

COMMITTED DISCIPLES

Elisha then left his oxen and went after Elijah. (1 Kings 19:20, NIV)

PATRICK REED WASN'T TRYING TO CAUSE A STIR. He simply said what every serious young golfer dreams of: *I want to be one of the very best.* Why else does a junior player stand over a six-foot putt alone on the practice green in the fading light of a summer's eve and say below his breath, "To win the Masters...?"

Of course, it was one thing to hear that Reed had said these words—"I truly believe that I am a top five player in the world"—and yet another to watch him take down the field at the WGC-Cadillac Championship. When he said it again after the final round, it wasn't so hard to imagine. In a matter of months, Reed has surged from obscurity to 20th in the world. He is on his way to the echelon he dares call his.

But is he really daring? He must believe for a reason. And he does. Two reasons, actually. He has put in much work. And he has the confirmation of those who know him best.

We can't speak specifically to the work Elisha had put in, except to know this: he was among the remnant whose "knees [had] not bowed down to Baal." His faith in God was firm. We can, however, speak to his confirmation and his commitment. Elijah, the mighty prophet of God, had come to meet the younger man in the field where he tended his oxen. At God's leading, he had placed his cloak around Elisha, and the spiritually sensitive protégé responded at once. Even Elijah thought Elisha was rash and told him to go back. But the soon-to-be-erstwhile cattleman returned home only to sever his earthly ties:

So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant. (1 Kings 19:21)

You might say that Elisha was the "first disciple," the one who displayed what it means to forsake all to follow the way of the Lord. You might say that he begs the question in all of us: *Are we willing to do all that it takes to be all that God has made us to be?* Players like Patrick Reed don't happen by accident; they are gifted and they cultivate their gift. Disciples, meanwhile, are called and they cultivate their calling. Like Elisha. Like Peter and Paul. And the real question for each one who would follow Jesus today: *Like me?*

Opening questions Talk about a time when you made a challenging decision to leave behind a comfortable position or place and make a new commitment. What did this require of you?

READING 1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2:1-12; Matthew 4:18-22, 19:16-30

Attendance and commitment

In the 1 and 2 Kings passages, what evidences do we find of Elisha's focused commitment to Elijah?

Similarly, what evidence do you find in Matthew 4 for the willingness of the fishermen to follow Jesus?

How do these actions fit into your own ideas about commitment? Are there limits to commitment? What are they?

The demands and rewards of discipleship

In Matthew 19, what are the hesitations of the rich young man? What are the concerns of the disciples (v. 27)? What rewards did Jesus promise for those who take significant, even sacrificial, steps in following him (vv. 28-30)?
