

Resonate

BIBLE STUDY

**“DO YOU WANT MORE OUT OF LIFE:
MORE VISION”**

Have you ever felt surrounded by problems? In the moments of difficulty, God can help us to see past our hardships into a different realm, the spiritual side of life. Often our vision is limited to the here and now. We need to be reminded that eternity is all around us.

DAY 1

Today's Scripture:
2 Kings 6:8-13

The Word

I am not an action movie fan. I do not like to see people get killed, even if it is staged. It upsets me even when it is one of the "bad guys". I believe Elisha would not like action movies either for he did all he could to prevent war.

2 Kings 6:8-10

⁸ Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, "I will set up my camp in such and such a place."

⁹ The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: "Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there." ¹⁰ So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places.

Verse 8: God was telling Elisha the battle plans of the enemy so he could warn the king of Israel. Would you like insights into the enemy's plans? You already have them. The Word of God helps you to know how to defeat the spiritual enemy of your life. It is a detailed plan that shows us how to beware of the enemy, the plots of the enemy, and how to be on guard against the enemy. If we would just listen to the Word of God, we would prevent the heartache that comes from defeat. The enemy, on the other hand, will become frustrated with all our victories.

2 Kings 6:11-12

¹¹ This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, "Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?"

¹² "None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom."

Verse 11-12: There were no traitors in the Aramean camp. The king just did not understand that the Lord is in charge of the battles. I do not think we realize how many things God protects us from. There are situations that never come our way because the

Lord prevents it. Whenever difficulties do enter our lives, we can rest in the truth that God has allowed it for His divine purpose.

2 Kings 6:13

¹³ *"Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan."*

Verse 13: This verse is so funny. The king of Aram shows his foolishness by trying to capture Elisha. If the Lord can tell Elisha Aram's secret battle plans, can He not inform the prophet that the soldiers are coming to get him? There is no common sense here. But whenever we try to control our own circumstances, we prove ourselves fools as well.

The king believed that if he could capture Elisha, then the battle would be won. But the battle is the Lord's. In many nations today, governments are attempting to destroy Christianity. They put believers into prison, often even to death. They believe that if they imprison or destroy the messenger then the message is killed as well. This is foolish for the church will prevail because God said it would prevail. The Lord chooses what will succeed and what will not. It is His plan, not ours that is victorious.

On a smaller scale, I attempt to thwart God's plan when I try to bypass problems to win "happiness" in my life. I remember having to work with a difficult volunteer. I would pray that her family would be transferred since her husband was in the military. I wanted to "win" this battle with her removal. But that was foolishness. God's plan for victory in my life was to learn how to serve alongside difficult people. The battle as well as the battle plan was His, not mine.

Each day we face a spiritual battle. We can be like the king of Aram and live life using our "common sense" and lose every time. Or we can be like Elisha who relied on the Lord for victory. The choice is ours.

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord for His help in fighting the battles of life.

How do you try to control your circumstances?

How can you rely on the Lord to deal with the difficulties in life?

DAY 2

Today's Scripture:
2 Kings 6:15-17

The Word

Tragedy strikes in a moment. We can be going along through our normal routine when suddenly life takes a drastic turn. A few years ago, I was sitting peacefully by the water enjoying the scenery when a friend of mine called crying hysterically. Her mom had been rushed to the hospital due to an unknown heart condition. It was only a few hours later that she was undergoing bypass surgery. Life went from normal to critical in a moment.

We never know what crisis or dangers may enter into our lives. But when they come, we feel surrounded.

2 Kings 6:15

¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked.

Verse 1-2: The servant of Elisha walked outside. It was another day in the city of Dothan. Can you imagine his surprise to see that the city was under siege? He went to bed with no thought of the enemy and wakes up to find them in his backyard.

The servant went straight to the prophet of God for guidance. He knew that the inhabitants of the city were ill-equipped to fight off this army. But he knew that the Lord had a plan and so he trusted that Elisha, the prophet, would share that plan.

I am struck by the word "we". The servant is reminding Elisha that he is on his side for he knows that Elisha is on the side of the Lord. When we are facing difficulties we can go to Jesus and say, "What shall we do?" Remind yourself that you are His and He is the Lord so He will direct you in the way of victory. Once you recall the fact that God is in control, you can replace your fears with peace.

2 Kings 6:16

¹⁶ "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

Verse 16: The servant knew how many people were in the city. He looked at the army and knew that they were outnumbered. What was Elisha talking about? Have you ever felt confused during hard times? You see no way out and God tells you to "not fight but wait". You are being treated unfairly at work and the Lord says "love your enemies."

