

December 30/31, 2023

“Elisha”

Pastor Aaron Buer



Beyond the  
Weekend

**SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.**

**2024 Challenge: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament**

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## Day 1 [Luke 24:13-35](#) | Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

**And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.** Luke 24:27

Throughout Jesus’s life, people misunderstand his mission and ministry. Some think he’s just a wise teacher. Others view him as a miracle worker healing the sick and feeding the poor. Others believe he will overthrow Rome and establish a physical kingdom. Even his closest friends misunderstand his purpose. Yet, Jesus makes it clear his mission goes beyond human expectations. He suffers and dies to save people from their sins and restore them to God and each other. His message is that the kingdom of God has arrived.

Jesus’s followers are heartbroken after his death. After his resurrection, Jesus meets two disciples discussing all that has happened. He conceals his identity and then begins to help them understand what he is about. He starts at the beginning of Scripture and teaches how God’s Word has always pointed to him—Moses, law and prophets. The New Testament authors later expound on this teaching in their writings to the early churches. Hundreds of references to the Old Testament help make the connection for Jesus’s followers that he had been the plan all along. He fulfills all of the Old Testament.

This year, we will look for Jesus in the Old Testament. On the first Monday of each month, we will introduce a book of the Old Testament and how we find Jesus in it. We will also include a daily reading plan and encourage you to highlight things that point to Jesus. We will better understand Scripture’s big storyline as we journey through this challenge. God’s plan always included Jesus coming to save us from our sins. We will see how God prepared the way through pictures, prophets, stories and symbols pointing to Jesus.

**TODAY:** Ask God to help you see Jesus in Scripture in a new way this year. Pray for God to open your eyes to the story of Jesus through every page of Scripture and know how to read the whole Bible in light of Jesus.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Throughout January, we will read the Gospel of Luke and look for how Luke points back to the Old Testament. Luke’s central theme is how God is faithful to the covenant promises to send the Holy Spirit to empower Jesus to save his people from exile and into his promised kingdom. The reading plan starts tomorrow. Remember these themes as you read this month: covenant promises, the Holy Spirit, exile and promised kingdom.

## Day 2 [Matthew 22:35-40](#) | Resolve

**Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”** Matthew 22:37

The Bible is filled with significant decisions people face. These moments pop up repeatedly because big decisions permeate human life. God tells Noah to build a boat and asks Abraham to leave home. David chooses to fight Goliath. Nehemiah prays about Jerusalem’s plight and takes action. Jesus invites disciples to follow him. Paul meets Jesus on the road. Following God involves many moments of choosing to obey and follow him. But the Bible also captures moments of failure. Adam and Eve question God’s goodness. The Israelites grumble in the wilderness. Saul disobeys God. Judas betrays Jesus. Failure doesn’t have to be final, but rebelling against God’s plan is costly. Obedience is the better way.

As we start 2024, we have a decision to make. We can choose to take our faith seriously this year. We can resolve to be obedient and follow God. We can take Jesus's statement about the greatest commandment to love God and others to heart. Or we can do our own thing. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus's death on the cross paid for our sins. It means we don't have to be defined by our past failures. We can choose to follow him into the life he has for us. For the next two weeks, we will look at what it means to resolve to follow God. We will examine what a firm determination to follow Jesus in 2024 can look like.

**TODAY:** Resolve to follow Jesus in 2024. Commit to loving God with all your heart, soul and mind. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the strength to follow through on your commitment. "God, as I enter 2024, I desire to love you with all that I am and extend your love to others. Please show me where I need to grow in my resolve to follow and obey you through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Luke 1](#). Highlight anything that refers to the Old Testament and how Jesus fulfills it. Look for direct quotations or themes that sound familiar. Use the cross-references in your Bible to help find connections to the Old Testament. A study Bible with notes will also point out places the author refers back to the Old Testament that aren't as clear (like an allusion rather than a direct quotation).

## Day 3 [1 Kings 19:19-21](#) | Choosing to Follow

**So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him.** 1 Kings 19:19

God doesn't always do things the way people expect. Elisha is out farming when he receives an unexpected invitation. He is doing his job and leading his team in the field. Suddenly, the prophet Elijah approaches and throws his cloak on him. What seems like a strange interaction is a life-changing moment for Elisha. The direction of his life monumentally shifts. Instead of taking over the family farming operation, Elisha is now Elijah's apprentice. God has called him, and he accepts the call. Elisha makes one major decision to follow Elijah and doesn't turn back. Then every day for the next 18 years, he wakes up to serve as Elijah's assistant. It was one big decision followed by hundreds of small decisions.

