

LIVING ON THE EDGE

A series on the
life of
Elijah

Group study guide
Part nine
24th November 2019



How many of us dream about going out with a “Blaze of glory?” But when the smoke clears, what is left? How quickly will our “Blaze of glory last?” If you are interested in going out with a “blaze of glory” there is a way you can do it which will last forever.

In this last installment of our series “Living on the edge” we come to the end of Elijah’s ministry, as he has completed the job God had for him to do. Whilst Elijah himself certainly goes off in memorable fashion, the question is what does he leave behind? All his years of tough ministry are to what end?

Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2 And Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

3 And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take away your master from over you?" And he said, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet."

4 Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. 5 The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take away your master from over you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet."

6 Then Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. 7 Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. 8 Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me." 10 And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so." 11 And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And

Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12 And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. 13 And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. 14 Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

(2 kings 2:1-14 ESV)

Commentary

In this study we have focused on the life and ministry of Elijah, and it seems he has been a lone voice crying out in opposition to the king and people going after other gods and in particular Baal. But after Elijah fled to the wilderness, and indeed Elijah complained to God that he alone was left, God told him that would not be so, and indeed gave him the assignment of calling his replacement; Elisha.

19 So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him. 20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" 21 And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with



the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.

1 Kings 19:19–21 (ESV)

Elijah's call of Elisha to be his disciple is done in a very understated way, perhaps because Elijah wants to leave it to Elisha to truly follow him and God, and doesn't want to put any pressure on Elisha one way or the other. Elisha recognises Elijah's sign as a call to action and although asking for permission to say goodbye to his family takes a decisive action so there is nothing for him to go back to once he leaves.

We haven't heard mention of Elisha, but presumably he has been observing and taking in everything Elijah has done since then. But now Elijah is to be taken up to heaven, and he takes a zig zag farewell tour of the prophets. Since Elijah told God he was alone it seems things have changed! At each stopping off point Elijah urges Elisha to stay behind, but Elisha refuses. The prophets also remind Elisha of his upcoming loss, but Elisha tells them to be quiet, tell me something I don't already know! The route of Elijah and Elisha mirrors the route of the invasion of Canaan by Joshua, except it is done in reverse. Elijah and Elisha also mirror Moses and Joshua, except of course Moses never made into the Promised Land.

Elijah strikes the Jordan and just like with Joshua the waters part, and the Red Sea with Moses before him. They cross over observed by 50 prophets. Elijah asks Elisha if he has a request before he goes. Elisha does; to take over from Elijah. Elijah says he has asked for something hard, but nonetheless if he sees what happens it will be a sign his request has been granted. Fiery chariots separate the two and Elijah is carried off to heaven in a whirlwind, as Elisha expresses his sorrow and respect for Elijah. Picking up the falling cloak he walks back to the Jordan and asking where the God of Israel is, striking the water with the cloak the waters part and Elijah passes over. Not only had the cloak changed hands but Elisha has assumed the power and position of Elijah and he will now be the prophet in Israel.

Group Study

Start this week's group by reviewing your responses to last week's study, how you applied them during the week, what you discovered as you applied them. What were the successes and difficulties, and where adjustments will you need to make?

Share with the group briefly how you became a Christian and who God used in your life to make Himself known to you?

Who were the key disciplers of you?

Do you have anyone discipling you now? Why or why not?

Are you discipling anyone now? Why or why not?

What does the Lord look for when He calls someone?

READ 1 Samuel 16:4-13

If you are looking for someone to disciple what sort of qualities would you look for?

READ The following verses

36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. Acts 4:36-37 (ESV)

25 So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians. Acts 11:25–26 (ESV)

15 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” 2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. Acts 15:1–2 (ESV)

37 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, Acts 15:37–39 (ESV)

What should we look for in a discipler?

How and where can potential disciplers and disciples connect with one another?

What is one key thing both discipler and disciple will need to have with each other?

When a group grows and becomes too large how willing are you to let it multiply even if that means losing some of your friends?

In the great scheme of the Bible and time, what is our role today?

Wrap up

Overall, as we conclude this series, how do you feel about livign on the edge?

