

Hope Church South Haven August 2nd 2026

1st Kings 19:19-21 & 2nd Kings 2:1-18

Standing Alone #5

Several years ago, I read a statistic that honestly bothered me.

Most Christians will never intentionally disciple another believer.

To be a disciple is to be pursued by Jesus. To be a disciple is to be **with Jesus**. Becoming like Jesus. **Doing what Jesus did**. And helping others do the same.

Most Christians:

- *Attend church* FAITHFULLY.
- *Serve* FAITHFULLY.
- *Give* FAITHFULLY.

But many never intentionally invest in **helping another person follow Jesus**.

When Jesus ascended, He DIDN'T *leave behind buildings*. He DIDN'T *leave behind a denomination*. He DIDN'T even *leave behind a written New Testament*. He left behind disciples. Disciples **who made disciples**.

Gameplan has always been: one relationship at a time.

That's exactly where Elijah's story picks up today. LAST WEEK Elijah believed everything depended on him. **God gently reminded him:** *Elijah, I've already chosen the next prophet.*

Elijah didn't wake up one morning and decided he needed an assistant. God called Elijah to go find Elisha. *To invest in someone else. To prepare the next generation.*

1st Kings 19:19-21:

So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. "Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye," he said, "and then I will come with you." //

// "Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?" So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant.

- Elijah FINDS Elisha behind a plow. Elisha **isn't looking for the spotlight** or a **ministry position**.
- Elisha is *faithfully doing* what God has already placed in front of him.

- Throughout the Bible God MEETS ordinary people in ordinary places in their ordinary lives.
 - ⇒ Peter was cleaning fishing nets.
 - ⇒ Matthew was sitting at a tax booth.
 - ⇒ Elisha was farming.
- Elisha was PLOWING with **twelve yokes of oxen**. It's *not useless random information*.
- Elisha came from **a wealthy farming family**. He had security. He had a future. He knew what the rest of his life would look like.
- Then Elijah walks over and places his cloak over Elisha's SHOULDERS.
- No **speech**. No **pressure**. No **manipulation**.
- Just an invitation. Because that's how God often calls us.
- Elisha does more than just saying goodbye to his family. He SLAUGHTERS the oxen and BURNS the plows and SHARES the meal with his community.
- He is making one thing clear: **there is no going back**.
- Elisha is *leaving behind the life* he had planned to *embrace the life* God had called him too.

- Then comes one sentence we could easily overlook: **He became Elijah's servant.**
- Not his replacement. His **servant**.

The story now jumps ahead several years. Most scholars think **somewhere between six and twelve years** have passed. *Imagine what those years looked like*. Elisha wasn't preaching to crowds or performing miracles.

He was serving and earning and watching and walking alongside Elijah day after day.

Before God entrusted Elisha to lead His people, He first taught him how to follow faithfully.

OUR CULTURE IS OBSESSED WITH THE SPOTLIGHT. We celebrate the platform. But God often does His deepest work **where hardly anyone is looking**. Before He uses us publicly, *He usually forms us privately*.

2nd Kings 2:1-6:

When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. //

// The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, “Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?” “Yes, I know,” Elisha replied, “so be quiet.”

Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” //

// And he replied, “As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So they went to Jericho. The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, “Do you

know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?” //

// “Yes, I know,” he replied, “so be quiet.” Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” And he replied, “As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them walked on.

- The story opens with an *interesting conversation*.
 - ⇒ Three times Elijah says: Stay here.
 - ⇒ Three times Elisha replies: **I will not leave you**.
- Elijah is testing Elisha if he really is sold-out to this new life.
- As they travel together, they walk through GILGAL and BETHEL and JERICHO and the JORDAN.
- It is intentional – all of these places *reminded Israel of God’s faithfulness*.
- Elijah gives Elisha one final lesson: the God who led Israel **in the past would still be faithful in the future**.
- This is a great example of BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP:

⇒ DISCIPLESHIP is more than passing on information. **It's inviting someone into**

a way of life. It's not just teaching what you know. *It's showing how you live.*

⇒ People don't only need our knowledge. They need someone they can watch.

Someone whose life points them to Jesus.

2nd Kings 2:7-12:

Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. //

// When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied. "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not." //

// As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" //

// And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

- The Jordan river's water parts.

⇒ The same God who opened the Red Sea for Moses is **still leading His people.**

⇒ The same God who opened the Jordan for Joshua is **still leading His people**.

- Elisha ASKS for a double portion of Elijah's spirit.

⇒ He isn't asking to become greater than Elijah.

⇒ **He's asking to become Elijah's spiritual heir.**

⇒ In Israel the FIRSTBORN SON received a double portion of the inheritance.

- Elisha is saying: I want to continue what God began through you. **I want to continue your mission.**
- Elijah doesn't promise anything. He knows that only God can give Elisha His Spirit. He knew that the *ministry was never his to give away*.

- Suddenly Elijah is taken into heaven.

