Christ?
Point 3: The successor is confirmed by a sign to begin the mission (2 Kings 2:12b-15).

12b When he could see him no longer, he took hold of his own clothes, tore them in two, 13 picked up the mantle that had fallen off Elijah, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. 14 He took the mantle Elijah had dropped, and he struck the water. “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” he asked. He struck the water himself, and it parted to the right and the left, and Elisha crossed over.

15 When the sons of the prophets from Jericho who were observing saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” They came to meet him and bowed down to the ground in front of him.

God would not cease to have a prophet calling Israel to faithfulness. Elijah might have been gone, but God wasn’t. The God of Elijah was still present, which was what Elisha communicated when he struck the river once again with Elijah’s cloak. Elisha believed that God had not abandoned the people, and he relied upon God for the power to minister to them. Elisha, like Elijah, operated with a great vision of God. These two prophets had great faith because they had a great God—as do we.

Voices from Church History

“[Elijah] left his mantle as a legacy to Elisha, and, though in itself it was of small value, yet as it was a token of the descent of the Spirit upon him, it was more than if he had bequeathed to him thousands of gold and silver.”

—Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

What should faith in the God of Elijah lead believers to do and say today?

Elisha was a true successor to Elijah, so His ministry in Israel and the surrounding nations would bring the blessings of God’s grace and the curses of His judgment. But his ministry was greater still, for it pointed forward to a greater Prophet. This Prophet, the true firstborn Son of God, also was anointed at the Jordan River. His command over water came not through a mantle but by the sound of His voice. And He came not just to confront idolatry but to provide salvation from idolatry. He is greater than Elijah; He is greater than Elisha; He is the God-man, Jesus the Messiah.

Why should the unfolding of the whole story of Scripture inspire us to worship and trust our God?
My Mission

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

- What are you being called to as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- How can your group develop godly relationships in light of the relationship between Elijah and Elisha?
- Who will you be praying for and calling to a life of discipleship in the power of the Holy Spirit?

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.”

—Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)
Never forget the cost of discipleship and the importance of having godly relationships in your life. Both of these essentials are expressed in this passage.

We see Elisha’s total abandonment of all things to follow this prophetic calling. The call to follow Jesus will also involve sacrificing certain things. It’s a privilege to follow Jesus, yet it’s also costly. But every true saint who has followed Jesus for years can testify that the reward reveals the sacrifice is actually quite small because Jesus is better than everything.

Then we also read in verse 21 how Elisha arose, followed Elijah, and assisted him—a picture of intimacy and companionship. In 2 Kings 2:12, Elisha called Elijah “father,” indicating the intimacy the two shared. Remember, Elijah had previously been isolated and discouraged. But now he received the blessing of being with Elisha and preparing him for the work ahead.

Who are the people in your life who bring you spiritual refreshment? Thank God for them.
Day 2: Read 2 Kings 1:1-18

Ahaziah continued in the evil ways of his wicked father, Ahab (see 1 Kings 22:51-53). He had seen the gracious and harsh acts of God toward Ahab, and yet, he followed in the evil path of his father anyway. The apple didn’t fall far from the tree, as this passage highlights.

When parents detest God or minimize Him, they shouldn’t be surprised when their children do the same. When we passively and implicitly teach our children that God isn’t important, our children will live that story out. Parents who inadvertently teach their children that the world revolves around them by regularly skipping corporate worship for other things shouldn’t be surprised when, later in life, their kids don’t see the local church as a big deal. Children will be influenced by what they have been taught, whether it was explicit or implicit.

What are some simple but important ways parents can disciple their children?

Day 3: Read 2 Kings 2:1-12a

Elisha would not let Elijah shake him. Most scholars believe the point of his not leaving Elijah’s side was to test whether Elisha would count the cost of discipleship, probably a final test to see if he would persist. We see something of our own call here—to forsake all for the glory of the Name. The question for us, like Elisha, is will we persist and persevere? This is the sign of the true disciple: delighting in God above all else and persevering in the faith and the mission. Elisha was a true disciple, for he had forsaken all, burning the plows, to follow Elijah. And this wouldn’t be the last time disciples would forsake all to follow a great prophet!

