



Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel

Volume 9 | Number 1

Article 6

4-1-2008

“Follow the Prophet”: Eight Principles from 1 and 2 Kings

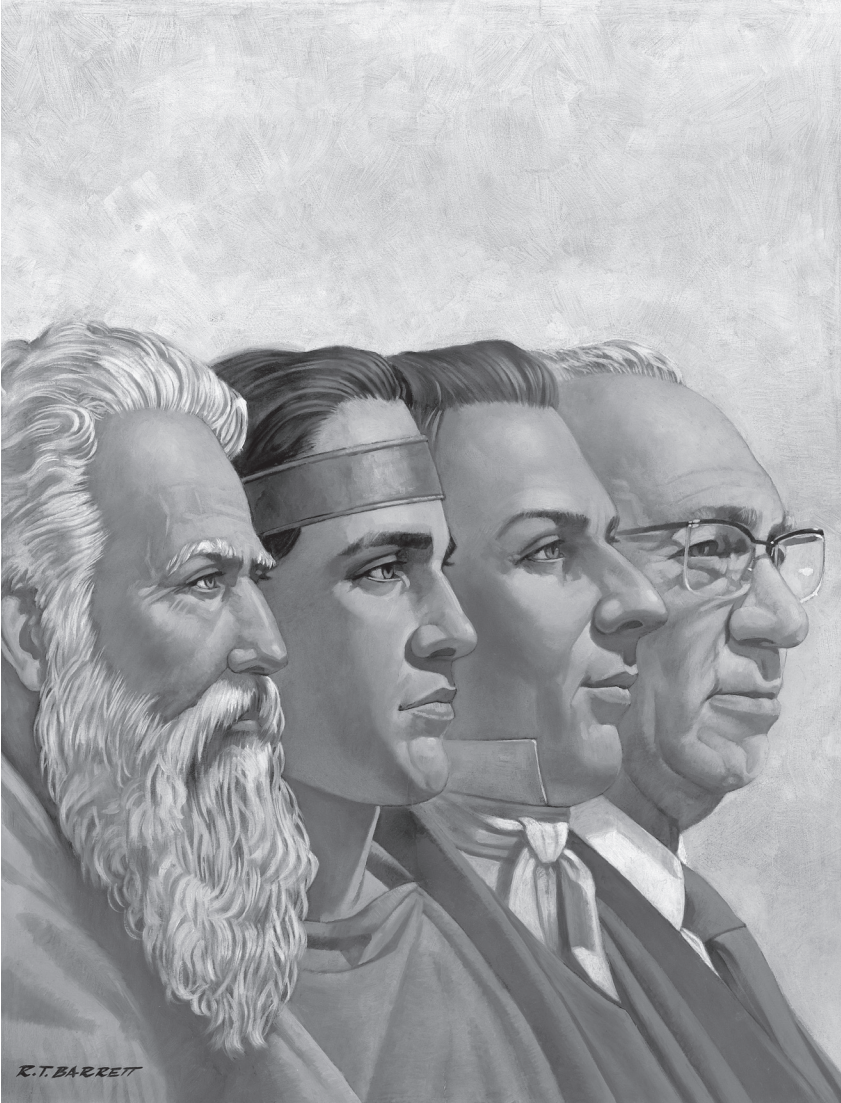
Ronald E. Bartholomew
ron.bartholomew@byu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/re>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Bartholomew, Ronald E. "“Follow the Prophet”: Eight Principles from 1 and 2 Kings." *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 9, no. 1 (2008). <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/re/vol9/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.



