

Are you investing what you've inherited?

Leona Helmsley was a New York real-estate developer that had amassed a fortune somewhere between \$5 and \$8 BILLION dollars. When she died in 2007, she gave a majority of her money to charity, and gave small amounts (\$10 million dollars each) to certain family members... It was a pretty straightforward billionaire "last will and testament," except for one VERY ODD provision: Helmsley left \$12 million dollars to her 8-year-old... DOG. \$12 million to her dog! And what's even better, is that she specifically excluded two of her grandchildren, saying, "I make no provisions in this for my grandson Craig or my granddaughter Meegan, for reasons which are known to them." \$12 million to the dog, \$10 million to two of the grandchildren, zero to the other two grandchildren. She's been dubbed "The Queen of Mean." I don't know why... She looks super nice to me!

What is it about inheritances that bring out the worst in people?

One day, we're perfectly happy living within our means, working hard for our money... I call it "participating in God's provision." God might make it all possible, but we've still gotta be out there working! And the next, a rich relative dies and everyone feels entitled to something.

So Leona Helmsley shows us the worst side of an inheritance, where it's unequal and leaves people out of the equation. And it resulted in law suits and the dog's inheritance being cut down to only \$2m (poor dog!)

Here's the thing about inheritances: They are a gift! They're undeserved. They're simply a benefit of belonging to the family. And so it becomes all the more important what we do with our inheritance.

Are you investing what you've inherited? That's our big question for today. And I want to make it clear: I'm not talking about money. Some of you right off the bat, checked out, because you're like, *"I come from a poor family! Inheritance is not a thing. The things I inherited from my parents is the reason I need therapy! There's no money to go around."* And that's fine...

Because we're not talking about financial inheritance, we're talking about spiritual inheritance.

This is the last week of this Elijah series called "The Whisper and the Fire." We've seen some incredible moments in Elijah's life: mountain-top experiences where everything is victorious and wonderful, and moments of depression and hiding and terror. And through it all, we've seen God's consistency; His faithfulness; both His patient pursuit and sometimes magnificent expression of power. All in the life of Elijah: this "larger-than-life" hero figure, that last week we saw isn't much of a hero at all. Up to this point, the entire conversation has been about Elijah. His words, his faith, his relationship with God... And today, we embrace the inevitable in Elijah's life.

Elijah is getting older. And he's had a remarkable life... Will his prophetic power live on after he dies? Or will it die when he dies?

God isn't only interested in spiritual GROWTH; He's interested in spiritual REPRODUCTION. Being healthy is great, but if what you have within you isn't invested in someone else; if it's not reproducing and multiplying, then everything you carry ends with you.

Enter Elisha.

In 1 Kings 19, picking up exactly where Jake's sermon last week left us, the Lord is speaking to Elijah, and tells him who to anoint to be king (Jehu) And God also tells Elijah that a young man named Elisha will replace him as God's prophet.

Here we have a young man named EliSHA... Not EliJAH... This will likely be confusing... Elijah - old guy. Elisha - young guy.

1 KINGS 19:19-20a

*<sup>19</sup> So Elijah went and found Elisha son of Shaphat plowing a field. There were twelve teams of oxen in the field, and Elisha was plowing with the twelfth team. Elijah went over to him and threw his cloak across his shoulders and then walked away. [Super weird way to make friends. BTW] <sup>20</sup> Elisha left the oxen standing there, ran after Elijah, and said to him, "First let me go and kiss my father and mother good-bye, and then I will go with you!"*

Have you ever received a surprise invitation?

Maybe it was something that you didn't think you'd be invited to... Or maybe it was something you didn't even know was happening...? A wedding? A baby shower? A school dance? And the invitation completely shocked you. You were thrilled. You couldn't say 'YES!' quick enough?

