

297.1: Tasks great and small (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 29, Updated)  
[“He Took Up ... the Mantle of Elijah”](#)

Productive Sunday School

1. Framing
2. Reading Review
3. Open discussion: Anyone find anything odd or disturbing about the reading? (once we own up to the troubling parts of the reading, we can dig into the constructive aspects)
4. Tasks small and great
5. Portions of the Spirit and the passing of responsibility
6. Conclusion: Engage in the daily practices that increase the spirit in our lives and our abilities, that transform us, until we become versions of ourselves that live the gospel, and then we will be prepared for the opportunities and responsibilities that come up

What if we are assigned to a task we can't do? Or are never given an opportunity to express our greatest gifts?

This lesson is about aligning our opportunities, responsibilities, and gifts.

Productive Sunday School

Class Member Reading is brief:

2 Kings 2 Elisha faithfully accompanies Elijah (against Elijah's requests). Elisha sees Elijah taken up to heaven with chariots, requests a "double portion" of God's Spirit upon him, does some miracles, and there is the strange story of Elisha killing small boys with bears after they call him bald.

5 Naaman has power and status, and is a foreigner. Naaman first goes to the king, the most powerful man in Israel (according to worldly status), who despairs because he is not able to help him. Elisha encourages the king to send Naaman his way, so that he can know there is "a prophet in Israel". The Hebrew of 5:13 is a bit complex. ESV has "My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it?" I agree with the KJV, NRSV, NIV etc. where there is an implied "if" "then would you" The literal Hebrew says "a big thing the prophet said to you not you done?" Elisha refuses to accept payment from Naaman, but one of his servants does and is cursed.

6 The stories about Elisha sound like a collection of fables, unconnected tales that have been gathered together. Here we have a story of a floating axe head, protection from armies with "chariots of fire" and the memorable phrase "those that are with us are greater than those who are against them" Elisha is a sort of prophet spy that protects Israel. Elisha blinds the Syrian armies, leads them to the capital of Israel, then feeds them before sending them away. We then have a horrible story of a woman eating her

son during a siege and getting mad because her neighbor protects her son, whom they agreed to eat the next day. The king of Israel tears his clothes in mourning and vows to kill Elisha (why?)

Open discussion: Anyone find anything odd or disturbing about the reading? (once we own up to the troubling parts of the reading, we can dig into the constructive aspects) Murder, cannibalism, for starters!

Tasks small and great

“Some small thing” I’ve been focusing on \*practice\* recently. This is deeper than knowledge, deeper than wisdom. It is about becoming. Life really is about the daily “small things” that heal and transform us. I think this is a worthy focus for the lesson

Many of us are functionally more open to major surgery than eating well and exercise. The big things get our attention. Emergencies (That’s why we need to distinguish “important” from “urgent”)

How we are motivated

1. Communication/Motivation
2. Incentivization/Insistence (rhetorical force)
3. Pain/consequence

What do we make time for? What are our daily rituals?

We need to practice and cultivate attention to the small things, which will trigger virtuous cycles and help transform us. Option B is pain, because that is what gets our attention no matter what we are paying attention to.

Leprosy: Read Where is God When it Hurts, author explained how leprosy works. It removes the ability to feel pain! We think of leprosy causing “limbs to fall off”, but how that works is that those who suffer leprosy can no longer feel the pain needed to protect themselves.

Portions of the Spirit and the passing of responsibility

We focus on the title portion of the scripture, that Elijah’s “mantle” passed to Elisha. The lesson focuses on that, because in the Church that is how the highest authority is transferred... when a prophet dies, we are taught that his prophetic authority passes to the senior apostle. This is an important aspect of LDS doctrine, administration, and authority. For the purposes of Sunday School discussion, I want to focus on the earlier part of the verse, Elisha’s request that “a double portion of the Spirit” be given to him. Solomon asked for “a heart that listens”, or wisdom, and Elisha is asking for gifts of the Spirit.

Gifts and ability, authority and opportunity, and responsibility are all different things!

Conclusion: Engage in the daily practices that increase the spirit in our lives and our abilities, that transform us, until we become versions of ourselves that live the gospel, and then we will be prepared for the opportunities and responsibilities that come up

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This mini-episode provides pointers on teaching this lesson and covers topics such as prophets and succession and miracles through the little things in life.