Robert T. Barrett, *Portraits of Moses, Mormon, Joseph Smith Jr., and Gordon B. Hinckley*

“Follow the Prophet”: Eight Principles from 1 and 2 Kings

Ronald E. Bartholomew

Ronald E. Bartholomew (ron.bartholomew@byu.edu) is a visiting CES instructor in Religious Education at BYU.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord commands us to “teach the principles of my gospel” (D&C 42:12). A principle is “a comprehensive and fundamental law, doctrine or assumption” or “a rule or code of conduct.”¹ Thus, a gospel principle is a lesson on which we base righteous decisions, the way to apply doctrine to our lives.² In 1 Kings 17 through 2 Kings 8, we can glean eight powerful lessons on following the living prophets. Each principle reinforces the theme of the Primary song: “Follow the prophet; he knows the way.”³

1. Give Your Best to the Lord First

A widow lived in Zarephath, a city north of Galilee on the coast of the Mediterranean in present-day Lebanon. Because of the terrible drought and famine, her food stores were spent. At the brink of starvation, she was gathering sticks to make a fire and cook the last meal she and her son would eat before they died. While doing this, the prophet Elijah, who had been sent to her by the Lord, approached her and asked her to bring him some water and some bread. She replied to him: “As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die” (1 Kings 17:12).

Upon announcing this, the prophet Elijah asked her to give her remaining food and water to him, instead of to herself and her starving

son, with this promise: “For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth” (1 Kings 17:14). Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Quorum of the Seventy explained the reason Elijah did this:

Now doesn't that sound selfish, asking not just for the first piece, but possibly the only piece? Didn't our parents teach us to let other people go first and especially for a gentleman to let a lady go first, let alone a starving widow? Her choice—does she eat, or does she sacrifice her last meal and hasten death? Perhaps she will sacrifice her own food, but could she sacrifice the food meant for her starving son?

Elijah understood the doctrine that blessings come *after* the trial of our faith (see Ether 12:6; D&C 132:5). He wasn't being selfish. As the Lord's servant, Elijah was there to give, not to take. . . .

One reason the Lord illustrates doctrines with the most extreme circumstances is to eliminate excuses. If the Lord expects even the poorest widow to pay her mite, where does that leave all others who find that it is not *convenient* or easy to sacrifice?⁴

The Lord's prophets frequently ask us to give the best we have, or all we have, to the Lord first, with the promised blessing that if we do, the Lord will bless us in return. I have reflected many times on how extremely difficult it would have been for a mother to give her last meal, meant for her child, to anyone—even the Lord's prophet. However, this woman had the faith to do it. 1 Kings 17:15–16 reads: “And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.”

How can we more effectively teach our students the blessings that attend those who give their best to the Lord first? Tithing for a poor college student, a two-year mission at the prime of life, seminary or institute in an already full high school or college schedule, giving up two nights a week for family home evening on Monday night and a Mutual activity another weeknight when they have pressing work or school conflicts—the list could go on. It is critical that we teach them they cannot expect the full blessings of the Lord unless, like the widow of Zarephath, they are willing to follow the prophet and give their best to the Lord first.

Perhaps the most poignant part is what happens next. Even though the oil and flour never ran out, allowing this woman, her son, and the prophet Elijah to eat “many days,” her son still became ill and died.

But, because of this woman's sacrifice and obedience, the prophet Elijah was still alive and was still at her house. Providentially, Elijah took the lifeless body of her son, called upon the Lord, and by the power of the priesthood raised him from the dead (see 1 Kings 17:15–24). Had this woman denied the prophet her last bit of food, would he have been there or even been alive to raise her son from the dead?

How many times have our students been asked to give up something valuable to the Lord only to find out later that the blessing they desired the very most—undoubtedly a blessing they could not have received any other way—was provided by the Lord because they chose to follow the prophet's counsel and give their best to the Lord first? Like this woman, our students can expect the Lord's blessings only if they are willing to sacrifice all they have, if necessary, to follow the words of the Lord's prophets today.

2. Prophets Stand for the Truth

Elijah faced the challenge of convincing apostate Israel that Jehovah was the only true and living God and that the worship of Baal had not only led them deeply into sin but was the cause of their current suffering. To do this, he proposed his famous challenge as recorded in 1 Kings 18:21–24:

How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. *And the people answered him not a word. . . .*

I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:

And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. (emphasis added)

What pain the prophet Elijah must have felt when no one responded positively to his challenge, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Instead, they insisted that Heavenly Father prove Himself one more time.

