

# Loving People not Stuff

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[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Go with me to 2 Kings chapter 6.

We're going to pray first, and then I'm going to give you a bunch in 18 minutes. So you can hang on. Father, I love you, and I thank you so very much for your Word. I pray, God, that you'd help us to get back what we've lost, help us to accomplish what you've given us, and I pray that you would do a work in each of our lives.

We give you praise for all in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm not going to read the passage for the sake of time, but if you go to 2 Kings chapter 6, verse 1, and I will go through the verses, will you? Pretty good. There's the sons of the prophets.

It's like a Bible college, and they are all dwelling. And Elisha and the boys all live together, and they're all studying, and this place gets to be too tight for them.

And so one of them comes, and he says to Elisha, we need a bigger place. Or several of them come, and they say, we need a bigger place where we can live with you, where we can dwell with you. And they say, we want to build us a place.

[ 1 : 01 ] And he said, well, y'all take off and go do it. And they said, won't you go with us? We'd like you to go with us. And so he said, all right, I'll go. And he went with them. So one of the guys had borrowed an axe head, and they're cutting down trees.

And while he's cutting down a tree, his axe head flies off, lands in the water, and he goes, oh, my goodness, boss, I lost the axe head. And so the man of God said, show me where you lost it.

That's verse 6. And he said, all right, watch this. Take it up. And it says in the verse 7, the iron did swim, and he took it up, and he put out his hand, and he took it.

And I want to take you through five things you can look at in this passage of Scripture for us. Number one, a growing ministry always has needs. Look at verse 1 with me.

And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too straight for us. They needed more room.

[ 1 : 56 ] The Bible school had gotten too tight, and they were working and living together. That's an Old Testament picture of what happened in the New Testament. In Mark 3 and verse 14, Jesus ordained 12 that they should be with him, and he sent them forth to preach.

So when Jesus started his ministry, it was really something going all through the Old Testament. Well, Elijah had done that. Elisha had been one of the guys, and Elijah did it. And he had a bunch of guys, and so all these guys are working together.

Jesus calls 12 men to come spend time with him, and they spend time with him, and he sends them out to preach. In Acts chapter 4 and verse 13, when they went out to preach, when they went out to preach, it was obvious that they had been with Jesus.

In Acts chapter 4 and verse 13. So there's a biblical pattern of these guys working together, and that is a man of God teaching other men of God.

We got Moses teaching Joshua. We got Elijah teaching Elisha. We got Jesus teaching his 12. We got Paul working with his. It's all through the Bible. Spending time with the man of God.

[ 3 : 04 ] But whenever you have a ministry like that, you always got some problems. These guys ran out of space. So here's a Bible verse for you. Write this one down somewhere in the margin of your Bible right there, and I'll use it for you twice tonight.

But look at Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 4. Where no oxen are, the crib is clean. But much increase is by the strength of the ox. I grew up on a farm.

I have hauled a lot of cow manure and pig manure and horse manure. The fact is, since I was a young buck that worked hard on the farm, all the neighbors used to call my dad and say, Hey, your boy want to come haul a load of manure?

And we didn't use tractors to get it out. I had a pitchfork and dug it out and threw it on a tract. I mean, all this modern stuff nowadays. So I know a little bit about this.

So look at what the verse says. Where there are no oxen, you don't have to worry about any poop in the stall. Where there's no children's church, you don't have to worry about skinned up walls. And where there's no kids in a church.

[ 4 : 04 ] You know, have you ever been to one of those churches? I was walking through here the other day. Somebody took a picture of me in my Sunday school class, Sherry Penland. May God judge her. And I was down vacuuming up the floor because people had left some stuff on the floor.

And I thought to myself on deputation. I went to so many churches where there was not one thing out of place. I don't think they ever clean the place by once a month. You don't need to. Nothing ever happens there. But when a whole bunch is going on, everything's going to get messed up.

That's the first thing that's going on in the story right here. Look at the second thing. It takes place in 2 Kings 6 and verse 2. The students responded to their own need.

