

Glen Park Gospel Church
Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Rev Chris Trinham

Elisha

No 1

Called to Service

First Kings 19:15-21; Second Kings 2:1-18

Elisha is considered by many to be a model leader. He was patient, persistent and persuasive. These three leadership gifts are evident in today's study. Not everyone has the same gifts, but by diligence leadership can be learned. Leader must analyse their strengths and major on them, then their weaknesses, then develop and strengthen them.

Not everyone is called to church or formal group leadership. But we all have some measure of leadership. Whether it be in the home, at school, at work, in the church community or simply our social relationships, here are some principles to learn and apply.

Before we can be a leader we must be a disciple.

Elisha's mentor was Elijah, a man of fire and condemnation. Elisha had a more conciliatory disposition - See your introduction booklet. Yet we also see a similarity in the works and responses of the two men.

Discipleship is a time to watch and hear and then to learn by experience under the master's practised eye. Mark tells us of Jesus choosing and calling his disciples:

And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He *could* send them out to preach Mark 3:14.

This method of Jesus, Paul, Elijah and others is a model for us all.

Beware of people who want to lead before they have learned:

Do not lay hands upon anyone *too* hastily and thereby share *responsibility* for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin. 1 Timothy 5:2.

God Himself called Elisha to be a leader prophet. And He did it through Elijah. Elisha knew nothing until his anointing. First Kings 19:15-21. God called Moses, Paul, Mary, Gideon, Joshua, Noah, in fact all the notable leaders we find in His

word. Many today are self anointed, self appointed. Self appointed - then dis-appointed!

Elisha was anointed to his

ministry. Three classes of leaders were anointed to their tasks, prophets, priests and kings. It was more than a symbolic endowment of the Holy Spirit. It was a sign, both to the individual and the community to be served that the hand and authority of God is on this individual. It also served as a demarcation between the old and the new.

Jesus himself was anointed to his prophetic ministry.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor . . . Luke 4:18.

But Jesus filled the role of all three anointed leaders.

Elisha was called and anointed

while in secular occupation; as he followed the plow. It may seem a trivial point, but he was with the last pair. This is the right place for a bullock driver, for that is what he is doing, driving his beasts. They are wilful, unlike sheep which can be led. God called a man ideally trained

to his future task. When God wanted a soul winner, he called a man casting nets. When He wanted a man to expound Christ in the Old Testament scriptures, he called a Pharisee.

If you want to know what God wants of you, take a look at the way He has led you until now, and extend it.

God had been preparing Elisha for his call. The Bible does not say so, but he was ready to instantly respond. The sons of Zebedee had several meetings with Jesus before they left their nets. The Spirit of God breaks the ground before the seed is sown.

Elisha burned his plough, and

slaughtered his oxen in a celebratory sacrifice. This was a crisis of commitment for him, a one way ticket. There was to be no turning back. These oxen were a symbol of wealth. It was no cheap gesture.

Elijah cast his mantle upon him.

The mantle was made of animal skins sewn together. What a contrast! The gesture reminds us of the commission of Jesus to the disciples in Mark 6:7-13. There was to be no pre-provisioning. They were to be totally reliant on the

providence of God and the compassion of their hearers. The act was symbolic. We later find Elisha living and working from home. See 1 Corinthians 9:3-6.

Farewell!

Elisha's request seems natural enough to us, and Elijah's reply unnecessarily hard v20. Hebrew has some forms of grammar¹ we do not have in English. The word 'let' could have been translated 'shall I' as a suggestion rather than a request; and Elijah's response be interpreted, 'Off you go, Have I restricted you.' Elisha was more anxious than Elijah that he should follow him.

A double portion of You Spirit, or more probably; 'another', or a 'second' endowment of the spirit you have². Such a gift would 1. Enable his prophetic insight and ministry, and 2. Validate his leadership in the eyes of the prophetic community. Was this Elijah's right to bequeath, or God's right to give? Is this why it was a difficult request?

The fallen mantle was the symbol to Elisha and the school of prophets. But the cleaving of the waters of the Jordan was a demonstration of that essential grace.

1 Cohortive form, now disused. 2 This Hebrew word indicates a pair, a twin, something cut in two, another portion, and by extension twice as much. Bible quotations in this study are from the NASB.

Welcome Glen Park Gospel Church
Lower Road, Eltham North
Sundays 10.30 am

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