They knew of the miraculous way the Lord had freed their ancestors from Egyptian bondage, helped them escape by the parting of the Red Sea, and fed and cared for them in the wilderness on their way to the promised land. They knew of Joshua's conquest of the land of

their forefathers and the Lord's sustaining hand in allowing them to retain the lands of their inheritance even up to that day. They had just experienced a terrible drought and famine caused by the sealing power of the priesthood that their false god Baal had been unable to prevent. Did the Lord need to further prove to them He had the power to save them before they would leave the worship of the false god Baal?

Like Elijah, our students may also have to stand alone against the wicked trends of our current culture and society. Like Elijah, many of them stand bravely against the storm of sin. However, many of them are seduced by seemingly "small" trends, fashions, or pressures because "everyone else seems to be doing it." The threat of peer rejection for "being too good" can overcome even the strongest among them. Of this, President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "What we desperately need today . . . are leaders, men and women who are willing to stand for something, . . . especially when it is unpopular to do so. . . . The problem with most of us is that we are afraid to stand up for what we believe, to be witnesses for what is true and right. We want to do the right thing, but we are troubled by fears."⁵ In other words, we need more "Elijahs" today.

Elder Glenn L. Pace of the Seventy said this of the need to decide, once and for all—and before it is too late—who your God is:

Many of us take the blessings of the gospel for granted. It is as if we are passengers on the train of the Church, which has been moving forward gradually and methodically. Sometimes we have looked out the window and thought, "That looks kind of fun out there. This train is so restrictive." So we have jumped off and gone and played in the woods for a while. Sooner or later we find it isn't as much fun as Lucifer makes it appear or we get critically injured, so we work our way back to the tracks and see the train ahead. With a determined sprint we catch up to it, breathlessly wipe the perspiration from our forehead, and thank the Lord for repentance.

While on the train we can see the world and some of our own members outside laughing and having a great time. They taunt us and coax us to get off. . . .

I would propose that the luxury of getting on and off the train as we please is fading. The speed of the train is increasing. The woods are getting much too dangerous, and the fog and darkness are moving in. . . .

With all the prophecies we have seen fulfilled, what great event are we awaiting prior to saying, "Count me in"? What more do we need to see or experience before we get on the train and stay on it until we reach our destination?⁶

Perhaps Elijah’s story as recorded in 1 Kings 18 could help reinforce amongst our students the idea that the “train of the Lord’s kingdom here on earth” is moving quickly, and the time for deciding whose side we are on is now. Elijah’s challenge echoes down through the ages to us today: “How much longer will you debate back and forth among yourselves?” The time to decide to stand up for the truth—and for the Lord’s prophets—is *now*.

3. Prophets Tell Us What We *Need* to Hear

An example of how the wisdom of men pales in comparison to the infinite and eternal nature of prophetic revelation is found in 1 Kings 22. When the king of Israel, Ahab, asked the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, if he would help him wage war against Syria in an attempt to regain a portion of their land they had lost, he agreed to form an alliance and help him. Before they went to battle, however, they counseled together and decided to seek the advice of the prophets. Instead of consulting with the prophet of the Lord, King Ahab sought the advice of four hundred prophets of Baal. He did this because they always said what he wanted them to say. And, of course, this time was no different. They all proclaimed that he should do as he wished and that Baal would deliver their enemies into his hand (see 1 Kings 22:1–6).

Upon seeing this, the righteous king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, said, “Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him?” (1 Kings 22:7). King Ahab responded, “There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil” (1 Kings 22:8).

When Micaiah was summoned, he sarcastically said what King Ahab wanted to hear (see 1 Kings 22:15). Sensing this, King Jehoshaphat said: “How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?” (1 Kings 22:16).

Once Micaiah realized that Jehoshaphat wanted to know the truth, he told him that the four hundred prophets of Baal were possessed of a lying spirit and that if they went against their enemies they would be scattered like sheep without a shepherd (see 1 Kings 22:17, 22). At this, the wicked King Ahab replied: “Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?” (1 Kings 22:18).