The Bible said, let us go, we pray thee. Hey, let us go unto Jordan. And we'll all cut down a tree. And we'll make a place there that we can dwell. And he said, take off.

They showed initiative. They showed initiative. It was their idea. This is an amazing thing to me as a pastor. It seems like sometimes if you want something done in the ministry, you're always pushing, pulling, motivating, praying, manipulating, doing everything you can to get people to do something in the ministry.

[ 5 : 12 ] But these guys just jumped up. Elisha never mentioned it. They got the idea. They wanted to take and go do something. It was their idea. They were not waiting to be motivated, pushed, pulled to do something.

So they were on the move. And they were willing to work. They might not have money, but they had sweat. And they were willing to invest it. They were willing to do what they could. You know why they were doing this?

Because they wanted to be next to the man of God, Elisha. They wanted a place where they could dwell. And look at your Bible in 2 Kings 6, verse 3 and 4. And underline this. And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants.

And he answered and said, I'll go. Verse 4. And he went with them. And they came to Jordan. Now, if you go back to Mark 3 and verse 14, that's amazing. Jesus told 12 that they might be with him, that he might send them forth.

And if you check out 2 Kings 6 and notice how many times the word with is being used here. They wanted to be with him. They were willing to fix things. They were willing to work. Now, people, especially students, always make mistakes.

[ 6 : 16 ] We got a bunch of them around here. They have a car wreck every other week. They lock their keys in their car. One of them will drive for another one because the last one had a wreck.

So he's driving for the one that had a wreck. And then he has a wreck. And then that kid locks his keys in the car. Anyway, people. I'm not talking about Justice or Tyler, just so you know. I'd like to ask you this question.

How do you respond to opportunity? You see, they didn't have to wait for the man of God, Elisha, to stand up and say, We need to fix this. We need to build a better place. They looked. They saw the need.

And they got involved. Are you looking for a way to be involved in ministry? Go with me to 2 Kings 6 and verse 5. The student loses a borrowed axe head. He loses a borrowed axe head.

Now, I've heard a whole bunch of preaching out of this passage of Scripture. And I've read this thing over and over. I've about got the chapter of these verses memorized. And you're going to find a lot of what I've heard. But just look at what it does say. It says, But as one was felling a beam, he's chopping a tree down.

[ 7 : 18 ] The axe head fell into the water. And he cried and said, Alas, Master, for it was borrowed. But here's what I like about it. He was working. And he was doing what he could with what he had.

And he didn't have enough to do what he needed to do. And he went and borrowed it. But that was a big risk that he took. Because in Exodus chapter 22 and verse 14, it says, If you borrow it and you break it, if you borrow it and you lose it, you have to pay for it.

You've got to make it good. Exodus 22, 14, He shall surely make it good. The key is verse 15. Don't borrow it. Get the owner to come with it. If the owner comes with it and he gets broken, it's his fault.

He shouldn't have been there letting his son be used. That's what the Bible says. If you can read the Bible, it's right there in front of you. Bring the owner with it. Otherwise, you've got to fix it. He didn't even have an axe head.

He didn't have one. He had to borrow it. He was trying the best he could. And tragedy struck. It's easy to judge this guy about borrowing. And I've heard, I don't know how many messages about how he shouldn't have borrowed it.

[ 8 : 18 ] But Elisha never says a word about that. That's amazing. But here's a big lesson for us. Everything I have is borrowed. I have nothing of my own. I have no abilities and no power and nothing that makes me different than anybody else.

And everybody sitting in this room is in the same boat. Look, if you would, at 1 Corinthians 4 and verse 7. Ed might can sing wherever he went. Ed might can sing. And he might can come up here and lead us in a song.

But, you know, Ed didn't do that himself. The Lord gave him that ability. And somebody else might can preach. And we might have a brother east here who's a nut screwed on the right boat. But you know what?

It was the Lord that did it. Look at what it says in 1 Corinthians 4, 7. But who makes you different from somebody else? Who makes you stand out? And what do you have that you did not receive?