Your paycheck is limited yet you know that we are called to “give to the Lord.” The ways of God are not the ways of men.

2 Kings 6:17

¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Verse 17: Elisha was able to see past the physical realm in order to view how God was at work in the situation. He prayed that the servant would have spiritual vision as well. When he did, he was able to view all the heavenly armies surrounding the enemy. They were safe; he just had not been able to see past his circumstances.

Many people want to see angels. However, the view of the heavenly army was not the point. Trusting the Commander of the army is the issue. We may not physically see the Lord's hand in our situation but we must trust that He is working in our lives.

St. Patrick is celebrated each year on March 17. Many people, however, do not know his story. He was kidnapped and forced into slavery in Ireland at the tender age of sixteen. Patrick lived as a captive for six years until he was able to escape. It was not long after his return to Britain, that he felt called to return to Ireland as a missionary. No one had ever wanted to reach these pagan people with the good news of Jesus Christ. Patrick had to convince the church to send him. Hundreds of lives were eternally changed by this one man. His time of slavery prepared him to be a missionary for he learned the language and the culture of the people during that time. When looking at it through his vision, God could not use this situation for good. Looking back on his life with spiritual eyes, Patrick realized that the Lord of heaven guided his path in order to reach an entire nation for Christ.

The servant looking only with physical eyes clung to the sliver of hope that the prophet would know what to do. Elisha, looking at life through his confidence and trust in God, saw past the problem to the One who was in control. Thus, he could face this situation, as well as any other, without fear.

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to open your eyes to see Him in your circumstances.

How can your spiritual vision be enlarged?

What situation do you need to look at through spiritual eyes instead of physical ones?

Looking back on life, when have you experienced the Lord taking a hardship and turning into something glorious?

DAY 3

Today's Scripture:

2 Kings 6:18; Ephesians 6:12, 18; 1 John 3:8

The Word

Commercial breaks always occur in the middle of a tense scene. Sometimes a T.V. series will end the season with a cliff hanger. I felt that way yesterday as the lesson for the day ended. The city of Dothan was surrounded. The servant was scared. Elisha told him not to fear because the enemy was outnumbered. Suddenly, the servant could see the heavenly army. Then, we ended the day. Let's pick up after the "commercial break".

2 Kings 6:18

¹⁸ As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, "Strike these people with blindness." So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.

Verse 18: Whereas Elisha had prayed for the servants eyes to be opened, he asked for the enemies' eyes to be blinded. The army is discriminatory: no blind people are allowed. To fight, you have to see. Once again, Elisha thwarts the battle plans of the enemy.

What I like about this story is that the heavenly hosts did nothing. They just stood around on the hills looking spectacular. But their presence gave Elisha and the servant confidence for the battle. People often want to brag on stories about an angel's deliverance (which I do believe can occur). However, it is even more amazing to see how this common fellow Elisha defeated an entire army with the Word of the Lord.

Mary Slessor was a missionary to Africa in the late nineteenth century. She arrived there from Scotland. The tribes were violent. Human skulls decorated the towns. She continued to reach the people with the gospel message and showed love to those who had lived a life of hatred. Often she even prevented wars:

Whenever Mary heard of any trouble, she would rush to the scene. As she approached, the men would be preparing for war. They passed around liquor, danced, and yelled threats at the other side. They were in war paint, and their spears and shields glimmered in the sun. The skulls and scalps of earlier victims waved from poles.

Just as the two sides were about to rush together, they saw a small, seemingly calm woman standing on a log between them. "Out of the way, Ma. We fight!"

She ignored the shouting warrior.

"Out of the way. You die, too, white Ma. Move on!"

"Shoot if you dare!" she called back.

When the two sides came to remove this gray-haired obstacle, Mary knew that she had won. She would scold them as children, plead with them to show mercy, or suggest they move to the shade of a tree to talk. Mary knitted while they talked, and she got a lot of knitting done. After hours of talking the men were calmer and too tired to fight. They went home without bloodshed. (Collins, George <http://www.wholesomewords.org>)

Mary Slessor trusted God and won the victory. Do you realize that the same is true for us? We may not be standing on a literal battle ground but we face skirmishes in life daily. If we will rely on the Lord's strength and victory, the enemy will be defeated every time.

