

LIVING MY BEST LIFE

Lessons from the Example of Elisha

Everyone wants to live a full and rewarding life. But what does this look like? Could it be that our greatest life investment is found serving God and others?

This series will explore the life of a prophet named Elisha. Elisha was living a prosperous life, managing his family's large agricultural business, until one day, God interrupted his busy schedule to offer him a new life that would be incredibly rewarding. He immediately surrendered his business, his possessions, the comforts of home, and his family connections to embark on a new journey filled with sacrifice and service. Through a series of experiences, God used Elisha in powerful ways. Some of his most notable experiences were when he helped lift a destitute widow out of poverty, brought a dead child back to life, and healed a powerful official of a life-altering disease.

His example encourages us that a life lived to its fullest is a life of service to God and others, and its pursuit is worth letting go of some of our comforts and conveniences.

WEEK ONE • Seizing the Opportunity

1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2:1-14

Life is filled with choices. We cannot pursue every dream, accomplish every goal, experience every new adventure. With each pursuit we give up the opportunity to pursue other things. In today's passage, Elisha gave up his career, valuable possessions, and the comforts of home to pursue a risky future of serving God and others. While he sacrificed much to pursue this life, he gained something far greater. By choosing a life of service, Elisha was given the opportunity to experience the power of God in his life and therefore live life to its fullest.

- 1.** Describe a time or situation in your life when you chose to sacrifice something important or meaningful to you for the sake of something better or for somebody else. What made that particular choice a sacrifice? Would you say the sacrifice was worth it?
- 2.** Elijah and Elisha were prophets. Why was the role of "prophet" so important in the scriptures? What was the prophet's relationship to the kings of Israel and Judah? What made the life of a prophet exciting, yet also dangerous?
- 3.** Read 1 Kings 19:19-21. It seems Elisha was a man of relative means. Imagine yourself in his place. How would you respond to the call of Elijah?
- 4.** Read 2 Kings 2:1-14. Have you ever needed to "take up the mantle" ("fill the shoes" or "step out of the shadow of another") for someone you looked up to or admired?
- 5.** Read Luke 9:46-62. In what ways is the story of Elijah and Elisha similar to or different from the story of Jesus and his disciples? In what ways does the story in Luke echo the story of Elijah and Elisha. How might each story help us to read and understand the other?
- 6.** What loyalties in your life can you think of that might prevent you from devoting yourself fully to Lord Jesus and the reign of God? Why is the notion of sacrifice for the sake of God and others so important for a life of authentic faith?

WEEK TWO • Becoming a Hero Maker

2 Kings 4:1-7

Watching a movie or reading a good book, it is natural to identify with the “hero.” We want to be the Luke Skywalker or the Hermione Granger of the story. But the most influential characters in these stories are the “guides”: Yoda, Dumbledore, Mr. Miyagi. The guides support and empower others, helping them achieve their full potential, and accomplish great things. God taught Elisha a powerful lesson on the value and joy of empowering others. When he was faced with a widow in extreme poverty Elisha was able to supernaturally empower her, helping her start her own micro-enterprise by which she was able to support her family. Through this, Elisha experienced the fullness of serving others.

1. Would you rather be the main character in a story or have a supporting role? Why?
2. What do we learn about the woman in verse 1? How is she known to Elisha?
3. Elisha knew the woman had a significant debt to pay. Why might he have given her the directions he did? Could he have met her need in some other way?
4. Even if the woman trusted that God could meet her need, following Elisha’s directions required intermediate action steps from her. What would have been involved in completing these steps?
5. Who were the witnesses of the miracle in this passage? How did Elisha’s directions invite others to take part in the miracle?
6. How might this miracle have also affected Elisha and the woman’s sons and neighbors?
7. What lessons from the example of Elisha and the widow might we be able to apply to our own situations today?

WEEK THREE • Finding Satisfaction in Giving and Receiving

2 King 4:8-37

Generosity feels good. It is fun to purchase diapers for new parents, sponsor a child through World Vision, or even host a fun dinner with friends. But a life lived to its fullest is a life of reciprocal relationships. Sometimes you give and sometimes you receive. Elisha's relationship with the wealthy woman from Shunem began relatively one-sided. He was hungry and she had the resources to give him food. She then continued to treat him very generously by building him his own "in-law unit." But as the relationship developed, Elisha found opportunities to bless the woman's life in return. He blessed her with fertility and later when her son died, Elisha miraculously brought him back to life. This week, as we study this passage, we encourage you to discover what it means to practice reciprocal service.

- 1.** A woman at Shunem chooses to bless Elisha in generous and thoughtful ways. Share with your life group a time when you've experienced a full circle of reciprocal giving and receiving.
- 2.** Read 2 Kings 4:8-11. In what ways did the woman at Shunem bless Elisha? Why do you think she did it?
- 3.** In 2 Kings 4:12-17, why do you think Elisha wanted to bless/return the favor to the woman? How did he go about doing so?
- 4.** What were the Shunemmite woman's steps of faith when her son died? How do you think the people around her might have reacted? Do you think this affected the woman's faith? How and why do you think her son was brought back to life?
- 5.** Luke 6:38 reads: "Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (NIV). How can we practically live life to the fullest while making reciprocal service a regular practice?

WEEK FOUR • Experiencing Miracles, Big and Small

2 Kings 5:1-14, 6:1-7

There is something very rewarding about doing big things. We value world-changers whose sacrificial actions solve global problems, heal life-threatening diseases, and leave a legacy. But a life lived to its fullest embraces every opportunity to serve regardless of the circumstances.

Elisha's ministry was marked by miraculously serving in a variety of circumstances and situations. His ministry touched the rich and the poor, the political elites, and the day laborers. Yet, the supernatural power of God shows no partiality. When the people of God see others in need, they step in and serve. This sermon will explore two river miracles. One miracle involves a powerful army commander who has a life-altering disease, and the other miracle involves a construction worker who lost a relatively inexpensive tool. In each circumstance, Elisha responds with compassion and as a result he experiences the incredible power of God's grace.

- 1.** Has God ever done something in your life that seemed impossible or miraculous? As you think back on your life, has He ever used some surprising event or person to change the course or direction of your life?
- 2.** Read 2 Kings 5:1-14. Although Elisha is the prophet through whom God does this miracle of healing, who else plays a role in it, and how? (Note: there are multiple answers).
- 3.** Why does Naaman get angry when Elisha sends him a message with the solution to his problem? What mindset did Naaman have to have to receive healing? Have you ever responded to direction from God in a similar way?
- 4.** Why does Naaman decide to obey the prophet's command? What difference does obedience make in Naaman's life? Re-read not only verse 14, but also 5:15-16. How do these verses add to your understanding the change in Naaman and the course of his life?
- 5.** Read 2 Kings 6:1-7. Why does Elisha respond to this man's need? Can our own simple choice to get involved in someone else's predicament make a significant difference in their life? Share an example of a time someone helped you, or you helped someone else.
- 6.** Application: Do we sometimes need extra prodding or prompting to obey God? Can we do that for each other? In what ways? Does the Holy Spirit ever prompt you to speak up or get involved in someone else's life?
- 7.** After answering these questions, look up and meditate on these passages: Psalm 119:59-60 and Hebrews 10:24-25.