



Enter the Story

Passing the Torch

A narrative about God's continued provision for those who will obediently seek him.

THE BIBLE

2 Kings 2-5

Prepare for the Story

ICEBREAKER

Share about someone that you have always looked up to and wanted to be like. What about that person has drawn you to them?

Rewind the Story

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- David – Fighting Giants and Kings
- Solomon's Quest - Wisdom, Wives & Building the Lord's Temple
- Divided Kingdom – Israel (North) & Judah (South)
- Elijah – Ahab, Jezebel, and the contest on Mt. Carmel

Hear the Story

Scene One: Chariots of Fire

Elijah served as the LORD's prophet for eight years in Israel. Because of his faithfulness God had a special plan for him. The Lord planned to take Elijah to heaven in a whirlwind.

On the day this was going to happen, Elijah and his assistant Elisha set out on a journey from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here because the Lord has sent me all the way to Bethel. But Elisha refused to leave him. Elisha knew the Lord was going to take Elijah away, and he wanted to be with him. So, they traveled on to Bethel together.

When they arrived, Elijah asked Elisha to stay in Bethel while he went on to Jericho, but once again, Elisha refused. He would not leave his master. So, they traveled to Jericho together. Again, when they arrived, Elijah asked Elisha to stay while he continued on to the Jordan River. But Elisha refused once again, and the prophets of Jericho joined them on their journey.

When they came to the Jordan, Elijah took off his cloak, rolled it up, and struck the water. Instantly, the river parted, and he and Elisha walked across on dry ground. When they reached the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, *"Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"*

Elisha responded, "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," for he wanted God to use him like He had used his master. *"You have asked a hard thing,"* Elijah said. *"But if you see me as I am being taken from you, you will receive it – otherwise, you will not."*

Suddenly, chariots of fire with horses of fire raced from heaven and separated the two men. In an instant, Elijah was taken into heaven by a whirlwind, so fast that he dropped his cloak. Elisha saw it all and cried out, *"My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"* And then Elijah disappeared from sight.

Elisha picked up his master's cloak and walked back to the Jordan River. Just as his master had done, he struck the water. Miraculously, it parted like before. God had passed his master's ministry on to Elisha. And those who witnessed this said, *"The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha."*

Scene Two: The Widow's Jar

One day, a widow came to Elisha, asking for his help. Her husband had died, and now she was in debt to some men. They were threatening to sell her two children into slavery as payment for the money she owed. Elisha listened carefully and then asked the woman, *"What do you have in your house?"* *"All I have is one jar of oil,"* the widow replied.

Elisha told her, *“Go and borrow as many empty jars as you can from your neighbors. Don’t ask for just a few! Bring them back to your house and shut the door behind you. Then pour the oil into all the empty jars, one by one.”* The widow obeyed Elisha and gathered the empty jars. They went inside their home, shut the door behind them, and began pouring oil from their one jar to fill all the empty containers.

The oil kept flowing and flowing so that all the empty jars were filled! When the last one was full, the oil ran out. Elisha told her, *“Go, sell the oil, pay your debts, and use the leftover money to live on.”* Because of this, the widow and her sons were saved from the bill collectors.

Scene Three: Raised to Life

As Elisha traveled the country, he became very well known. When he often passed through the city of Shunem, where a certain family always invited him to stay at their home. Elisha was blessed by their hospitality and shared many meals with them. After some time, the husband and wife decided that because Elisha was a man of God, they wanted to set aside some space for him, so they built an addition to their home for him to use whenever he was in town.

This couple had been blessed financially, but they had one problem. They didn’t have a son, and the husband was getting very old. When he died, there would be no one to care for his wife. Elisha wanted to bless this family because of their kindness to him. So, he told them that in one year, they would give birth to a son. And just as Elisha had promised, they gave birth to a son the next year.

Years went by, and this boy grew up. One day, he was helping his father in the field when suddenly he cried out in pain, *“My head! My head!”* No one knew what the issue was. The boy was taken home, where his mother cared for him. But by noon that same day, her son had died.

The woman left immediately to find Elisha, the prophet. When she finally reached him, he could see she was terribly upset. She told him what had happened and refused to leave until he came back with her. When he arrived, Elisha found her son lying dead on his bed.

Elisha prayed to the Lord and then lay down on the child with his face on the little boy’s face. Soon, the boy’s body got warmer, but did not move.

