



**KING'S
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EDINBURGH

God Calls (1 Kings 19: 19-21)

Elisha was going about his day as usual when God suddenly called him through the prophet Elijah. It was the key turning-point of his life, and he immediately decided to follow Elijah, leaving his prosperous life behind and embracing difficulty and danger. God calls all of us to live this way, He wants nothing less than total commitment and wholehearted obedience (*Matthew 22:37-39*). It is a calling to a life of hardship and glory, a life of unpopularity and divine approval, to death and resurrection life.

Elisha makes his decision immediately – how could he do this? He knows that God is speaking to him through Elijah: the God who made everything, who rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land, who had given Elisha everything he had. Christians have an even greater story and awareness of God through Jesus: the perfect revelation of God and our Saviour.

Elisha left a lot behind to obey God: he lived in a lovely place (Abel-meholah means “field of dancing”), he had parents whom he loved and had a responsibility for, he was probably choosing singleness given that Elijah wasn't married, by siding with Elijah he was effectively proclaiming himself an enemy of the government, and he had a successful business with all the attendant wealth and status. This was like a bonfire of the certainties – he was leaving everything he knew, except God. Was it a little over the top? I don't think so, and here's why...

1. It makes sense

Athletes know what so many Christians forget, or prefer to ignore, that you have to be fully committed if you're to achieve something difficult and glorious (*1 Corinthians 9:25*).

2. It's God's command

God's people always face an either/or choice: either we go along with everyone else or

we worship God alone (*1 Kings 18:21, Deuteronomy 30:19-20, John 14:6*). Israel at the time of Elijah and Elisha was always making the wrong choice, usually by trying to be acceptable to the world around it whilst keeping some remnants of its own religion. A Christian who keeps their faith to themselves, who doesn't let it change anything except what they do on a Sunday morning and the occasional generally-accepted good deed, is just about acceptable to everyone else, but anyone who believes that Jesus alone can define what is right and wrong, that what God has said matters more than what anyone else thinks, is asking for trouble. Most of us don't want trouble but in a world that is opposed to God, that is sometimes going to happen, however loving and wise we are. The God of the Bible is not accommodating, He will not share His glory with any other. Only He created all things, only He sustains all things, only He saves.

3. Jesus faced an either/or for us

Either He leave us to ourselves, hopeless and miserable, alienated from God and from each other now and forever, or come and rescue us. There was no other option, no other way, so He kissed His Father goodbye, and came to Earth, He left His riches of Heaven behind, and the sacrifice He made to save us was not oxen but Himself.

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *"When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die."*

The drama of God's call is followed by the discipline of apprenticeship: Elisha *"went after Elijah and assisted him"*. That's how he spends the next 10 years, and we know nothing of what happened to him in that time, except that when the time came to succeed Elijah he was as ready as he could be. If you thought responding wholeheartedly to the call was hard, what follows can be even harder. It's when the dreams God gave you seem like they might die. It's when personal ambition can be ground down into humble service. It's when you learn perseverance and reliance on God alone because there's just nothing else. It's absolutely essential if you're to fulfil the call of God on your life.

A real relationship with God, listening to Him and responding to Him every day, finding that He alone is sufficient, is essential if we are to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

Questions

- How did God call you?

- What are the specific temptations you face that would cause you to give God less than everything?
- In what way do you want to start living more wholeheartedly for God? What might the cost be?
- Why are we unused to thinking of our lives as cross-bearing?
- Luke said that what follows the all-or-nothing call can be even harder because it's day after day, unspectacular, forming our character. How are you forming habits of devotion that keep you close to God and aware of His voice?



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