

## **2 Kings 2:1-14**

### **Lessons from the Jordan River; Live in the Flow of the Spirit**

The Jordan River is a biblical landmark where many great experiences of God took place. Stories in both the Old and New Testament books of the Bible tell about spiritual events and insights that occur at the Jordan River. Different experiences of God happen there, that teaches us different truths about God. So for the next four weeks we'll be looking at lessons of faith from the Jordan River.

One person who learned something about the power of God while spending time at the Jordan was a man named Elisha. It was at the Jordan River where his life caught the flow of God's power working through him. So now that Easter has come and we have celebrated that Jesus lives, the next question is so what? Well, God can take Elisha's story and use it to offer us direction on how we can catch the flow of the living reality of Christ among us.

### **Read 2 Kings 2:1-14**

Elijah was wrapping up his time as a prophet for God. Elisha had been a pupil to Elijah. Elijah was preparing to leave. Elisha was struggling to accept the departure of his mentor/teacher. We know Elisha was struggling because the Bible teaches us that twice as Elijah and Elisha were traveling toward the destination point where Elijah will leave, people remind Elisha that his master will be leaving. Each time Elisha was reminded, he told them to be silent. He probably gave them the look we get when we start to tell someone how a movie ends that they have never seen before. They give you the look to keep that information to yourself.

### **Depend on God through life transitions. vs. 3&5**

One lesson from this story that concludes at the Jordan River is

that God has designed life to be ever changing. The book of Ecclesiastes, chapter three reminds us there is time for various conditions of life to occur. Times of mourning and celebration, a time for birth and death. But the Bible repeatedly reminds us about this reality of life because sometimes we're like Elisha, we don't want to face and hear about the impending changes in life. Maybe this morning in your own way you're at the Jordan River. You're like Elisha because there is a change happening or about to happen in your life. It may be one that you're dreading like Elisha, or it may be something you are looking forward to but it still amounts to change, adjustments and uncertainty.

What really counts is how we let God lead us and empower us to cope with life changes and transitions. What really counts is whether we seek to catch his power in those times to grow in Christ.

This scene of Elisha facing change certainly applies to us as a congregation. In June a new pastor will be taking over the leadership of the church. God is watching and ready to work through us through that change.

Especially for leaders that is a real time to evaluate and take stock. Sometimes change is a moment when we see new opportunities or what we would do differently if we had to do it all over again. Change is a time when maybe we wish all of life were like playing golf where we could take mulligan. If you're not familiar with golf, a mulligan is where you get an opportunity to take another shot because the first time you hit the ball it went in the lake or the woods. Perhaps this is a time to question as you go through the transitions to take your next shot and make the choices that you believe help you catch the direction of God's spirit.

**The prayers and request we make of God are a reflection of our spiritual health. v.9**

Before Elijah left, the Bible tells us he asked Elisha what he could do for Elisha before leaving. This another part of the story that applies to us. God is wanting to know what we desire from him. We might think, well isn't that contradictory to teachings of the scripture about us seeking God's will? No, because after all there are times where God wants to know what we want and what we expect. Jesus once said, **"Ask and it will be given, search and you'll find, knock and the door will be open..." Luke 11:9** God sometimes will ask us what we desire what we believe we need. **I believe the reason God may do this is because request and prayers reflect the spirit of our hearts. What we ask for paints a picture of where we are spiritually in our relationship with God.** As a matter of fact this may be the reason why we don't pray and don't ask of God because we desire that which we know God would never want to give us.

C.S. Lewis once said that people have taken the scripture where Jesus says be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect to mean that unless you are perfect God will not help you. And since none of us are perfect then God will not help. But what be perfect means is that the only help God will give to us is to become perfect, or spiritually whole or complete. (Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis, p.201) Do our prayers seek to become more Christ-like or just have what we want.

Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's power. I read in two different Old Testament resources Thursday and both stated that the total number of miracles that Elijah performed during his ministry was 8. The total number of miracles Elisha performed before he died was 16. Elisha doubled the number of miracles. Elisha prayed for a double portion. His prayer was to be greater than his mentor. **Elisha challenges us to wonder, do we desire to exceed those who inspire us or do just do enough to get by and get what we want?** Perhaps some pray that everyone else will be

on fire for the Lord, but they just want be assured they'll have blessing in this life and go to heaven. Elisha's request revealed his heart. Elisha's desires told God and Elijah he wanted to be bold and wanted God's power working through him. Another lesson from the this time at the River Jordan is that our prayers tell who we are and what were striving before in life.

Pastor and author Francis Chan gets at this issue about the content of our prayers and how they reflect a committed life and trust to God; or not. This clip were about to see has him on a balance beam such as used in Olympic gymnastic competition. Take a look.

### **Play Francis Chan Video**

I don't think Elisha's story teaches us to pray for a double portion of God's spirit to play it safe. What we pray for tell us where we are spiritually.

### **Pick up and use the help God provides. v.13**

Elisha would face the change. The scripture says a chariot of fire and horses came and God used them to separate Elijah from Elisha. Elijah was carried up to heaven and Elisha was left behind. And on the ground, Elisha finds the mantle that belonged to Elijah. A mantle was cape like piece of clothing that Elijah had worn and used in performing miracles. Elisha took that mantle and he went to the edge of the Jordan River because he needed to cross back over to the side where he lived. He strikes the river with the mantle and nothing happens. Then he ask where is the Lord the God of Elijah, strikes the river again with the mantle and the Jordan River parted.

Now, someone once said that the scriptures are like eating fish. There are some pieces of the fish that have the meat so close to the

bone you just have to put that section of fish aside and enjoy the piece of fish without so many bones. I know there is a lot of wild stuff happening in this story with flaming horse powered chariots and rivers being parted, that may come across as the bony parts of this story and difficult to digest. But don't let that part of the story keep you from getting the meatier, more powerful truth it contains.

Elisha took up the mantle of Elijah and used it. He used the power and means that God had made available.

We catch and connect with the flow of God's power when we come to the decision we cannot get to where we want to go unless you trust God enough to move in you. We catch the power of God's spirit when we decide to use and implement small or large the spiritual gifts and opportunities God has provided. We can only be inspired so long by the preachers message, or someone's testimony of what God did for them; but then the moment comes to us to put the inspiration into action. Elisha faced his moment. He had to get back across the Jordan. Elijah wasn't there any more to part the river. It strikes me in this story that Elijah by God's power has brought Elisha across the Jordan River. If Elijah is going to cross over the Jordan, he was going to have to do it on God's terms and help.

Another lesson from the Jordan River is knowledge of God has to get translated into action; not just intentions. Elisha had the knowledge of what he needed to do. He saw Elijah part rivers. Now he had the mantle of Elijah to use. All that was left was the test, of whether Elisha trust God enough to slap that mantle on the water and see God do the rest?

Sometimes what keeps us out of the flow of God's power is we get to the edge of our Jordan River. We get to the edge and were holding the gifts and abilities in our hands to do what God wants us to do but; instead of acting on opportunities to be obedient we

stop. What if Elisha would have said, “before I try and be like Elijah, maybe I better join a 4 week study group on how to part the Jordan River with God’s power? But he had seen enough. He had learned enough. It was just time to transform the knowledge and information into obedience to God. Chances are all of us have some type of Jordan River condition and God is watching to see are you going to be faithful in what you already know and live more completely for him.

Closing Prayer