We've probably never experienced something so outwardly significant (or bizarre) as Elijah throwing his cloak on Elisha. But, when we accept God's gift of life through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we undergo something far more significant. Our sins are forgiven. Following Jesus and becoming his disciple (apprentice) changes our lives. It reorients everything. It's a submission of our desires to God's plan. Just like Elisha follows Elijah to learn how to live, we follow Jesus to see how he lived and develop his character.

**TODAY:** Choose to follow Jesus. Following Jesus is similar to how Elisha makes one decision to follow Elijah and then daily choices to learn from him and grow. If you haven't decided to follow Jesus, take that step today. If you have questions, we'd love to talk with you. Email us at [btw@adabible.org](mailto:btw@adabible.org). If you have decided to follow Jesus, decide today to follow him in every part of your life, both big and small.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Luke 2](#). Highlight anything that refers to the Old Testament and how Jesus fulfills it.

## Day 4 [Romans 6:1-18](#) | No Turning Back

**For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.** Romans 6:6-7

Elisha kills the oxen and burns his plow ([1 Kings 19:21](#)). He's no longer Elisha, the farmer—he's Elisha, the assistant of Elijah. There's no going back. The oxen are dead, and the plow is a pile of ash. He doesn't hedge by putting the animals in the barn and the plow in storage. He's deliberately made it difficult to give up his new life and return to farming. It's a done deal. He's all in.

Jesus gives us a new identity when we follow him. We are no longer enslaved to sin but a child of God. We have to choose whether to live out of our old self, the slave to sin, or to embrace following Jesus. Choosing God's way means refusing to live like a slave to sin. It's going all in.

Spiritual drift occurs when we stop choosing God's way. We fall back to old habits and patterns, searching for happiness and value in what we think we can do on our own. We need to cut ties with some things in our lives. We need to burn some plows. We may need to reject the belief that the next promotion is what really matters. We can leave behind trying to look perfect in every social media post. We can stop thinking we only matter when we get the first chair in band or good grades. Some of us need to cut off other things that threaten to drag us back to slavery.

**TODAY:** Write in your journal or mobile device: "In 2024, I'm going to leave \_\_\_\_\_ behind." Identify one attitude or action you need to stop. Then, identify something you will do instead, such as praying, reaching out to a friend, or choosing to go for a walk. Ask God to give you the strength to follow him in that area of your life.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Luke 3](#). Highlight anything that refers to the Old Testament and how Jesus fulfills it. Pay special attention to the Old Testament quotation pointing to John the Baptist and what the genealogy does.

## Day 5 [1 Kings 19:19-21](#) | The Power of Accountability

**So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing 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. 1 Kings 19:21**

Elisha hosts a barbecue. It's a party, but it's more than a party. It's a way to say goodbye and make a statement that something different is happening. Elisha is publicly declaring a change of direction. He's letting his community know he's no longer a farmer but instead is going with Elijah. He can't show up next spring and start farming again. If he returns to the fields, they will hold him accountable.

Accountability is crucial for spiritual growth. God created us for community and is one reason for the church. We can't follow Jesus alone. The church community is meant to encourage, challenge and hold us accountable. Baptism is one step we take in community to signify our acceptance of Jesus's gift. It's a public declaration and celebration, similar to Elisha's barbecue. But it also invites accountability. If we stop following Jesus, our community should hold us accountable. That's how God intended for the church to work. Participating in a small group can also help us keep growing, hold us accountable and encourage us to follow Jesus.

**TODAY:** Consider whether you have real community—a place of authentic accountability. If you lack that kind of community, a great place to start is with a small group. You can find more information and sign up [HERE](#). New groups launch in January. If you are currently in a small group, lean into it. Consider taking the next step of vulnerability to reveal where God is challenging you or something you're struggling with this season.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Luke 4](#). Highlight anything that refers to the Old Testament and how Jesus fulfills it. Look up the Old Testament passages Jesus quotes. Note the length of time and location of Jesus's temptation and how that points back to Old Testament stories.