Ephesians 6:12

¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Verse 14: I don't know if anyone has told you this but you are at war. Your battle is not against your family, your co-workers, or your neighbor. You are fighting the forces of hell. You cannot see the spiritual realm unless the Lord gives you the ability to view it. If you did, both angels and demons would be apparent. There is a war raging and we are too busy fighting over the remote control to see it. That is exactly how the enemy likes it. If we forget he is around, we will battle one another instead of him. It is time for us to take a stand against the enemy.

Elisha knew that through the Lord he was more powerful than any army attacking the city. One man faced all the weapons of war and in an instant dismantled them due to blindness. You want vision? It is time to seize the most important part of life: prayer. Elisha, a man of prayer, could see the way out. That way out involved prayer.

Ephesians 6:18

¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Verse 18: Elisha is an example of prayer warrior. He knew how to call on God and we need to do the same. We must be alert to the enemy lurking to destroy us. Do not ignore his presence any longer. An ignored enemy has the advantage over you. Instead, be on the lookout for his attacks. Get your eyes off what you can physically see and begin to view the spiritual world. It is real. The devil is real. Demons are real. They are not myths but powerful evil forces wanting to destroy you.

You cannot defeat the enemy, just as Elisha could not have fought his way around the army of Aram. He needed divine intervention. This is not an unrealistic Rambo scenario where the good guy takes out 10,000 bad guys in a two hour film. Instead, this is real life. We are outnumbered. If we fight alone, we will be defeated every time. We must ask the Lord to help for He alone can destroy the work of the evil one.

1 John 3:8

⁸He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

Verse 8: The devil loves his work. His calling card is sin. He wants to entrap you in it. He wants to keep you stuck in it. He loves when it surrounds you. But Jesus came to destroy the sin that entangles us. He came to set you free. Call upon Him. He will defeat the enemy.

Up Close and Personal

Praise Jesus Christ who has come to set us free from the entanglement of sin. He destroyed the works of the enemy.

When have you shown amazing courage because of your confidence in the Lord?

What do you know about spiritual warfare?

If our battle is not against “flesh and blood” but against the “spiritual forces of evil”, how can you train yourself to look past your problems with people to the spiritual battle taking place?

How will you approach problems differently now that you understand that they are spiritual in nature more so than just personal?

DAY
4

Today's Scripture:
2 Kings 6:18-20

The Word

Alvin York was a hero of World War One. He led a charge of seven men who advanced against a German platoon which had the military advantage of being uphill.

He was awarded the Medal of Honor for leading an attack on a German machine-gun nest, killing 32 German soldiers and capturing 132 others as well as knocking out 35 German machine guns, completely overtaking a German controlled hill.

How did York accomplish such a feat? A conversation between Sergeant York and his Division Commander, General Lindsey, in January 1919 when they toured the site where York captured 132 Germans three months earlier reveals Alvin's thought about this:

General Lindsey: "York, how did you do it?"

Alvin York: "Sir, it is not man power. A higher power than man power guided and watched over me and told me what to do." And the general bowed his head and put his hand on my shoulder and solemnly said"

General Lindsay: "York, you are right."

Alvin York: "There can be no doubt in the world of the fact of the divine power being in that. No other power under heaven could bring a man out of a place like that. Men were killed on both sides of me; and I was the biggest and the most exposed of all. Over thirty machine guns were maintaining rapid fire at me, point-blank from a range of about twenty-five yards. When you have God behind you, you can come out on top every time."

Alvin York. [updated March 21, 2007; cited March 21, 2007]. Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alvin_York

Elisha experienced this same power of God when he led an army to their defeat. He did not use a gun instead he walked them toward surrender.

2 Kings 6:18-19

¹⁸ As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, "Strike these people with blindness." So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.

¹⁹ Elisha told them, "This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for." And he led them to Samaria.

Verse 18-19: Samaria was the headquarters for the northern part of Israel. It would be like walking an enemy army into the pentagon. Basically, the Arameans were defeated.

2 Kings 6:20

²⁰ After they entered the city, Elisha said, "LORD, open the eyes of these men so they can see." Then the LORD opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria.

Verse 20: As a child, I did a lot of sleep walking. It was a weird feeling to wake up in random places. I would find myself in other rooms of the house, unable to figure out when or how I got there. I wonder if this is how these guys felt. They are standing in

the middle of enemy territory. The tides had changed. They started the day surrounding the city of Dothan, now they find themselves surrounded in Samaria. What a strange turn of events. Only the Lord could orchestrate it.

