

All By Your Lonesome  
June 30, 2019  
[Scripture Focus: 2 Kings 2: 1-14 ]

This morning, we'll be talking about things that we can't do "all by our lonesome" (I don't think that people grow in their faith without help).

Let's take a closer look at the text from 2 Kings that I read earlier. Before we get started, let me warn you of one of the complications of today's scripture.

The two folks that we'll be talking about today are Elijah (E-L-I-J-A-H) and Elisha (E-L-I-S-H-A). Their names sound almost identical. I'll do my best to make sure that we're clear when talking about the two but things really do get complicated when we learn that Elisha essentially wants to be the identical copy of Elijah.

Elijah and Elisha are two of the most well-known prophets of Israel. They served in the northern kingdom there. Elijah is first introduced in 1 Kings 17 as the prophet who predicted a three-year drought in the land. After being miraculously fed by ravens, he stayed with a widow and her son where this family experienced God's supernatural provision of food.

Elijah went on to defeat the prophets of Baal, then calling down fire from Heaven to completely end the drought. We'll talk more about this perplexing text in just a moment.

Let's first listen for God's Word. This morning, I'll be reading from The Message... Please listen for what God has to say to us.

**1-2 Just before God took Elijah to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on a walk out of Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here. God has sent me on an errand to Bethel." Elisha said, "Not on your life! I'm not letting you out of my sight!" So they both went to Bethel.**

**3 The guild of prophets at Bethel met Elisha and said, “Did you know that God is going to take your master away from you today?”**

**“Yes,” he said, “I know it. But keep it quiet.”**

**4 Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here. God has sent me on an errand to Jericho.” Elisha said, “Not on your life! I’m not letting you out of my sight!” So they both went to Jericho.**

**5 The guild of prophets at Jericho came to Elisha and said, “Did you know that God is going to take your master away from you today?”**

**“Yes,” he said, “I know it. But keep it quiet.”**

**6 Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here. God has sent me on an errand to the Jordan.” Elisha said, “Not on your life! I’m not letting you out of my sight!” And so the two of them went their way together.**

**7 Meanwhile, fifty men from the guild of prophets gathered some distance away while the two of them stood at the Jordan.**

**8 Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up, and hit the water with it. The river divided and the two men walked through on dry land.**

**9 When they reached the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, “What can I do for you before I’m taken from you? Ask anything.” Elisha said, “Your life repeated in my life. I want to be a holy man just like you.”**

**10 “That’s a hard one!” said Elijah. “But if you’re watching when I’m taken from you, you’ll get what you’ve asked for. But only if you’re watching.”**

**11-14 And so it happened. They were walking along and talking.**

**Suddenly a chariot and horses of fire came between them and Elijah went up in a whirlwind to heaven. Elisha saw it all and shouted, “My father, my father! You—the chariot and cavalry of Israel!”**

**When he could no longer see anything, he grabbed his robe and ripped it to pieces. Then he picked up Elijah’s cloak that had fallen from him, returned to the shore of the Jordan, and stood there. He took Elijah’s cloak—all that was left of Elijah!—and hit the river with it, saying, “Now where is the God of Elijah? Where is he?” When he struck the water, the river divided and Elisha walked through.**

Back to the “back story” from earlier... After Elijah ended the drought by calling down fire, it began to rain. Elijah fled from the evil Queen Jezebel, who had vowed to kill him. When Elijah reached Mount Horeb, Elijah heard God’s voice telling him to anoint two kings and also to make Elisha a prophet. This happened, just as God asked.

Elisha knowing that Elijah wouldn’t live much longer, asked to be blessed with a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. Ultimately, Elijah was taken directly to Heaven by a chariot of fire. Elisha picked up Elijah’s mantle (which was like a “cloak”) and used it to cross the Jordan on dry land. He received the double blessing that he had requested and performed many miracles in Israel.

Some other basic background on this text: This week, we find ourselves in unusual territory. We’re looking at a text from 2 Kings in the Old Testament (at the front of the Bible). Scholars assume that 1st and 2nd Kings are actually a single literary work. It’s assumed that both volumes were written by the same author. While it’s not known for sure, many believe the author of both books to be the Prophet Jeremiah.

Elijah and Elisha are extraordinary prophets. Their journeys epitomize a complete devotion to God. In fact, when told by Elijah that he could have anything, Elisha asks for a double dose of Elijah’s spirit.

Elisha doesn’t ask for an earthly gift (like treasure or power). He simply wants to be like his mentor, Elijah. The idea of the double portion or double blessing is prevalent throughout the Old Testament. It’s often considered a birthright reserved for the oldest son.

The request from Elisha in today's scripture for a double portion of Elijah's spirit refers to his desire to be doubly blessed in his life and ministry. Oddly enough, scripture records exactly twice as many miracles from Elisha as what we see happening through Elijah's efforts. If you're keeping score that's Elisha 28 and Elijah 14.