Elisha walked around the house and laid on the child a second time. When he did this, the child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. He was alive again! When his mother saw her son, she fell down at Elisha's feet and bowed to the ground.

Scene Four: Naaman is Cured

During the time Elisha was a prophet, a man named Naaman commanded the army of the King of Syria. He was a brave and courageous soldier, but he had a terrible problem he could not solve. Naaman suffered from leprosy. Naaman's wife had a servant girl who had been captured and taken from Israel. One day, she told Naaman's wife that the prophet Elisha could heal Naaman of his disease. When His wife told him about the prophet, Naaman told the king.

The King urged Naaman to go to Israel and find the prophet. He even gave Naaman a letter to the king of Israel, asking for help. So Naaman left immediately, with the letter and silver, gold, and fine clothing as payment for his healing.

When the king of Israel read the letter, he was afraid and tore his clothes. *"I am not God!"* he said. *"I have no power to heal this man!"* He had forgotten about Elisha. Instead, he thought the letter was a political trick by the king of Syria designed to start a fight. When word about this request reached Elisha, he sent for Naaman.

So Naaman traveled to Elisha's house with his chariots behind him, carrying the silver and gold. He rode right up to Elisha's door, but Elisha did not come out. Instead, Elisha sent a messenger to Naaman, telling him to wash in the Jordan River seven times. If he did this, he would be healed.

At first, Naaman was angry and refused. He was an important man who had traveled a long way. *"I thought Elisha would come out to me and call upon the name of the Lord his God and wave his hands and cure me. Our rivers at home are much better than Israel's rivers. Why can't I wash in one of them and be healed?"*

But his servants urged him to obey Elisha's command. Reluctantly, Naaman listened and followed the prophet's instructions. He washed in the Jordan seven times, and suddenly, the leprosy disappeared. After being healed, Naaman returned to Elisha and said, "I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. He offered Elisha gifts to thank him for what he had done, but Elisha refused. Naaman promised to worship the God of Israel even after he returned home.

Retell the Story

- What did Elisha ask for when he knew that Elijah was about to leave?
- What happened to Elijah?
- What did Elisha receive?
- The widow asked for Elisha's help with what problem?
- What instructions was she given?
- What happened to the widow and her sons?
- What happened to the family in Shunem?
- How did Elisha heal their son?
- Who was Naaman, and what was his problem?
- What did Elisha do for Naaman?

Discuss the Story

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?
- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?
- Elijah's departure is unlike any other story. What seems significant about this passing of the torch from Elijah to Elisha?
- Elisha asks for a "double portion" of Elijah's spirit. What do you think you would have asked for if you were in Elisha's position?
- What do you think it was like for the widow and her sons while they were filling the empty jars with oil?

- Put yourselves in the shoes of the Shunammite family from this story. How would these events affect your perspective of God?
- It's ironic that without the help of a slave girl from Israel, Naaman, the commander of Syria's army, would have never been healed. What does this tell us about how God likes to operate?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of **other** stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?
- What do you notice from this story about God's character or qualities?

Join the Story

1) PASSING THE TORCH

In our story, Elijah passes the prophetic torch to Elisha, something that God had told Elijah would happen years before. Why is it so important that our faith doesn't just stay with us? Why is every follower of Jesus directed to make more followers of Jesus?

2) NEVER SAY NEVER

Throughout Elisha's ministry, the miraculous happens. Why can it be so difficult for us to believe that miracles still happen? Have you ever experienced something that you would describe as a miracle? How did it change your perspective going forward?

3) AS MUCH DIRT AS MY MULES CAN CARRY

After Naaman is healed, he says something very strange to Elisha (2 Kings 5:17):
“Please let me, your servant, be given as much dirt as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings, and sacrifices to any other god but Yahweh.”

Naaman has identified the God of Israel as the one true god. He’s got a new perspective. But He’s still living in an old paradigm. He wants to take the soil from Israel back home because in the ancient world, they believed that the gods were geographically located. In what ways do we struggle to let go of old systems while trying to embrace the new things God might be doing?

Pray

God,

Your ways are mysterious and often beyond explanation. We cannot begin to comprehend your purposes or what you have planned. But we know that You have given each of us a calling. You have prepared in advance for us work to accomplish to build Your kingdom. We are willing to follow You into the unknown – and we acknowledge that Your plan is always the best plan. Your purpose for our lives is better than anything we could dream up for ourselves. We will seek Your Kingdom and Your righteousness first, and everything else will fall into place. Amen