Because Micaiah told them the truth, he was shut up in prison and was fed a meager diet of bread and water. Meanwhile, both kings went to war against the Syrians. In the battle, the wicked King Ahab

was killed, but the righteous King Jehoshaphat's life was spared (see 1 Kings 22:26–37).

What would happen if our prophets only told our students what they wanted to hear? For Ahab's wickedness, the Lord had promised him through the prophet Elijah that when he died dogs would lick up his blood—and they did at the battle against the Syrians (see 1 Kings 21:19; 1 Kings 22:37–38). Fortunately, our students will not have something that ghastly happen. However, spiritually speaking, something much worse could happen. It is not the role of our prophets to agree with us—especially when the path we are pursuing could lead to our moral or spiritual destruction. It is the prophet's responsibility and privilege to warn us against evil paths we might be tempted to pursue. Avoiding their counsel could put us in dire straits. President Harold B. Lee said of the path to safety:

Now the only safety we have as members of this church is to do exactly what the Lord said to the Church in that day when the Church was organized. We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet, “as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me . . . as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.” (D&C 21:4–5.) There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory.” (D&C 21:6.)⁷

King Ahab did not have to die—he had a prophet, the true prophet, who warned him of danger despite his wickedness. Similarly, our students have living prophets who will tell them what they need to know, instead of what they might want to hear, in an effort to keep them safe from the dangers of the world.

4. The Mantle Fits—Wear It!

An example of an exceptionally faithful follower of the living prophet is Elisha himself. When the prophet Elijah passed by him one day, he threw his mantle or shawl on Elisha (see 1 Kings 19:19). Later, when Elijah was translated, it fell on him again (see 2 Kings 2:13–14). Elijah had used this shawl to perform miracles like parting the waters in

2 Kings 2:8. This passing of Elijah's shawl or mantle to Elisha has become symbolic of prophetic succession in the Lord's kingdom even today.⁸

Elisha didn't stop to see if the mantle fit; he simply did his best to perform the work the Lord called him to do and was a wonderfully successful prophet who performed many mighty miracles and other good works for the Lord. Similarly, it is not our students' place to decide if a call from the Lord fits or is right for them; it is their opportunity to accept and serve and go and do. President Boyd K. Packer said:

It is not in the proper spirit for us to decide where we will serve or where we will not. We serve where we are called. It does not matter what the calling may be.

I was present at a solemn assembly when David O. McKay was sustained as President of the Church. President J. Reuben Clark Jr., who had served as First Counselor to two Presidents, was then sustained as Second Counselor to President McKay. Sensitive to the possibility that some may think that he had been demoted, President Clark said: "In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines."⁹

Like Elisha and President Clark, each of us should seek to serve where we are called, regardless of position, prestige, or honor. I was taught this lesson powerfully by my grandmother. At her funeral, the bishop remarked, much to my surprise, that my grandmother had served in the same calling in that ward for thirty years. The calling? Nursery leader. "In fact," he said, with much emotion, "she served as my nursery leader."

Not once had I heard her complain that she had served in the same calling for thirty years. What an example of wearing the mantle given to her from her priesthood leaders!

5. "Bear" with the Difficult Teachings of Prophets

The wisdom of the prophets is not always easy to see. Some youth are tempted to believe the prophet's counsel as outdated, old-fashioned, or out of sync with reality. We have all witnessed some of our students experience serious misfortune because they turned their ears, eyes, or hearts away from prophetic counsel. An unfortunate example of this is found in 2 Kings 2:23–24. After having performed the great miracle of healing the waters of Jericho, Elisha "went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth [youths] out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and

cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.”

What does the phrase “go up” mean? They were asking the prophet to leave, or at least leave them alone. Their reference to “bald head” was most likely referring to the prophet’s age. In our modern English, they were saying something to the effect of, “Get out of here, you old man, and leave us alone!” Now, our students would probably not say that directly to our beloved prophet. But, unfortunately, some say things with the same impact: “I wish he [the prophet] would mind his own business,” or “What does he know about being a teenager today?” Is it not prophetic guidance protecting them from the destructive “bears” waiting to prey upon them?

