

Act It Out: Elijah, Elisha, and the Passing of the Mantle

II Kings 2:1-18: Elijah Is Carried to Heaven

Elijah's miraculous ascent into heaven in a whirlwind concludes a series of dramatic stories in the Word. The drama continues right up to the end of Elijah's life—at which time his power is transferred to his successor, Elisha. This activity centers around the reading of II Kings 2: 1-18 while the students respond to the story through interpretive movement.



Warm-up

- Today's story is about the final events in Elijah's life. Elijah and Elisha took a long journey from the interior of the land of Canaan to the Jordan River, which was at the border of the land. From here they miraculously crossed over to the other side with the help of Elijah's mantle. Elisha begged for a double portion of Elijah's spirit—which would indicate that he was the heir and Elijah's true successor.
- Israelite law declared that the eldest son would inherit a double portion from his father. This does not mean that Elisha would be more powerful than Elijah.
- Symbolically, Elijah's power was passed by means of the mantle, which Elisha picked up and in turn used to part the waters of the Jordan.

Supplies Needed for the Class

- text from II Kings 2: 1-15 (included on separate page)
- space for the group to move freely around
- *optional* scarves to use as props for the whirlwind and as Elijah's mantle

Introduction

1. We are going to start by exploring some of the details in the final story about Elijah. As you listen, try to picture ways in which you might use movement to act out what is being described. Consider whether the places in the story are high or low, whether the tasks are difficult. Pay attention to how closely Elisha sticks to Elijah despite the distances traveled.
2. The story starts in *Gilgal*, in the hill country. This place pictures ideals we have, e.g. being truthful.

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3. From there it moves to *Bethel*. This pictures the way we use our ideals when we try to put them into action.
4. From there the journey takes them to *Jericho*. This depicts the way we develop moral approaches to handling our ideals in our life, e.g. how to let go of resentments.
5. Elijah uses the mantle to part the *Jordan River*. Going through this barrier with the Lord's help represents the way we scatter false ideas that stand in the way of our values.
6. Crossing over into *Gilead* in our lives pictures our lives when we “walk the walk” or *do* what we believe. We consciously refuse to be dishonest and deliberately do what we know is right.

Activity

- Take a few moments to think about how you might act out the story. You may wish to do this as individuals—because this is a journey each individual makes in their lifetime. Or you may do it with a friend—because the Lord is always with us through others we meet along our journey. (*Give the students about 5 minutes.*)
- *Optional*: distribute props.
- Read the story while the students do interpretive movement to the reading. Pause if they need more time to complete something.

Wrap-up

- Today's story concludes the present series of lessons. What were the highlights for you?
- Suggest one way in which you might take one of these highlights with you and use it on your journey.

Reading from II Kings 2: 1-15

¹ And it came to pass, when the Lord was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. ² Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So they went down to Bethel.

³ Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?” And he said, “Yes, I know; keep silent!”

⁴ Then Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to Jericho.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So they came to Jericho.

⁵ Now the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?” So he answered, “Yes, I know; keep silent!”

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So the two of them went on. ⁷ And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan.

⁸ Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

⁹ And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?” Elisha said, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.” ¹⁰ So he said, “You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.”

¹¹ Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. ¹² And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” So he saw him no more.

And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. ¹³ He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, “Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.

¹⁵ Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him.