

“The Challenge”

1Ki 19:15-21

Jamie Ocana – pioneer pastor in Bernalillo – recently heard him mention a conversation I had had with him that changed his life – when I arrived in Espanola, Jamie was coasting – “called” but not pursuing – after a few years, it was weighing on me that I didn’t have any men who were seriously making moves to go out – challenged Jamie about his life – he says it changed the direction of life

I. The Necessity of A Challenge:

A. What is a challenge?

1. The dictionary defines as – “a call to take part in something”
 - a. In our text – Elijah is challenging Elisha to be a part of what God is doing
2. A challenge is a confrontation between a vision that a pastor has for a man – and the current state of that man’s life
 - a. *1Ki 19:19 So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him.*
 - b. Have to understand what is happening here – Elisha existing happily in a life of comfort / security – then Elijah messes it all up – the mantle was something that Elisha would have been familiar with – the symbol of the prophet
 - i. A challenge isn’t a comfortable thing – in a sense it is emotionally / spiritually violent
 - ii. There is a clash of opposing ideas / visions of the future
3. A challenge is personal and verbal
 - a. *1Ki 19:20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?"*
 - i. Not simply preaching / example – direct words from a pastor to a man

B. A challenge is necessary because:

1. Sometimes men are blind to their potential
 - a. *1Ki 19:16 Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi asking over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.*
 - b. We see no signs that Elisha is aware of what his potential in God’s Kingdom is
 - i. Many times men are completely unaware of how powerful / impactful their lives can be
 - ii. A challenge can help them to gain a vision of that
2. Sometimes men are blind to their current state
 - a. *1Ki 19:20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?"*
 - b. IOW – Elijah is challenging him that his current way of thinking / the way he is ordering his life – is not conducive with God’s will
 - i. As men, we have a profound propensity for self-deception
 - ii. We can be convinced that we are wonderful – and are on our way to great things – when, in fact, we are neither of those things
 - iii. A challenge can open our eyes to the actual state of things

PG to our band – “You guys looked like idiots. You think that because girls are screaming, you’re hitting hot licks. Let me let you in on a little secret. You could fart on the mic and those girls would scream.” – didn’t feel like we were so great after that

C. A challenge is an incredibly powerful thing

1. *1Ki 19:21 ... Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.*
2. Think about this – Elisha goes from a small life that is being essentially wasted / completely blind to what he can be – then Elijah challenges him – and the entire course of this man’s life changes – he is now on his way to being one of the greatest prophets to ever live
 - a. A challenge can rescue a man
 - b. A challenge can unlock the potential of a man
 - c. A challenge can have incredible impact
 - i. Imagine all the people that are impacted by Elisha’s ministry
 - ii. People that will be saved / healed / delivered / churches planted / cities and nations

Jamie – went from just existing – to impact – Michelle Martinez saved / now her whole family in church – sent out – unlocked something in our church – Bernalillo – wonderful move of God – all because of a challenge

II. Willing to Challenge:

A. As pastors – we have a holy calling to challenge men

1. Notice where the command to challenge comes from - *1Ki 19:16 Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi asking over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.*

- a. This is not a small / insignificant part of our ministry
- b. Discipleship is our calling
 - i. *Mat 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples...*
- c. God's plans involve a pastor properly challenging his men
 - i. The world needs your men to be all they can be

B. A problem - is pastors who won't challenge their men

1. Different forms:

- a. Some simply won't challenge their men at all (*David with Absalom*)
- b. Some give weak challenges
 - i. Complain about things in front of their men / passive aggressive pastors
- c. Some give twisted challenges
 - i. Think a challenge is just jacking men up for what irritates them – go off on them

2. Pastors who won't challenge their men – have a heart problem

- a. Spirit of rejection
 - i. Leaders who have a spirit of rejection hate to challenge – because they need everyone to boost their ego all the time – don't want the men to respond negatively
- b. Pride
 - i. Leaders who are full of pride hate to be made to look bad – so when a man makes him look bad – he can't handle it – goes off
- c. Worldliness
 - i. If your heart is given to the things of the world – you see no need to challenge men to the things of God (*they might leave their good job and go out*)

3. The results of not giving a challenge:

- a. Disciples are lost b. Potential is wasted c. The KOG is hindered

C. If we are going to properly challenge men – we need to get our hearts right

- 1. Repent of holding God's men back from their potential
- 2. Let God heal internal issues
- 3. Rekindle your passion for reaching the world

Few years after taking Espanola – no men making real moves towards getting sent out – was unacceptable to me – my challenge to Jamie was not because he was ready / had no problems – but because I believe this is what I am here to do

III. Responding to A Challenge:

A. A pastor giving a challenge is only one side of the equation – other side is the man who is being challenged

- 1. You could have the best pastor in the world – but if you won't respond to a challenge – it will do you no good
- 2. The reality is – that we are always going to be in need of a challenge
 - a. Some men have the idea that they have arrived at a place where they no longer need to be challenged
- 3. Our future as men – hinges on our ability to respond to a challenge (*Elisha's entire future is hanging on his response to this challenge*)

B. Things that hinder our response:

- 1. Taking the challenge personally
- 2. Pride
- 3. Suspicion of our pastor's motives

C. The men who flourish in the KOG – are those who receive a challenge and respond to it

1. *1Ki 19:21 So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.*

- a. God's anointing comes upon a man like this

When I challenged Jamie – was really watching how he would respond – older than me / had been in church for some time – amazing how he responded – took everything I said and did it – something changed inside of him – God now using him powerfully