Now, if you received it, why are you bragging about it like as though somebody didn't give it to you? Look at the verse. Look at the verse. Are you looking at it? So here's a guy. Boy, he's a real preaching machine.

[ 9 : 20 ] Here's a guy. He's a real singing machine. Here's a guy. He's a real business machine. He's a real giving machine. And he's like, man, can you check me out? I'm a giver. You know what the Lord would say? Whoa, whoa, whoa, buddy.

Everything you got I gave you. If there's any bragging, it better be about me because you didn't do it. I did it. And if you got the beam cut down and you get to build a place for the preacher, somebody you borrowed that X head from, basically that's what it says.

John chapter 3 and verse 27, John answered and said, a man can receive nothing except to be given him from heaven. It's God that's given it all to us. I have married a great woman.

Does that mean that I picked out a great woman or I've just been blessed by God? I should be given God glory. Do you realize that what you have came from God? And if you do, are you using it for God?

Or do you feel like whenever the offering gets taken, here's, you know, the offering's about ready to be taken. And in your mind, you're like, I don't know why this church wants my money. You know what the problem is, is you think it's your money.

[10:18] But if you got money, you didn't make it. He gave it to you. And if you got talent, you didn't make it. He gave it to you. You say, no, I work hard. He made it where you could work hard. You could be, you could be in a bed somewhere, but God's blessed you.

Are you using what God's given you for his honor and his glory? Go to 2 Kings chapter 6 and verse 6. 2 Kings chapter 6 and verse 6. And the man of God said, where did it fall?

Where fell it? Where did it fall? And he showed him the place. And he cut down a stick and he cast it in hither, thither, and the iron did swim.

Therefore said he, take it up to thee. And he put out his hand and he took it. The student admitted his mistake. Look at the verse.

The student admitted his mistake. So the iron flew off the end of his axe. If you've ever used one very much, it might have happened to you. A hammerhead came off.

[11:16] The iron came off. The student didn't go, wow. In fact, it's in Spanish. The saying in Spanish, if you literally translate it back from Spanish to English, it'll say it fell itself.

So when you drop something, you don't say, I dropped it. You say it fell itself. And so, in fact, it's when they say a cuss word, they'll say that word escaped from my mouth. It's like that word was running around in there and he was trying to keep it in, but it couldn't keep in and it jumped out.

That's not how this guy did that. This guy said, I messed up. I lost an axe head. Wasn't my axe head. And I brought it. He admitted it. He was humble enough to ask for help.

He acknowledged his mistake. If we want God to use us and we want to get where God's using us and building our church and doing something, we got to admit where I messed up, not where other people did.

I need to look in the mirror and think about me. Second thing is, in the story, he knew where he lost it. He knew where he lost it. The man of God said, well, where'd you lose it? And it says in verse 6, and he showed him the place.

[12:19] And he showed him the place. When you lose something, you usually get it back when you go back to where you lost it. You can't just act like it never happened.

Some of us used to be a little more excited about serving Jesus than we are now. Some of us used to read our Bibles and now there's enough dust on the Bible cover, you could write your name there. Charles Spurgeon said you could write damnation in your own Bible cover and the dust you left on it.

But I wasn't going to say that. I just said, Spurgeon said that. I didn't say that. I read that today. We need to go back where we got it. We need to go back where we lost it. We need to get it back.

Look at the next one. He knew who could help. He knew who could help. Hey, man of God, a master, the word master in that verse isn't like slave owner. It's more like teacher.

It's like, hey, master. That's rabbi or master. That's what Jesus said. Don't have anybody calling you that. And he said, hey, master. Hey, teacher. He knew God could work through his man.

[ 13 : 20 ] He goes and asks the man of God. He had enough of a relationship that he knew Elisha would listen to him. He had enough of a relationship that he knew Elisha could help him.

He knew where he could go. Let me give you another thought out of that little verse right there. There's no judgment in the whole passage. I want you to read the passage. Now, I've heard every preacher I've ever heard preach about how he shouldn't have borrowed that axe head.