It is a tragedy that the youth in Elisha’s day were cursed and died the way they did because of their attitudes and actions toward the prophet. However, there are many more today that are losing their spiritual or physical lives due to similar attitudes. And there are many bears seeking to prey on those who willfully disregard the Lord’s prophets and their counsel. We have all seen those who have been bitten, or even destroyed, by the bears of pornography, unworthy music, immodest clothing, unclean language, inappropriate relationships, and substance abuse.

Although our society is full of these hungry, vicious bears, our students can be completely safe from their devastating effects if they will honor and obey these older, wiser, gray, even bald-headed men who are called of God to be our leaders. My friends and colleagues, perhaps these verses could be used to reinforce the idea in our students’ minds that there is safety from the she-bears of our day in honoring and sustaining the prophets, even if, and perhaps especially if, their teachings are difficult to bear or seem out of sync with current trends.

6. Make “Room” for the Prophet in Your Life

How much time and effort does it take to follow the prophet? How much time and effort are you putting into listening to and following his words? In 2 Kings 4 we read about “a great woman” from Shunem (2 Kings 4:8) who made time and space for the Lord’s prophet in her life. Her story can help students see that we need to make time for the prophet.

This woman watched the prophet Elisha pass by her home on his many travels day after day, and, sensing he was indeed a holy man of God, she stopped him one day and invited him in for food and refreshment.

Elisha appreciated her graciousness and eventually made it a practice to stop by her home each time he passed.

Sometimes his journeys would bring him by her home late at night, and rather than just send him on his way after feeding him, she asked her husband to add a room onto their house so he would be able to spend the night if he needed to before continuing on his journey. This woman not only made time and space for the prophet, she actually made physical space for him by adding a room (see 2 Kings 4:8–11).

One of the great blessings of living at this time is that our students have more opportunities to listen to or read the inspired words of the prophets than any other group of young people that has ever lived. They are also busy with many good activities. While some of these activities are for mere pleasure, most are not. Schoolwork and extracurricular activities alone could monopolize their time. Many of them also work to save money for their missions, college, and personal needs. While almost all of these activities can be beneficial, it is possible to become so busy there is no time left to spend with the prophets. Like the Shunammite woman, they must decide to make “room” in their lives for the prophets and their messages.

Because of her faithfulness, great blessings followed. Although this woman and her husband had reached old age without the blessing of a child, Elisha promised them that because of the way they had treated him they would be blessed with a son. To their surprise, they had a son within a year’s time! After he was fully grown, however, he became sick and died. When Elisha heard of it he traveled to their home and brought their son back to life (see 2 Kings 4:16–37). Later, when Elisha prophesied a seven-year famine in Israel, he made a special trip to this woman’s home to warn her to leave the country with her family to save their lives. After the famine, they returned only to discover that another family had moved on to their property while they were away. When the king learned they had left because they had been warned to do so by the prophet, he restored their property to them (see 2 Kings 8:1–6).

How many challenges could be overcome, questions answered, or difficult problems resolved by finding a regular time and place to study and ponder the words of our living prophets? For some, the thought of adding one more thing to an overscheduled life might be discouraging or even overwhelming. Commenting on this, Elder Dallin H. Oaks said: “For most of us, most of the time, the choice between good and bad is easy. What usually causes us difficulty is determining which uses of our time and influence are merely good, or better, or best.”¹⁰ We can glean a lesson from the Shunammite woman. Her “house” did not

have adequate room in it either—it was already full. To make room for the prophet, she had to add a room to her house. This suggests that perhaps the answer is not dropping a class, being released from a calling, or quitting a job. It is often inappropriate to remove such activities from our lives. As Elder Oaks has suggested, the answer is more likely to make room at a time taken up by a less important activity. As we create space in our lives for the better over the good, we make room for the words of the prophets. We too can be blessed beyond our expectations.

7. Prophets Often Teach through Small and Simple Means

In 2 Kings 5, we read of the interaction between Naaman the leper and the prophet Elisha. This story could be used to teach various principles, some of which are outlined below.

