

Coach House Church BEACONS

PASS ON YOUR PASSION

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Many of us that are in churches have found passions within the church. We have found roles that we are really good at and we have built ministries for ourselves within church. This is a really good thing, but what happens when God moves us on or something happens to us that means we can't serve in the same way.

Let's read 2 Kings 2:9-15 "When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"

"Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

"You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not."

As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. "Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.

The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha." And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him."

Elijah had a long ministry of prophecy and Elisha followed in his footsteps. But this didn't happen in a moment. Elijah had been preparing Elisha for this for years. Elisha had been following in Elijah's footsteps.

There are plenty of other succession stories in the bible, and not all of them are positive. There are people who struggled to let go of what they had built,

like Saul. He didn't want to pass power to David and ended up with a gruesome death.

It's tough to build something and then see someone else take it over. It's hard to see them doing a job not in the way that we would have done it. It's hard to feel that we have been side-lined and that someone else is doing what we are passionate about so we often put off the thought of finding someone to take over what we are doing.

But we have to remember that we aren't promised tomorrow in a role. Anything could happen to us that would mean that we couldn't do the job anymore and we don't want to leave it till it's too late. Also, the kingdom of God is not about us building it, but about His kingdom being built, however that happens. We don't want to get to the stage that we are hindering the work because we want to hold on to all that we are doing.

Another reason to pass on what you are doing is that if you love what you are doing, then someone else might inherit that love from you. You may be giving someone great joy in a role that they love very much. My passion as a young teenager and in my early twenties was operating songwords. I loved getting those words up on the screen at the right moment and it was something I really looked forward to on a Sunday. I am now privileged enough to have been able to pass that on to others and it is now a great joy to see them enjoying something that I know is a lot of fun.

So how do we go about this? How do we find the right people to take over? Well, as with most things, it starts with prayer. God told Elijah to go and anoint Elisha. God knows who the right person is to take over after you. He knows where He wants the next generation to go. So pray that God will reveal to you who is going to be next in your role and accept the answer He gives you. There are some provisos with this. The person has to be willing to do the role and has to have some interest and skill in the role. They should also have a heart to be a servant. Elijah and Elisha are another great example of this.

We can read about it in 1 Kings 19:19 " So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. 20 Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. "Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye," he said, "and then I will come with you." "Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?"

So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the ploughing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant."

It is really important that whoever we choose is willing to do the role we are asking them to do. You can't give someone a passion by dragging them kicking and screaming into a role. And it may be that it just isn't the right time for them and there will be a better time later, but don't try and force what you like on someone else.

A servant heart is also really important in any role. The person needs to be doing the job they are doing to build up the kingdom of God, not to get the glory for themselves. They need to be able to work for others, not for themselves. And the more up front the job is the more true this is because there is more opportunity to make it about yourself the more public your role is. However, don't put off finding your replacement or training them or letting other people know who they are. It is really important that the right person succeeds you so I believe you should be doing this almost as soon as you step into a role.

When God reveals that person (or those people) to you, then it is time to start mentoring them. When you know all that your role entails, start sharing that with someone else. Help them develop in the skills in the role, in the love of the role and show them what the dangers and pitfalls of the job are. They need to be aware of every part of what you do. Don't be like President Roosevelt. He died while in office and hadn't even told his successor that America was building a nuclear bomb. Make sure that the person that steps into your role next knows all they need to know.

Mentoring involves praying for and with the person you are mentoring. It is also very much like teaching a school lesson. The person begins by watching you do your role, learning how you do it by seeing you do it. Then they begin to do the role with you, alongside you. Then you watch them do the role and support them in doing it and finally you release them in it, allowing them to do the role completely on their own. This process will take a different amount of time depending on what the role is and how complex it is.

Mentoring is really tricky. You need to be able to let the person work alongside you while you are still fulfilling the role God has called you to. If it's a job that only one person can do, it might not be time for you to step aside, but you still need to prepare someone for the day when that does happen. It's also hard because the trainee is probably going to fail at some point. You need to be able to pull them aside and explain where they've gone wrong but in a really loving way that doesn't drive them away or make them resent you. These are all things that we need to learn to do as mentors, but with the grace of God, these are things that we will be able to step into.

The third step is really something that you will be doing all the way along and all the way through but it is something that is important to mention. We need to be praying for the person or people we are mentoring. We need to make sure that God is anointing this person for the role, whatever that role is. We

don't want to pick someone just because we like them or we think that they are the right person. We need to make sure that God has placed His anointing on them. We need to pray that they will mature in the role and that they will have the right attitude. We need to pray that they will also find someone to train up when the time is right.

The final step is the hardest, the one that people put off and the one that is the most uncomfortable. The last stage is for you to step aside from the role. This might not be for years and years but the time will come where God will tell you that it is no longer your time to do the role. It can be really hard to let go of something that you love, but if you have trained someone you trust, this will be a lot easier. When this does happen, we need to step aside gracefully and not try to cling on to something that doesn't fit us anymore.

I was encouraged by the example of soul survivor. This is a youth festival that has been running for years and years very successfully. It has brought many to a saving faith in Jesus and is part of many people's testimony including mine. However, a couple of years ago they felt that God was telling them to stop running the festival, to step aside and let other festivals take over the work that they had been doing. And they obeyed. I think, even when it seems to humanly make no sense for something like that to happen, obedience to God is a very powerful witness to His kingdom. The last soul survivor was a very powerful one, and the timing was perfect. They wouldn't have been able to run one the next year because of COVID. God knows what He is doing.

So let's be strong enough to find others to run the race alongside us, that will take our baton, our passion and keep it going for longer than we could have. Let's make sure that building the kingdom of God doesn't become about us but about what He would have us do.



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