He should have just stood around with his hands in his pockets and watched the other guys or picked up the limbs the other guys cut off the trees or whatever he should have done. He shouldn't have borrowed it. But, you know, he had plenty of opportunity to say that, but he didn't ever say that.

I'm not saying he should borrow. I'm just saying it's amazing how we like to judge and condemn and put down and find fault. It's easy for me to see what you're doing wrong. It's easy for me to see what you're doing wrong.

It's a lot harder for me to see what I'm doing wrong. This man already knew he'd done wrong. A fellow in our church told us Sunday in our Sunday school class, he said, they're already messed up. They really don't need you to remind them of that.

[ 14 : 17 ] They need somebody to love them and help them. We want to be the kind of church where they'll be loved and helped. Not one word mentioned about being more careful. Not one word saying, hey, you should have got the head of that axe on there better.

I mean, I could hear my dad. If I'd have lost the axe head, believe me, I'd have had a lecture in. Axe heads coming off. And I'd have had a lecture in. You could drive a nail in the top of that thing and tighten her up.

I'd have got a lecture from my dad. But Elisha didn't do that. He wasn't fussed at for borrowing the axe head. Maybe people need to be loved and not judged. Especially when they're honest with you and admit their problems.

Especially when they're honest. You want to hear a wild one? You sometimes are better off to be a hypocrite and a liar. Because if you ever tell a good Christian that you've been having a problem, he'll judge you and hate you and mistreat you.

But if you lied and act like you didn't, he'd be real good to you. You know, if you were to say to somebody, brother, I'm struggling with this judgment.

[ 15 : 22 ] But if you'd come and say, no, I ain't struggling with nothing. He'd be like, you're a good guy. Me and you, neither one of us struggling. Both of you are liars. Not one word mentioned.

Not one bit of judging. A little bit of loving. So before I get to the application where I want to spend the next two minutes with you is, are you helping hurting people? Are you in the helping hurting people business?

We're in the helping hurting people business. Here's a little bit of application. We have to deal with growth and training of young people here. At Vision, we spend a lot of time with a lot of young people.

And I know you do. And I know they come. And I know they go. And I know they leave their McDonald's cup where I don't want it. I walk through. I am caught. I picked up shoes. When I came by before most of you got here, I picked up shoes.

I just threw over another pile of junk, praying somebody pick up one of the piles of junk. I go through and I move stuff all the time. But, you know, if you don't have any oxen, you don't have any stuff where it shouldn't be.

[ 16 : 21 ] They have problems. And they mess up. And we have to clean up. But where no oxen is, no oxen are. I was trying to talk like an Ohioan.

Where no oxen are, the crib is clean. The house is a lot cleaner with no children. Isn't it amazing? If you have children at your house, they mess it up, don't they?

And they skin up everything you got. They mess up everything you got. And your house is so much quieter when you have no kids. But it's a lot deader, too. Say, man. I'd far rather have to pick up junk and get junk off the seats.

And, you know, some kid in the last building took a knife and cut a chair. I wanted to cut him. But you know what? I'd rather have a deal with that. Come on. I'd rather have to deal with that.

The challenge here is for us to each get involved in the lives of others. And that's costly. That's costly. Not just talking to them one time. Not sharing the gospel one time.

[ 17 : 16 ] But loving them where they are and helping them. We must learn to deal with problems and help others deal with their problems. I'd like to tell you something before I quit.

Listen to this. A church like Vision knows more about people with problems than a regular church. You see, when you have a discipleship ministry, when you have this guy talking to this guy and this guy being told to be honest and this guy being told to be honest, and they're having this discussion and they're having this training and they're meeting every week, and you can see their foibles and their failures and how their frustrations and everything else is going on, it's so easy to judge them.

But in the average church, you come in and you've got your tie up exactly where it's supposed to be. You come in. You walk your little soldier walk in. You've got your King James Bible under your arm and you've got all the right words down.