Elisha is minding his own business in the field, working as he always had, when a man of God came up and threw his cloak over his shoulder... This was an invitation. It seems weird, and I wouldn't recommend doing this to a stranger, you'll probably get a restraining order filed against you. But this was a clear invitation, and Elisha understood it.

It was an invitation to come and learn from someone WORTH learning from... It would be like Warren Buffet inviting you to learn investing; or Tom Brady inviting you to throw a football around his backyard. This was a big moment, and Elisha wasn't letting it slip by. Invitation accepted.

Just this past week, on Wednesday, I had a business man that I really admire invite me out to lunch. My wife and I own a small business with 3 employees, and I know NOTHING about growing a business, so I took him up on it! He owns a consultancy in Boston that he started a few years back, and his office is on the 6th floor, corner office, facing the TD Garden. He's got 40 employees, his business grew by 70% last year.

So I drove into the city, and joined him on a tour around his office. As we got to the 6th floor, people were immediately asking him for a minute of his time, "*Hey Jason, can I get 30 seconds with you?*" "*Jason, I need you for a minute.*" And here I was... Trailing behind him, having been invited by him for a 2-hour lunch block. I felt like royalty.

So he showed me around, shared some business lessons (which I loved) then we went out to lunch. Over lunch, about 20 minutes in, he stops and looks at me in the eyes and says, "So how do you want to do this?"

"*Do what?*" And he said, "*This. Do you want to do this every week? Every other week? John, I want to be your coach... And I want to tell you everything I know, and help develop you into the business owner I know you could be.*"

I was shocked. I thought this was just lunch! I thought he was just being nice to a young guy just starting out... But he went on to say that God gave him a dream of being a business coach, and he wanted to put another 5 years in, then retire and just coach young leaders... And he said, "*John, I want you to be my guinea pig.*"

DONE! Sign me up. I don't need to be a guinea pig, I'll be a lab rat! Whatever it is, I'm ready to learn.

So we're going to meet every other week, and he's going to pour into me everything he's learned over the past 25 years. He said he wants our meetings to be with the Bible open on one side of the table, and a Profit & Loss statement on the other.

This was a God-ordained invitation to be discipled by one of the best men I know.

Elijah finding Elisha in a field, doing respectable (but simple) work, and calling him into adventure is very similar to the way Jesus did it with his disciples. Fishermen in the middle of a day's work... And Jesus calling to them, "*Come and follow me... I'll make you fishers of men!*"

Today, I want to paint a very simple picture of what it looks like when we invest in the next generation... This is what network marketers understand. All those folks selling *Lularoe* and *Thrive* and *Amway*... They understand this better than the church. But the idea started with Jesus.

We're called to make disciples.

*Matthew 28:19 ...Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations...*

And not only that, but to make disciples that make disciples that make disciples.

It's like a Christ-centered, grace-filled pyramid scheme. This is our calling. This is why when we begin believing we're not zapped into some other dimension to be with God... We're called to SPREAD THE WORD. Help others find their way back to God.

Jesus invested in 3, and they invested in 12, and they invested in 72... And here we are, 2000 years later with 2.2 billion Christians on earth.

I don't want this to turn into a discipleship seminar, but I do want to share a quick picture of what healthy discipleship looks like:

- INVITATION:
- INFORMATION:
- IMITATION:
- INNOVATION:

And let's look at this through the lens of Elijah and Elisha's relationship.

INVITATION: We saw the way that Elijah intentionally pursued someone to invest in. This part isn't accidental. And it wasn't accidental with Jesus either. The fact that you're here today means that someone, at some point, invited you to church; or invited you to consider spirituality. Someone wanted you to experience what they had experienced.

And an invitation is always a mutual thing: Elijah invited, and Elisha accepted that invitation. It needs both sides. A mentor to invite, and a protégé to say yes.

Elisha was all in. In fact, he sort of went overboard.

1 KINGS 19:21 NLT

*...Elisha returned to his oxen and slaughtered them.* (There's no going back to his former way of life!) *He used the wood from the plow to build a fire to roast their flesh. He passed around the meat to the townspeople, and they all ate. Then he went with Elijah as his assistant.*

First step is INVITATION.