Trust the messengers of the Lord. If we are humble and teachable, we can learn from the most unexpected sources of the truth.

The first messenger in 2 Kings 5 is an Israelite woman who, providentially, was taken as a prisoner of war and given to Naaman's wife as a servant. We know very little of this young woman's life experiences. However, from her heartfelt expression of faith we gather that she had an unwavering conviction of the divine calling and attendant priesthood power of the prophet Elisha. Her only words recorded in scripture are: "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy" (2 Kings 5:3). What a beautiful expression of absolute faith! And what an unlikely messenger of the prophetic power to heal the captain of the Syrian hosts!

Apparently her message was well received because it led to a personal letter from the king of Syria to the king of Israel and an accompanying gift of enormous value. It is a remarkable thing indeed that the Syrian hierarchy took such notice of the words of this young Israelite prisoner of war. From this incident we can learn the importance of receiving the testimony of prophets from even the most humble of witnesses. We can also see the immense power and influence one person can have when speaking with spiritual conviction. Our students need to know that their humble, pure, powerful testimonies, when borne with spiritual conviction, can have a powerful influence on people of every nation or every station.

Of his own conversion, President Brigham Young said: "When I saw a man without eloquence, or talents for public speaking, who could only say, 'I know, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of the Lord,' the Holy

Ghost proceeding from that individual illuminated my understanding, and light, glory, and immortality were before me. . . . The world, with all its wisdom and power, and with all the glory and gilded show of its kings or potentates, sinks into perfect insignificance, compared with the simple, unadorned testimony of the servant of God.”¹¹

The second messenger was Elisha’s servant, Gehazi. Unlike the Israelite maiden, whose message was accepted, believed, and acted upon, Gehazi and his message were entirely rejected at first. Naaman had assumed that after the long journey to Samaria the prophet would come out to see him, call down the powers of heaven in some miraculous display, and heal him instantly (see 2 Kings 5:11). When Elisha did not even come out to meet him, but instead sent a young man with his message to “go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean” (2 Kings 5:10), Naaman was offended and exclaimed: “Are not . . . [the] rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?” And the scriptures record, “He turned and went away in a rage” (2 Kings 5:12).

The final messenger to Naaman was his own servant. Sensing the potential loss of the prophet’s promised healing, he carefully approached his master and said: “My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?” (2 Kings 5:13). To his credit, Naaman humbles himself and submits to the prophet Elisha’s counsel and is made whole.

It is critical that our students learn from this story that the authorized messengers of the prophets—Church teachers and leaders, parents, and home and visiting teachers—carry saving messages directly to their homes and hearts. The Lord said, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). Elisha taught this principle powerfully by not coming out to Naaman in person. It is also critical that our students come to understand that in their callings they become the messengers of the prophets to those to whom they are called to serve. Like the three messengers in this story, our students can become the means of bringing salvation to those of great influence, station, or wealth—or to the smallest child and simplest Saint.

Obey the Lord’s plain and simple teachings. Like Naaman, some of our students might be tempted to look for something new, sensational, or dramatic while overlooking the ordinary teachings they receive from the prophets through parents, teachers or leaders. Perhaps they might

rationalize, as Naaman did, that there must be greater solutions to what seem like greater problems. Perhaps the world might offer a more spectacular, sophisticated solution. In the words of Naaman, “Are not . . . rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?” (2 Kings 5:12).

Naaman almost missed out on a miracle that completely changed his life because he did not believe it would heal him. How many more blessings could be given us if we would more consistently listen to and obey the normal, everyday counsel from God’s prophets? Can we help our students gain a greater appreciation for the doctrines and principles taught in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” and the standards found in *For Strength of Youth* (especially our college-age students)? What about reinforcing the small and simple acts of regular church attendance, meaningful participation in family home evenings, and daily scripture study and prayer? These are the things the Lord’s prophets have asked us to cause the great things to come to pass in our lives. Could we more powerfully teach our students to humble themselves, like Naaman, and follow these small and simple things to receive the greater blessings we all desire?