You know exactly what to say. And nobody knows you and you don't know them. When you start a discipleship ministry, you ruin all that. When you start a ministry where you're really working in people's lives.

So I just challenge you. I'm amazed that Mr. Elisha, brother Elisha, preacher Elisha, doesn't fuss at the guy. He's just like, where'd you lose the accent, buddy? We can get it back.

[ 18 : 35 ] We can get it back. I'm not here to condemn you. I'm here to help you get it back. I'm here to jump on you. I'm here to help you get it back. We must learn to deal with problems and help others deal with them.

Being transparent and doing discipleship lets you learn more about their lives. Years ago, I was with a dear friend of mine. And I said to him, I said, you know, it breaks my heart to know some of the things that some of my children did.

I know that some of my children did some things that just, and I named a couple of things. And he said to me, he said, thank God my kids never did that. I went home and I said to my son, I said, son, he never did that.

And my son said, we were together when we both did it. I told you and he didn't tell his daddy. Maybe that's the difference. You see, that's what happens when you're living with people.

That's what happens. You know what they teach preachers and pastor schools a lot of times? Don't get too close. They'll know you got clay feet. Don't let them know who you really are. Keep your act up. That's not very biblical.

[ 19 : 38 ] That's not what Elisha did. We don't want to do that. We want to show initiative. As a church, as people working in our church, in our ministry, I would challenge you to take a risk and go for broke.

Borrow the axe head. Not literally. Nobody around here needs an axe head, probably. Most of you don't. Borrow a computer. Don't do that either. Borrow a computer. Don't borrow a car. You'll wreck it.

Students, don't borrow anything. That was all a joke for you. Let's get back to where God used us. I want to be used of God. I want to be used of God.

I can tell you that raising our children, there was constant turmoil in my house. I remember the first time we got our own furniture. Betty and I got married pretty poor.

Her mother and daddy gave us everything we had to get started. My mother and daddy, I think my mother and daddy bought us a washing machine, so that really spurred her parents. So they went and bought us a dryer and then gave us a bed.

[ 20 : 36 ] I mean, it was like it was a bidding war. I'm like, a bid. Come on, we don't mind a bid. And so both of them were trying to outdo that. Her mom and dad won by a long shot. We finally bought our own. It wasn't something her daddy used when he first got married 1,700 years before we came along and were living there.

And David, I think it was Chris, he came across the room and he had his little metal tractor and he got to the coffee table. It was not a nice coffee table. You rich people wouldn't even think it was a nice coffee table.

But when you're a poor little old preacher boy and preacher wife in a little church that's not really worried about your salary, he brought that thing and he slammed it down on top of that table and he started running that little thing up on that.

And I just reached over and shoved him backwards like three feet. Just Christian love. I mean, he was not going to mess up my table. My table cost 100 bucks.

I don't care what the kid's worth. Huh? Come on. You never done that. You never valued junk over kids. And you don't value stuff in our church over people.

[ 21 : 35 ] I know you never would. I know you never would. But I did. I had to go to him and apologize. But you know, they skin up your tables, don't they? They leave their glasses there and they don't put them little doikies under to keep all the water off your table.

Well, you know how they mess up. They mess up everything. You go in the bathroom and there's a whole roll of toilet paper in the toilet. They hadn't even been to the bathroom. They're just experimenting. They want to know how many rolls of toilet paper it takes to stop up a toilet.

You know how it is. They all move out. You know what you can do? You don't have to worry about it a bit. Ain't nobody using the toilet paper anymore but you old people. Huh? Come on. We don't want that kind of church, do we?

Ever. Ever. Ever. I pray God gives us a bunch of little kids meeting over in those children's rooms. I pray we have a bunch of people coming in that speak different languages, that come from different places, got different levels.

I hope we always want some of that. And just love people where they are. I want God to use us. I want to do more than we've ever done before.

[ 22 : 36 ] And I am not that interested in taking care of stuff. You can mess up the coffee table because you're 40-something years old now. And I'd go back to when you was a boy at my house and try to love you a little better.

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Thanks.