

The Inheritance of Power – Slide 1

Slide 2 - In almost every TV show or movie, there is a character who seems to be uncertain or insecure in his or her own capabilities. Maybe the character is a dancer who is full of self-doubt or an office employee who cannot seem to get the hang of things. At some point in the natural progression of the plot, this same person is usually transformed as he/she blossoms into a new beginning, full of newly found confidence. If the plot follows ALL of the clichés, then those transformed individuals were empowered by key friends, family members, and/or colleagues along the way.

Slide 3 - Enter Elisha and Elijah.

Elisha is dedicated to Elijah's prophetic ministry and does not want to see Elijah go away. So he clings to him. He clings to Elijah on the journey to Bethel, even though Elijah advises him to "stay here." Elisha again clings to Elijah—this time more boldly—as they journey to the Jordan, despite Elijah's command to "stay here."

It is in this dynamic that we are witnessing a transformation. Elisha is moving from insecurity and uncertainty about his own role and status toward an increasing amount of confidence. What seems like initial clinginess morphs into a principled protest of Elijah's command to "stay here" (v. 6). Even before the mantle is passed, Elisha is transforming into someone different. He is claiming the boldness of Elijah that he has witnessed firsthand and is using it as a part of his own toolkit.

Slide 4 [parting of the sea] - They cross the Jordan together, and we reach a breaking point in the plot. The increasingly confident Elisha is confronted with Elijah's statement: "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you."

Pause right there and immerse yourself in the narrative.

We have a "Power Held" dynamic at play between a well-known prophet (Elijah) and an "up-and-coming" prophet (Elisha). The one who has more social "Power Held" is asking the one with less power, "What can I do for you?"

Many of us have been in a situation like that before. Maybe you have met someone else "important" who, in trying to display their graciousness, asks if they can do anything for you.

Bring a moment like that to mind.

Slide 5 - When the individual posed the question to you, "What can I do for you," or "How can I help," how long did you pause as you thought about what you would say? How many negotiations were taking place in your brain as you were trying to decipher what is a good "ask" and what might be too much?

Now, return to the scripture passage and imagine what might have been going through Elisha's head and how long it took him to respond when he boldly said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit."

Slide 6 - The clingy and seemingly insecure Elisha we encountered just a few verses prior is now making the audacious "ask" for a DOUBLE SHARE of Elijah's spirit.

Who is this new Elisha and where did he come from?

In connecting this story to our worship series, there are two inheritances on display.

Slide 7 - This first is the inheritance of "Power Held". It's like being the leader everyone respects and follows.

When Elijah was taken up into heaven, Elisha picked up the mantle that had fallen from Elijah; he struck the waters of the Jordan with it, and the waters separated. The same God who was with Elijah now demonstrates power through Elisha. Elisha's new ownership of mantle symbolizes the transfer of "Power Held" from prophet to prophet.

Slide 8 - At the same time, there is an inheritance of "Power Given". This "Power Given" came explicitly through relationship and connection. Elijah empowered Elisha to claim more authority, not only with his words but also in bringing Elisha alongside him (much to his chagrin). We witness a new boldness in Elisha as a "puts himself out there" in demanding a double portion of Elijah's spirit.

Slide 9 - “Power Held”:

- What type of “Power Held” have we inherited as Christians? From whom and how?
- Why have we inherited this “Power Held” and toward what end?
- How do dynamics of “Power Held”—positive, neutral, and negative—show up in society? In our churches? In our families?
- When and how have you seen “Power Held” stewarded well?
- How are we being called to steward “Power Held” (personally, in our congregations, in our communities)?
- What is the relationship between “Power Held” and authority?
- Between “Power Held” and privilege?

Slide 10 - “Power Given”: [against the world-view that power must be taken.]

- Who have you/we been given powered by? Theologically? Experientially?
- Why do you think people are so captivated by “Power Given” narratives?
- In what situations of our society and world has “Power Given” led to great success? To failure?
- How are we being called to give power others through relationship?
- How might our churches participate in the “Power Given” of others?
- What is the relationship between mentoring and giving power?

Slide 11 - As we have seen in the story of Elijah and Elisha, both “Power Held” and “Power Given” are dynamic, risky, and weighty inheritances of God. They must be stewarded well.