## SO WHAT?

Let's talk about mentorship for a moment. To you, what is a mentor? Have you ever had one? Webster says that a mentor is "a trusted counselor or guide." I think that many of us may have had a parent or family member who was a mentor for us. Others of us may have been mentored by a teacher or a pastor or a Sunday School teacher (like Nick Koren).

The point that I want to make is that you can't be mentored all by your lonesome. This idiom (all by your lonesome) is one that my grandmother would have used. If you used the phrase "all by your lonesome" with a current middle school student, you'd likely get the tilted head, cocker spaniel look.

Here's my point; if I simply read the 2 Kings 2 text from the Bible, I may begin to get the picture but I only really got Elijah's mentorship of Elisha when I saw the way Nick Koren mentored me. I realize that if I simply sit home (all by my lonesome) playing with my phone, I'd never be able to experience first-hand what it meant to be cared for and by another person.

So, when I'm asked "isn't it ok to just stay home on Sunday morning, drinking good coffee, reading my Bible and praying all by my lonesome instead of getting dressed up and going to church?" My answer gets vague pretty quickly.

Sure, it's better to stay home alone reading your Bible and praying than it is to not read God's Word or not to pray but the reality is that things get even better when we're being influenced by someone who's trying to make us better people.

## NOW WHAT?

I've talked to you before about Simon Sinek's talk on millennials. If you haven't seen it, please go to YouTube and watch it. If you wonder why things are the way they are with young people (especially those between 18 and 34), Sinek's talk will explain a lot.

A bottom line is that most people (not just people who are 18 - 34) but even those of us who are in our 30's and 40's and 50's and 60's and 70's have found this new way to have relationships. Most of us have online and offline personas.

When I was young I had family and friends that I interacted with daily. I didn't have online and offline friends or identities. When I needed help with something, I didn't Google it; I didn't Skype someone on the west coast; I didn't go online to ask questions of someone that said they were an expert. I didn't even ask Siri. I talked to my parent or my grandparent or a member of my family or a teacher or my pastor.

Think about it. When the modern world has a question, who do they ask? SIRI!!! When they lock their keys in the car or need to know how to cook a roast or have a question about God, they go to Siri - not a trusted counselor, guide or a mentor.

Watch this: Siri, does Jesus loves me? That's not at all what Nick Koren would have said. Why is it that we're surprised that folks don't find the church relevant anymore.

Frankly, for many folks, the church isn't even necessary. If you have a question about faith, just ask Siri.

Siri will give an answer with no strings attached. We won't need to pray or take a step to follow God. I asked Siri whether I should pray to God. She said that she couldn't answer that. Also not what Nick Koren would have said.

It's beautiful: zero accountability!!! Of course folks don't pray. Why should they? Siri doesn't see it as important and Siri is a trusted source of information about everything.

As parents whose kid's faith journeys hit "pause," we shouldn't be surprised when our adult kids don't encounter a mentor like Elijah or Elisha or Nick Koren. (In their mind) they don't need a mentor. Siri's the perfect mentor or friend. Siri's never going to ask you how things are between you and God. Siri will never condemn you for not reading the Bible or not going to church. Unfortunately, truth be told, you can't do it all by your lonesome... We need someone with a heart to reach out and encourage us.

When you're trying to find out how many pints it takes to make a quart, Siri's a good resource. But when you're trying to find out why the world's so whacky, why bad things happen to good people and why folks have trouble developing authentic relationships with others, Siri can't help. I know. I asked her.

God's the best resource for the answers to important questions. Unfortunately, you can't always instantly hear God's answers. You've got to have patience; unless you're asking Siri. When you're all by your lonesome, Siri will answer you. It may not be the real or the right answer but you'll hear something...

I spent last weekend with (6) of my church friends. Brooke, Makaila, Megan, Rachel, Ashley, Barbara and I spent lots of time talking about answered (and unanswered)

prayer. We also talked about persistent prayers especially when God doesn't respond as quickly as Siri.

On Sunday afternoons, when I get home and ask Loretta about worship at her church, my final question is always "so, what's the take-a-way?"

So, what's our take-a-way for today? We can live our lives supported by artificial intelligence (like Siri). However, we are called by God to live in community (especially a community of faith). Most of us learn best when we learn with or from others.

I meet my friend, Steve, for breakfast at McDonalds every Friday morning. It is one of the most important events of the week for me. If you don't have someone you can talk to (who's not your spouse or boss), please find someone. That's the take-a-way.

It's important to have a mentor and to be a mentor. If you're fortunate, the person who you mentor and the person who mentors you could be the same person. Some weeks, I seem like the smartest guy at the table on Friday mornings. Some weeks, I just need to talk to the smartest guy at the table (and it's definitely not me).

This is an important quest. It's helpful to have someone who has experience in marriage, kids, parents and faith. Don't take this process lightly. It's amazing how life can change when you don't live it all by your lonesome!

Thanks be to God that we're able to live within a community of faith with others.