- Elisha cries out: MY FATHER! MY FATHER! Not my **prophet**. Not my **leader**. Not my **teacher**. He cries: *My father*.

- Somewhere in those hidden years, discipleship stopped being something to do. **Discipleship became family.**

- The *greatest spiritual growth* usually **doesn't happen in a crowd**. Or on Facebook. It happens in a relationship.

- THAT'S GOD'S DESIGN. **One life shaping another life to look more like Jesus.**

2nd Kings 2:13-18:

Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. "Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over. //

// The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha." And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. "Look," they said, "we your servants have fifty able men. Let them go and look for your master. //

// Perhaps the Spirit of the Lord has picked him up and set him down on some mountain or in some valley." "No," Elisha replied, "do not send them." But they persisted until he was too embarrassed to refuse. So he said, "Send them." //

// And they sent fifty men, who searched for three days but did not find him. When they returned to Elisha, who was staying in Jericho, he said to them, "Didn't I tell you not to go?"

- Elisha picks up Elijah's cloak. Walks back to the Jordan. Strikes the water. And asks: **Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?**
- Elisha isn't trusting the cloak. He isn't trusting Elijah. **Elisha is trusting God.**
- The river parts. Elijah has left the building but God is still present.

The servant changes. But the mission continues.

If we look at this story through the PERSPECTIVE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP, it teaches us two simple lessons.

From Elijah's perspective:

Faithful disciples make room for the next generation.

Last week Elijah believed God's kingdom depended on him. This week he discovers it never did.

Before Elijah's ministry was over, God was already preparing someone else.

One of the greatest things God did through Elijah wasn't only what happened on Mount Carmel. **It was raising up Elisha.**

Elijah understood something every mature believer eventually must learn:

God's work is **bigger than one person**. God's work is bigger than one season. God's work is *bigger than one generation*.

The church is more than I am. More than **my ideas** and **my preferences** and **my passions**.

His church is more than you are. More than **your ideas** and **your preferences** and **your passions**.

- This isn't about generational wars in the church.
- This isn't about **older people stepping aside** so younger people can take over.
- And it isn't about *chasing the newest trends*.

The goal is to raise **faithful disciples who genuinely know** and **love** and **follow Jesus**. Every generation needs someone to show them what that looks like.

That's exactly how discipleship begins. Not with a curriculum. Not with a program. But with a relationship.

- Someone **notices potential**.
- Someone **opens their life**.
- Someone **invites them in**: Come walk with me as you learn to follow Jesus.

That's what Elijah did for Elisha.

We often MEASURE SUCCESS by what we accomplish. God MEASURES SUCCESS by **who we prepare**. Not simply what we build but *what continues after we're gone*.

Let me repeat that: We often MEASURE SUCCESS by what we accomplish. God MEASURES SUCCESS by **who we prepare**. Not simply what we build but *what continues after we're gone*.

- Our children are watching far more than they're listening. They're learning what following Jesus looks like by watching us.
- Our greatest inheritance won't be what stuff we leave behind. **It will be the faith we leave in them.**

J. Warner Wallace said:

The church is always one generation away from extinction.

Our GREATEST DANGER is that too few mature believers **are intentionally walking alongside others.**

- The question isn't simply: *what am I accomplishing?*
- The real question is: *who am I helping become a lifelong follower of Jesus?*

From Elisha's perspective:

Faithful disciples stay close before they lead.

Before Elisha ever led God's people, he first learned how to faithfully follow.

John Stott once said:

The way up is down.

Christianity has NEVER SIMPLY BEEN about believing the right things. It's about **learning to follow a Person. JESUS**. That is DISCIPLESHIP. And discipleship is rarely instant.

Elisha didn't become the next prophet because he was gifted. **He became the next prophet because he was faithful**. He stayed and he watched and he listened and he served.

DISCIPLESHIP is **caught before it's taught**. That's why people don't simply need your knowledge. *They need your example*.

Paul understood that when he wrote 1ST CORINTHIANS 11: *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ*.

- God is far more interested in forming our character **than expanding our influence**.

- Before He entrusts us with greater responsibility, He **teaches us to depend on Him.**
- Before He broadens our ministry, He **deepens our relationship with Him.**

Can I ask you two HEAVY questions.

- **Who is helping you become more like Jesus?** Who knows you well enough to encourage you and to challenge you and to pray for you and to remind you of your faith when you forget it? *None of us was meant to follow Jesus alone.*
- **Who are you intentionally helping follow Jesus?** Who has God placed in your life? Who are you encouraging? Who are you praying with? Who are you helping take one more step toward Jesus?

Because that's how the gospel has always spread. **One faithful disciple helping another faithful disciple follow Jesus.**

Imagine if every believer at Hope intentionally invested in one other person. Over time, our church and our community would change. Not because of better and bigger programs, *but because ordinary people were helping others follow Jesus.*

- **ONE conversation.**

- ONE **relationship**.
- ONE **faithful disciple investing in another**.