Elijah went on to his eternal reward without tasting death because God is in control of death and can overrule it. Elisha saw his mentor taken away, just as he hoped, but he also was sad and showed signs of sorrow over his loss (v. 12). Yet he would get up and persist in the mission to which he was called.

This text leaves us with some questions: Will we count the cost? Will we persist? Will we seek the glory of God over our own? Will we rely on God’s power to speak God’s Word faithfully in places of darkness?

What tests of your perseverance in the faith are you currently facing?
Day 4: **Read 2 Kings 2:12b-25**

The passing of the mantle to Elisha was validated in three signs. One, Elisha, the new Joshua, parted the Jordan River and headed toward Jericho, reversing Elijah’s steps. The company of prophets realized that Elijah had passed his prophetic work on to Elisha, so they revered him as the new representative of God for Israel.

Two, the men of Jericho said something lethal was in the water causing humans and animals to miscarry and die. Historically, Joshua had cursed anyone who would try to rebuild Jericho (Josh. 6:26), and during Ahab’s reign, someone did pay the price of that curse (1 Kings 16:34). Through Elisha’s miracle, the city that was under a curse now received a blessing from Yahweh—fresh, healthy water.

Three, as Elisha traveled to Bethel, some boys came out of the city to ridicule this new Joshua who had come to pagan Bethel to root out Canaanite worship. In saying, “Go up, baldy!” they essentially meant “Get out of here; we don’t want anything to do with you.” In their mockery these guys are showing contempt and hostility toward Yahweh and His representative. So Elisha brought on God’s judgment against these mockers, and she-bears attack the boys (see Lev. 26:21-22). God will not be mocked; He will have the last word (Gal. 6:7).

What are some ways you can stand for the honor of God when He is mocked in this world?

Day 5: **Read 2 Kings 4:1-44**

Here we find one of the most fascinating and exciting portions of 2 Kings. We finished the story of Elijah in 2 Kings 2. Elijah was gone, but his ministry wasn’t. It continued, particularly through the life of his successor, Elisha.

But Elisha reminds us of more than just his mentor. As the privileged readers of the Old and New Testaments, we also see that Elisha foreshadowed the ministry of Jesus. Elisha’s ministry was a Messiah-like ministry. In fact, Elisha’s ministry was closer to the ministry of Jesus than Elijah’s in some ways, especially in the degree of compassion that he demonstrated. Like Jesus, Elisha had compassion on those in need: a widow, a barren woman, a dead son, a hungry multitude, a leper, and those in difficulty (4:1–6:7).

How do the people of God need to balance tender pastoral care with strong prophetic traits today?
Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- The successor commits fully to the mission (1 Kings 19:19-22).
- The successor requests God’s power to complete the mission (2 Kings 2:6-12a).
- The successor is confirmed by a sign to begin the mission (2 Kings 2:12b-15).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

When has God helped you in assuming an important new role or set of responsibilities?

Why should we never detach God’s gifts to us from the mission He has given us to make His Son known to the world?

Notes
The prophetic books of the Old Testament can be confusing, both to the newcomer to the Bible and the longtime reader. Where do these prophets fit in the overall narrative of Israel and Judah? What messages did they communicate? What was God doing in and through their work? The benefit of this volume of The Gospel Project is that it gives you a glimpse of the prophets right at the point their message was going forth to God’s people. We can ask questions of God with Habakkuk, look forward to the coming Suffering Servant with Isaiah, stand amazed at the stunning picture of relentless love in Hosea, and learn something of God’s extravagant love with Jonah.

As you work through the sessions in this volume, keep an eye on all the different ways God reveals Himself and communicates His messages of judgment and grace. Fall to your knees in awe, and then stand up and boldly proclaim the love of this great God, who inspired the prophets to deliver His word.
UNIT 13

SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3
2. Charles Spurgeon, in Charles Spurgeon’s Classics (Charles River Editors, 2016) [eBook].

SESSION 4

UNIT 14

SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3
2. Jen Wilkin, None Like Him (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 158.

UNIT 15

SESSION 1

SESSION 2
3. Thomas Watson, The Doctrine of Repentance (Charles River Editors, 2018) [eBook].

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

SESSION 5

SESSION 6
2. Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle, Erasing Hell (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2011) [eBook].