

“Passing the Mantle”

2 Kings 2:1-12

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Rev. Brian T. Smeal; pastorsmeal@gmail.com

All Scripture quoted from ESV unless otherwise noted

Matthew 6:19-21 – Jesus tells us, “...lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” How do you do that? How do you store up treasures in heaven, rather than here on earth? There are several answers to that question, but one in particular springs forth from 2 Kings 2:1-12. Namely, by investing in the next spiritual generation. That is ‘passing the mantle’ by passing along your wisdom, experience, and knowledge of the Lord to those who come behind you.

In 2 Kings 2, we see that 3 times, Elijah had attempted to have Elisha stay back while he went forward, but each time, Elisha refused to leave his master’s side. At Bethel and then again at Jericho, some ‘prophets in training’ asked Elisha if he knew that Elijah would be taken from him, and both times, he replied that yes, he knew, but that they should keep that information quiet. Maybe that was so they could all focus on the Lord, and not on the prophet who so faithfully served Him for so long.

Upon coming to the Jordan River, Elijah strikes the water and the river divides so they can cross over, after which, Elijah asks what Elisha would like him to do for him. Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. According to Old Testament inheritance traditions, the eldest son received twice as much as any other child, indicative of his status as firstborn son. For a king, the eldest son would typically be expected to succeed his father as king. So, by making this request, Elisha saying that he accepts his call to be Elijah’s successor.

As they are walking along, suddenly, chariots and horses of fire separate them and Elijah is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. Note that he is not riding in the chariots; the storm took him away. After that excitement, Elisha mourns for his departed mentor and friend, but then picks up the mantle, showing that he was ready to step into his calling.

Much has been made of the relationship between Elijah and Elisha. They spent years together, though nothing is recorded of what their interactions and ministry together looked like. But it is generally understood that Elijah, the more experienced prophet, was mentoring Elisha, fresh off the fields, where as a farmer, he had spent much of his time.

There is a need today for men and women who will rise up and mentor those who come along behind them. There are many young (or at least, younger in the faith) people who would benefit greatly from a more experienced Christian to come alongside them and help them grow in their faith, sharing life together. Today, we will

attempt to address what you can do in order to seek how to prepare that generation to take this world for Christ.

The first thing to do is identify and invite others to follow in your footsteps. In 1 Kings 19:16, Elisha named as Elijah's successor. He did not question God's calling – verse 20 shows that he immediately left his farming lifestyle. He did not leave a way back, either; in verse 21, we see that he sacrificed the oxen he was using to plow and burned the yokes he was using to lead them. We also know that Elisha did not jump the line and think that just because he was called, that he had been properly equipped. Instead, he entered into an intentional mentoring relationship, in which Elijah was able to mentor Elisha and usher him into this new era in his life.

Great mentors identify and recruit those who will surpass them. That's the goal – that one day, the individual(s) that you mentor will one day go on to do even greater things for the kingdom of heaven than you ever did. After all, mentoring is not a competition; it's an investment in those who will one day take your place, doing even greater things than you did. Check out Jesus' attitude toward this in John 14:12-14.

After identifying and inviting someone that would benefit from being mentored by you, the second step is to invest in their growth and development. Elisha walked with Elijah for years, and while most of their interactions are not recorded, by the end, we see that Elijah had invested his experience and his wisdom into Elisha so much that Elisha had no fear in stepping up into his role as Elijah's successor – he had 'learned the ropes,' as the saying goes. It takes time, patience, and humility to not just show a skill, but to actually teach someone that skill, allowing them to make mistakes as part of the learning process, but being there to give feedback on why those were mistakes

After investing and building up a mentee, there will come a time for the third step in the process, which is to inaugurate their ministry. For years, Elisha followed Elijah, learning from the master so he could be effective in ministry in his own right, and when Elijah was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind, the mantle fell once and for all to Elisha. The greatest legacy a mentor can leave is to invest in and release for effective service a mentee who is capable, competent, and confident.

Let's flip the script for a moment and think about who you might be able to identify as a possible mentor for you. It should be someone who's been where you want to go; someone who knows the way. It should also be someone whose moral, ethical, and practical standards are worth emulating, for the precursor to effective mentoring is having a life worth emulating in the first place.

If you would be a mentor, you should work hard and submit to Jesus so that you can live a life such that if someone were to see you, 24 hours a day – your actions, thoughts, motivations, everything – they would say, "I want to live a life like that." Where do you need to change, in order to live a life worth emulating?

The final step in effective mentoring is releasing that person for powerful service to God and effective ministry within the local context and global community. Find the Elijah around you; one whose life is worthy of being emulated; one who is willing, able, and qualified to pour wisdom and experience into your life; one who is not afraid to unleash your full potential, even if that means that you, the student, will be surpassing them, the master. And then find the Elisha within you. Be willing to honestly evaluate who you are and where you're at today – spiritually, mentally, emotionally. Be willing to humbly trim the excess or change significant parts of who you are in order to become the most powerful and effective YOU that you can possibly be. Be willing to carry on the blessing and the burden of living as a mantle-wearing, torch-bearing, cross-sharing champion for the Lord Jesus Christ in a world that is more and more desperate to hear that message from Jesus, through you, to them.

Takeaways from this message.

Observations from 2 Kings 2:1-12

One way to store up treasures in Heaven is by investing in the next SPIRITUAL GENERATION

Preparing the next generation

❖ IDENTIFY

- ✓ Elisha didn't question GOD'S CALLING
- ✓ Elisha didn't leave a WAY BACK
- ✓ Elisha didn't JUMP the LINE
- Great mentors IDENTIFY and RECRUIT those who will surpass them

❖ INVEST

- Great mentors create LEADERS, not DEPENDENTS

❖ INAUGURATE

- The precursor to effective mentoring is having a life worth EMULATING

The final step in effective mentoring is releasing that person for powerful SERVICE to God and effective MINISTRY within the local context & global community.

DIG IN!

Here are some farm-fresh questions that will help you to personalize and apply this morning's message.

1. *What was most surprising, unexpected, or helpful from today's passage/message? Why?*
2. **Why do you suppose Elijah told Elisha (3 times) to stay behind while he intended to go on ahead? Why did Elisha refuse to acquiesce to this request?**
3. **If dogs could talk, what would they argue about most?**
4. **This is the third time we've seen God parting waters (Red Sea, Exodus 14 and Jordan River, Joshua 3-4). Each time, God was ushering His people into a new era.^[1] How might having a mentor in your life help usher you into a new era in your life? Who might that mentor be? When will you talk to them about this?**
5. *What have you learned through your personal time of Bible reading this week?*

^[1] <https://bible.org/seriespage/5-elijah-taken-heaven-2-kings-2>