8. Prophets See What We Do Not

In 2 Kings chapters 6 and 7 is the story of a drought and famine so terrible that the Israelites resorted to cannibalism. The king discovered starving women eating their own children and sent a messenger to Elisha the prophet. Elisha prophesied that on the next day, food would be so plentiful that it would sell for an all-time low in the market place. This was difficult for the Israelites to believe. Their country was under siege by the Syrian army, which at that time had them completely surrounded. Food was so scarce that bird dung was selling in the market place for food—and that, at a very high price. When one of the king’s servants heard Elisha’s prophesy, he denounced him saying it was impossible. Elisha replied that not only would his prophecy be fulfilled, but this man would live to see the food with his eyes, but never get any of it to eat because of his unbelief and derision of the Lord’s prophet (see 2 Kings 6:24–7:2).

As you know, that night “the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life” (2 Kings 7:6–7).

When the Israelites discovered the camp of the Syrian army completely empty of soldiers the next day, they ran out and took all of the food the Syrians had left behind. And, as Elisha has prophesied, it did sell in the market place at all-time low prices. As for the man who had scoffed at Elisha’s prophecy—well, the king had assigned him to keep the gate of the city. When the starving people ran out of the city in a frenzied craze and returned in the same manner, they trampled him under their feet, and he died—thus fulfilling Elisha’s second prophecy that the man would see the food but never get to eat any of it.

What lessons are in this story for our students today? Like Elisha, our modern prophets are also “seers.” That means they can see things that we cannot see with our mortal eyes. Elder Dennis B. Neuenchwander of the Seventy taught: “What our modern seers are making known that otherwise could not be known and what they are seeing that is not visible to the natural eye. . . . Listen, ponder, and prayerfully consider what they are teaching and what they are doing. . . . To have living prophets, seers, and revelators among us and not listen to them is no better than not having them at all.”¹²

An excellent example of this is “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” Elder M. Russell Ballard noted: “The proclamation is a prophetic document, not only because it was issued by prophets but because it was ahead of its time. It warns against many of the very things that have threatened and undermined families during the last decade.”¹³ For example, in October 1995, when the proclamation was issued, same-sex marriage was not legally recognized anywhere in the world.¹⁴ From 1998 to 2000, however, the issues of same-sex marriage and so-called civil unions became the focus of large-scale public debate in Europe, Scandinavia, South America, and Canada. Since 2003 this debate escalated in the United States of America to the point that many states passed legislation against it and a federal constitutional amendment defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman was proposed and voted on twice in Congress. The First Presidency also issued a statement in support of such a constitutional amendment. As of this writing, nearly all countries in the world have now become heavily engrossed in this debate, which was not even an issue in 1995. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” stands as a clear witness to the world that prophets, seers, and revelators are not only ahead of the times, but their counsel can also prepare us against the future elements of societal and moral decay that threaten to destroy us as individuals, families, and societies.

Conclusion

The books of 1 and 2 Kings offer inspiring lessons and principles about following the prophets. By testifying that prophets “know the way,” we can help our students successfully travel the difficult roads that lie ahead. **RE**

Notes

1. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v. “principle.”
2. President Boyd K. Packer defined a principle as “an enduring truth, a law, a rule you can adopt to guide you in making decisions” (in Conference Report, April 1996, 22).
3. Duane E. Hiatt, “Follow the Prophet,” *Children's Songbook* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2006), 110.
4. Lynn G. Robbins, in Conference Report, April 2005, 36–37.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something: Ten Neglected Virtues That Will Heal Our Hearts and Homes* (New York: Times Books, 2000), 167–68.
6. Glenn L. Pace, in Conference Report, October 1992, 12–13.
7. Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, October 1970, 152.
8. See Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Elijah,” 664.
9. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, October 1997, 6.
10. Dallin H. Oaks, “Sins and Mistakes,” *Ensign*, October 1996, 63.
11. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–86), 1:90–91.
12. Dennis B. Neuenschwander, in Conference Report, October 2000, 55.
13. M. Russell Ballard, in Conference Report, October 2005, 43.
14. See <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/07/31/world/main1850586.shtml>