

<u>Lessons from Elijah, Ahab, and Elisha</u> sermon series	Lessons from Elisha 1 Kings 19 to 2 Kings 10	Preached 7/18/2004
C Proper 6	Authored by Tim Isbell	

Thesis: God's way is to call us to a pure and holy passion and he wants us to drop what we're doing and follow.

Elisha's call

Read 1 Ki 19.15-21

Elijah anointed Elisha; we read it.

But Elijah never anointed Hazael or Jehu

Elisha anoints Hazael in 2 Ki 8, and if you've read ahead you know the prophesy comes true.

Elisha anoints Jehu in 2 Ki 9, ditto.

Don't you love Elisha's reaction to the call

He's working in the field with 12 teams of oxen. I guess all lined up plowing. He has his work to do and he's doing it when God's prophet Elijah walks out in the field and throws his cloak over Elisha.

Elisha knows what it means. He has just received God's assignment to follow Elijah, and eventually to take Elijah's place.

I don't think Elisha expected anything like this to happen; but he immediately goes into action!

That's impressive to me, and probably to God.

He said goodbye to his dad & mom. He butchered and BBQ's the oxen over the wood from the plow!

He committed himself to the new assignment, and destroyed his means of going back on that commitment.

He immediately reorganized his life around that call.

This Elijah story reminds me of passage in Matt 13

44 "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field--and to get the treasure, too!"

45 "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a pearl merchant on the lookout for choice pearls.

46 When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!

Matt 13:44-46 (NLT)

Anyway, Elisha got off to an impressive start.

Many OT characters start out strong, but then they don't survive the challenges that follow.

Elisha didn't just start strong. He lived his whole life passionately following the Lord. And what an impact he had!

I know a little about God's calls

I know it's sometimes hard to discern the assignment

I didn't grab all the assignments God sent my way. I missed one that I'd dearly love to have another chance at.

Got any like that? Where you sure wish you could have a "do over?"

But I also know something about recognizing the assignment and rearranging my life in response.

And I know it's hard to keep going for the long haul, to stay on track, to stay fired up about the assignment day in/day out. Week in /week out... month in/month out... year... decade.

I've never done anything worth doing that was one upper after another. There's always a mixture of emotional highs/lows along the way.

Much of the time the fire of the assignment burns hot. But then sometimes it burns so low that unless I take some action it might burn out.

In the last few weeks I've feel my fire burn a little low. I got tired; saw a few too many train wrecks in people's lives. Do you understand?

In times like these I've learned some tricks... "feeding tricks."

Practices really; spiritual practices.

If I go feed on certain things then it's my experience that the Lord fans my flame. So, recently I decided to trigger 3 of them.

- Feed on some good books. So I bought some and started reading. It helped, but not enough.
- Feed on good sermons from the best preachers I can find. So I ordered a 13-week subscription. But it won't start arriving for a couple weeks.
- Feed on some good Christian music. I usually take Thursdays off. But this week I had a District Advisory Board meeting in Concord. I knew there would be nothing

on that agenda fan my flame brighter! Then I remembered another “food” that I hadn’t tasted in a while: some praise and worship music. I played it LOUD. It’s 1.25 hours each way to Concord on Thursday listening over and over to 1 CD - most of the time to just 2 songs on that CD.

One of them we sang this morning already. The other one perhaps we can learn. That one relates pretty directly to this message on Elisha. It’s a song Elisha would have sung if he’d known it. It’s...

One Pure and Holy Passion

Give me one pure and holy passion,

Give me one magnificent obsession,

Give me one glorious ambition for my life,

To know and follow hard after you.

Here’s the result – I didn’t get a day off, but...

The Lord used 2.5 hours in the car to fan the flame of my pure and holy passion, my magnificent obsession, the glorious ambition he has for my life: to know and follow hard after him.

I want to encourage you to learn how to put yourselves in places where God can fan the flame of your devotion.

Yours are probably different places than where I need to feed. But I don’t know how I’d survive without these sort of feeding places.

There’s another Elisha story: the Shunammite woman

Read her story (~ 2 Kings 4), or tell it, or simply encourage people to read it!

She had the hospitality gift!

It opened the door not just for Elijah, but also for Gehazi, AND ALSO FOR God’s blessing on her whole family!

She felt secure in her family; maybe that is why she could extend hospitality.

She knew how to lead – and did so with the same decisiveness as Elisha.

James Dobson’s story about his father

Play a clip from Bringing up Boys, VCR Tape 1 ... 1:08:30 – 1:11:55

Revisit “One Pure and Holy Passion” ... CD song

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Give me one pure and holy passion,

Give me one magnificent obsession,

Give me one glorious ambition for my life,

To know and follow hard after you.

Knowing and following hard after the Lord means different things to each of us.

- To Elisha it meant traveling around Palestine serving as God's prophet.
- To the Shunammite woman it meant serving the Lord by using her gift of hospitality and by devoting her energy to her family.
- To James Dobson's father it meant sacrificing whatever was to become of his ministry career to rearrange his life around his son.

If you're a parent, isn't the your passion obvious? Isn't your obsession obvious? Isn't your ambition obvious? Unless God calls you to something else and shows you how he will care for your children, then knowing and following hard after God begins with organizing your life so that your children can join you in knowing and following hard after God.

How about you?

- What's your passion? ... is it pure and holy?
- What's your obsession? ... is it magnificent ... in God's eyes?
- What's your ambition? ... is it glorious ... is it God's ambition for your life?

God's challenge to each one of us is to "know Him and follow hard after him."

<i>Other resources:</i>
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