



Words Matter  
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## Words Matter

**Words have a potency that can either \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.**

*You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.*

James 1:19–21 (NRSV)

### **The setting of Elisha's prophetic ministry:**

- Elisha, a prophet during the rule of a mixed bag of kings.
- He is the successor to the prophet Elijah.
  - *So [Elijah] set out from there, and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." Then Elijah said to him, "Go back again; for what have I done to you?" He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah, and became his servant.*

1 Kings 19:19–21 (NRSV)

- Elisha's family is tied to the work of the land.

- Elisha follows in the footsteps of a local celebrity.
  - *Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?” And he said, “Yes, I know; keep silent.”*  
2 Kings 2:2–3 (NRSV)

### Whose call is it?

- Our call from God is not a replication of someone else’s experience of God.
- When we project another’s gifts onto our own calling, we begin to experience a God of “\_\_\_\_\_”.

*He went up from there to Bethel; and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, “Go away, baldhead! Go away, baldhead!” When he turned around and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. Then two she-bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and then returned to Samaria.*

2 Kings 2:23–25 (NRSV)

### Two approaches to the text:

#### 1. The view that Elisha defends God’s faithfulness

- Embracing a call from God doesn’t jive well with a culture that, in many ways, has tainted our understanding of God.
- A call is God’s \_\_\_\_\_ to further the Kingdom.

#### 2. The view that Elisha took things too far

- With power or authority comes the fear of how we can \_\_\_\_\_ it to our advantage.
- An overly bitter person can paint a narrow picture of God.

### What could we possibly take away from this?

- A call from God is not intended for our personal benefit or satisfaction.
- A story like this is an opportunity to trust in a just God without being the agents of justice ourselves.
- Human words can hinder reconciliation.