Next is a season of INFORMATION. Whether you like it or not, sometimes we need to actually learn something. Sometimes we need to have a season of sitting down and reading a book about something we don't understand. It's like Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus... Taking in every word He said.

Bible scholars believe that Elijah mentored Elisha for SIX YEARS... Six years where Elisha learned from Elijah, watching his ways, listening to how he spoke, witnessing miracles, high-points and low-points... Gaining as much information from him as possible.

We need seasons of INFORMATION. That's what school is all about. I think public schools do a great job of transferring information. Some of my closest friends have dedicated their entire lives to teaching... To get information in the hands of young students, and to help them understand it, and apply it.

But when I was in school at least, they expected us to just jump from INFORMATION to INNOVATION. They were like, *"Here's some math and science, now go out and change the world!"*

Missing this critical 3rd step... IMITATION.

To truly grow in the ways of Jesus, we must have seasons of IMITATION. Seasons when we begin to walk out what we've been learning. Seasons when we mimic the ways of our teachers, coaches, and mentors... when we begin to understand how it feels to walk in the ways of Jesus; how it feels to swing the hammer; how it feels to get behind the wheel and start driving down a backroad.

Now, a lot of people are turned-off by the word "imitate." It's unoriginal. It feels immature. No one wants to imitate someone else! We all want to be pioneers and doing our own thing. And if anything, our egos only want people imitating *us*!

But here's the thing: If you want to live the kind of life that Jesus lived; you must learn to walk in His shoes.

That's what the disciples did. They followed Him for 3 years. And guess what? A lot of those years were spent trying to imitate His ways...

Peter walking on water? Jesus had already walked on water.

The 70 disciples being sent to heal the sick; Jesus had already been healing the sick.

If you read through the book of Acts, you see the disciples doing supernatural things that they had seen Jesus do during His life... It's all imitation. Walking in the same ways. Stepping out of the classroom and into the hands-on training.

We see this in Elijah and Elisha as well. Let's look at their last few moments together before Elijah is taken into Heaven:

2 Kings 2:7-14 NLT

*<sup>7</sup>Fifty men from the group of prophets also went and watched from a distance as Elijah and Elisha stopped beside the Jordan River.*

*<sup>8</sup>Then Elijah folded his cloak together and struck the water with it. The river divided, and the two of them went across on dry ground!*

*<sup>9</sup>When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken away."*

*And Elisha replied, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit and become your successor."*

*<sup>10</sup>"You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah replied. "If you see me when I am taken from you, then you will get your request. But if not, then you won't."*

*<sup>11</sup>As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared, drawn by horses of fire. It drove between the two men, separating them, and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven.*

*<sup>12</sup>Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father! My father! I see the chariots and charioteers of Israel!" And as they disappeared from sight, Elisha tore his clothes in distress.*

*<sup>13</sup>Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak, which had fallen when he was taken up. Then Elisha returned to the bank of the Jordan River.*

*<sup>14</sup>He struck the water with Elijah's cloak and cried out, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" Then the river divided, and Elisha went across.*

Now, this is one of the most dramatic, and perhaps traumatic, moment in Elisha's life. He finally has his big moment to ask Elijah for a "double-share" of his spirit, and to become his successor. And Elijah agrees. But then Elijah is kidnapped by this 'chariot of fire' and taken into heaven. God, that's a little intense! I think you can tone it down a bit.

And all of a sudden, after six years of mentorship, Elisha is alone.

Did you catch what the first thing Elisha does, after he composes himself? Just like Elijah had done in v. 8, Elisha picks up the cloak, which had fallen on the ground, and he returns to the bank of the Jordan river.