When problems come our way we cannot see the way out. But God may see a solution that you could never discover yourself. For example, Sergeant York attempted to not be drafted in the military because as a Christian he believed that murder was wrong. He could not reconcile killing people in war with his faith in Christ. After spending two days praying on a mountain, he decided to join the army and serve his country. Only God could see a country boy with reservations of being in the military become the biggest war hero of his time. We do not see the whole picture. God does. When we obey Him, we will see glorious victories that only He can bring about.

Up Close and Personal

Confess trusting your limited vision over the Lord's eternal perspective. Ask the Spirit to help you to trust Him.

When have you experienced God working out a situation in your life in a totally unexpected way?

How does this help you trust Him in your present circumstances?

How can your faith in God's eternal vision be increased?

DAY
5

Today's Scripture:

2 Kings 6:21-23; Luke 6:27-36

The Word

Vulnerability of the enemy shows the character of a man. Those with little character will seek revenge and invoke pain. But the people with the character of God will turn the other cheek and reach out in friendship to the enemy.

Elisha and the king of Israel are in Samaria. The prophet has just led the Aramean army into its enemy territory. Both are viewing the same situation but react very differently. Let one be a warning, the other an example for life.

2 Kings 6:21-22

²¹ When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, "Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?"

²² "Do not kill them," he answered. "Would you kill men you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master."

Verse 21-22: The king was ready to slaughter the army. Elisha said "let's host a party for them." For me, this is confusing. The Arameans were at war with Israel. Why not destroy the enemy? Would this not be an example of God bringing victory to the Israelites? What was the reasoning behind Elisha's party? I believe the NIV text note gives a good response to this:

In reality the Aramean soldiers had been taken captive by the power of the Lord, not by Joram's military prowess. The Lord's purpose was to demonstrate to them and their king and to the Israelites and their king that Israel's national security ultimately was grounded in the Lord, not in military forces or strategies.

Spiritual vision sees beyond our pain to the glory of God. Joram, the king of Israel, wanted to end the Aramean power. God wanted to showcase His power. Joram wanted a quick solution. God wanted an eternal solution. Joram wanted revenge. God wanted reconciliation. Joram wanted to kill. God wanted to give life.

When we react to a situation based upon our wants or feelings, we will thwart the purposes of God in our circumstances. By meeting our immediate desires, we are bypassing the eternal glory the Lord wants to gain in the situation.

These men had originally been after Elisha yet he is the one who extended grace to them. He could have egged the king on to destroy but instead the prophet protects the very men who wanted to harm him.

Luke 6:27-36

²⁷"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³²"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.

Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Verse 27-36: Do not gloss over these verses. Think about them. If someone hits you, do not hit back. If someone takes from you, give them more. If someone is mean to you, love them. These are not easy words. Nothing in me wants to do them. I admit, the only thing that I would love to do for my enemies is to take revenge. But that just makes me a Joram. I want to be an Elisha. I want to be able to look at an army of enemies and say, "Right now, instead of having you all killed, I would like to invite you to a feast. You are going to be the guests of honor."

2 Kings 6:23

²³ So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory.

Verse 23: These men thought they were as good as dead. They were surrounded by the Israelites who could have easily slaughtered them. The king was ready to give orders for execution. Many of them probably thought about family members whom they believed they would never see again. Suddenly, a voice intercedes on their behalf. The very man who they were trying to kill now saves their lives.

What kind of love is this?

Friend, this is the same love we have received. We were an enemy to God Himself. Because of our evil ways, His Son died brutally on a cross. We deserve to be eternal punished for our wickedness. The enemy of our souls laughs thinking that he has got us now. He thinks we will suffer and he enjoys it. We bow our heads waiting for the inevitable. Suddenly, a Voice intercedes on our behalf. A nail scarred hand reaches out to us in friendship. He asks us to join Him and His Father for dinner.

What kind of love is this? It is the eternal love of God. It was showcased to you on the cross. I know you have been hurt by others, but can you look past the pain and see Calvary. He was hurt, too. He understands what you are going through. But He was willing to look past what you did to Him and chose to place His eternal love upon you. It is time to get your eyes off yourself, off your circumstances, off your pain. Instead, look at Jesus. Do you see Him? He is looking at you with love. Now, go, and share His love with others, even your enemies so that they, too, may see the glory of God.

Up Close and Personal

Praise Jesus for His eternal love.

Who are the enemies in your life?

How will you show them the love of Christ?

What will this love cost you?

What will help you persevere in showing love to others?