*<sup>14</sup>He struck the water with Elijah's cloak and cried out, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" Then the river divided, and Elisha went across.*

This is imitation. This is walking faithfully in the ways of a Godly mentor, and then being prepared when it finally came time. Elisha knew what to do.

And my goodness, think of the FAITH it took for Elisha to do that. First thing: Picks up the cloak, walks to the river, and demonstrates the power of God bestowed on him... Performing his first miracle.

INVITATION > INFORMATION > IMITATION > INNOVATION.

God didn't want Elisha to simply be a clone of Elijah. That's not what spiritual reproduction is about. Just like we don't want our kids to be clones of us. We want more for them.

And God wanted more for Elisha. He wanted Elijah's ceiling to be Elisha's floor. And it was.

This is one of those details that can get lost, but Elijah had 14 recorded miracles in scripture. From causing drought to causing rain, to prophecies and the parting of the Jordan.

Elisha asked for a double-share... And Elisha's career in scripture includes... 28 miracles. Exactly twice as many as Elijah. In fact, one of Elijah's LAST miracles, the parting of the Jordan, was Elisha's FIRST.

What a beautiful picture of investing in the next generation. Our ceiling becomes their floor.

We see this in Jesus as well.

JOHN 14:12 NLT

*"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.*

Jesus said that His disciples will do even greater things than He did. And we have. Think about it... The billions and billions of disciples that have been formed in the likeness of Christ, living His heart out in every corner of the earth.

Jesus never traveled outside of the Middle East. How did the Gospel get here to New England?

On paper, Jesus didn't have much to offer. He wasn't leaving his disciples a big financial endowment; He left them a spiritual endowment. He saw their potential, He trained them, and He empowered them to go forth and set the world on fire for God. And they did.

That was His goal all along... Not that He'd be number one, like a King propped up, but that He'd be number one like the first Domino, triggering a chain reaction far more intricate and beautiful than anyone could do on their own.

These are REMARKABLE things... Greater things than Jesus Himself did.

So now the conversation turns to us... Will *we* invest what we've inherited?

In Christ, we have a rich spiritual inheritance: We've inherited the very Spirit of God. God Himself living within us, mingled and intertwined with our souls; speaking to us; leading us; confronting us; sanctifying us... Making us more and more like Christ, every day.

There's a VERY good chance you've already had someone invest in you... Spiritually, if you're here, someone, at some point in your life, sowed a seed of interest. They might've invited you to church, you might've watched their life from afar and ended up curious about what they had that you didn't... You were drawn in by the JESUS you saw in them.

And even if you weren't... If you are a spiritual pioneer and you set out on your own and found Jesus, that's great... You still have a responsibility to now invest what you've inherited.

May the Gospel not end with us.

You know that if our children don't tell *their* children about Jesus, this whole thing is done, right?

The Gospel made it a few thousand years after Jesus, went from 12 disciples to 2.2 billion disciples, and then fizzled out around the time we invented the computer.

*No!* We can't let that happen. Future generations need to know the Gospel... The GOOD NEWS that God loves humanity so much that He was willing to let His son come to earth even though He knew we would kill Him.

Who is your Elisha? Who has God put on your heart to pour into? Who can you invest in; in a way that might radically change the trajectory of their lives? Who, right now, is in the field plowing that you can find and invite into something much greater? If you're a Christian, you can't claim 'no inheritance.' The inheritance of the Spirit of God is far greater than any inheritance this world has ever seen.

Are you investing what you've inherited?

And for those of you that are new here... Those of you just dipping your toe in the water of faith; those of you that feel like you're still in the field plowing, with no opportunities coming your way... When the invitation comes, take it.

Humble yourselves to learn at the feet of someone that has gone before you. Doesn't matter if they're older or younger than you, if they've been with Jesus, they have something to invest in you.

Be faithful through the seasons of INVITATION, INFORMATION, and IMITATION... And you'll find yourself in places you could've never imagined. Doing new things and innovating new ways to reach people with the greatest news they'll ever hear.

Let's pray...