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THE 66-BOOK 8-WEEK GROUP BIBLE STUDY SERIES • BOOK 12 OF 66

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2 KINGS

An 8-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

THE COMPLETE STUDY • WEEKS 1-8 • 2 KINGS 1:1-25:30
GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

2 Kings: An 8-Week Bible Study

An 8-Week Bible Study • ESV® • 8 Sessions of 75-90 Minutes

PARTICIPANT STUDY EDITION

Synchronized Section-by-Section with the Leader Guide Edition · Includes Group Reflection Workspace

2 Kings: An 8-Week Bible Study

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WEEK 1 OF 8

Week 1: From Elijah to Elisha — 2 Kings 1:1–3:27

Scripture Scope: 2 Kings 1:1–3:27 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

- **The title:** In the Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Kings were one book. 2 Kings picks up exactly where 1 Kings ends, with Ahab's son Ahaziah on the throne of Israel.
- **The setting:** About 290 years, from Ahaziah of Israel (about 850 BC) to the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC), with a closing note about 561 BC, when King Jehoiachin is released from prison in Babylon.
- **The main characters:** Elijah, Elisha, the Shunammite woman, Naaman, Jehu, Jezebel, Athaliah, Jehoiada, Joash, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Manasseh, Josiah, Huldah, Zedekiah, and Jehoiachin.
- **Its place in the Bible:** Kings explains to God's people in exile why Israel (722 BC) and Judah (586 BC) fell: they rejected the LORD and his prophets (17:7–23). It also keeps hope alive through the LORD's promise to David (8:19; 25:27–30). In the Hebrew Bible it belongs to the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings).
- **The structure (three parts):**
  - Elisha's ministry (chapters 1–8).
  - Jehu's revolt and the kings of Israel to the fall of Samaria (chapters 9–17).
  - Judah alone, from Hezekiah to the exile (chapters 18–25).
- **Why it matters:** The LORD patiently warns his people through his prophets, shows mercy again and again, and keeps a lamp burning for David, yet his word of judgment comes true when Israel and Judah refuse to turn. Exile is not the end: the book closes with David's heir alive at the king's table, pointing to Jesus, the Son of David.

How This 8-Week Study Works

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, each week of 2 Kings invites you to walk through the story of the prophets and kings together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's chapters inside the structure of 2 Kings and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV. 2 Kings includes war, sieges, assassinations, and violent judgments. The study retells

those scenes briefly in its own words rather than printing or reading them in full, so the group can understand what happened without dwelling on graphic detail.

Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through 2 Kings:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

The 8-Week 2 Kings Study at a Glance

Week	Title & Passage	Movement 1 / Movement 2	Canonical Horizon
1	**From Elijah to Elisha** (1:1–3:27)	Elijah's Last Word and His Departure (1:1–2:18) / Elisha's First Signs and the Moabite War (2:19–3:27)	The Spirit poured out and the prophet greater than Elijah
2	**Mercy for the Least Expected** (4:1–5:27)	Elisha's Works of Mercy (4:1–44) / Naaman Healed and Gehazi's Greed (5:1–27)	Jesus cleanses lepers and welcomes outsiders
3	**Chariots of Fire and a City Under Siege** (6:1–8:29)	Horses and Chariots of Fire (6:1–23) / Famine, Siege, and the Word Fulfilled (6:24–8:29)	The unseen armies of God and the good news that must be shared
4	**Jehu's Sword and Joash's Crown** (9:1–11:21)	Jehu's Revolt (9:1–10:36) / Athaliah and the Hidden King (11:1–21)	The hidden King preserved and the true Son of David crowned
5	**Repair, Decline, and Undeserved Mercy** (12:1–14:29)	Joash's Repairs and Elisha's Death (12:1–13:25) / Amaziah, Jeroboam II, and the LORD's Compassion (14:1–29)	Grace to the undeserving
6	**The Fall of Samaria** (15:1–17:41)	Kings in Quick Succession (15:1–16:20) / Why Israel Fell (17:1–41)	The Good Shepherd who gathers scattered Israel
7	**Trust Under Siege** (18:1–21:26)	Hezekiah, Sennacherib, and the LORD's Deliverance (18:1–19:37) / Hezekiah's Illness and Manasseh's Evil (20:1–21:26)	The King who trusts the Father and the God who alone saves
8	**The Book Found and the City Lost** (22:1–25:30)	Josiah's Reform (22:1–23:30) / The Fall of Jerusalem (23:31–25:30)	The Word that exposes and restores, and the Son of David lifted from exile

Scripture Scope: 2 Kings 1:1–3:27 • **Focal Group Readings:** 2 Kings 1:1–4; 1:13–17; 2:1–15; 2:19–22; 3:9–20 (ESV) • **Session Pacing:** 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

Opening: From Elijah to Elisha (2 Kings 1:1–3:27)

Passage **2 Kings 1:1–3:27**

Opening

Ahab is dead, and his son Ahaziah falls through a window and lies injured. Instead of turning to the LORD, he sends messengers to ask a Philistine god whether he will recover. Elijah meets them with a piercing question: is there no God in Israel? Then Elijah's work on earth comes to an end.

He walks one last journey with his faithful successor Elisha, parts the Jordan with his cloak, and is taken up by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha picks up the fallen cloak, strikes the water, and asks, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" The waters part. The LORD's work goes on.

Week 1 At a Glance

Scripture Scope	2 Kings 1:1–3:27 (Ahaziah's appeal to Baal-zebub, Elijah's last word, Elijah taken up, Elisha's first signs, and the war against Moab)
Focal Passages	2 Kings 1:1–4; 1:13–17; 2:1–15; 2:19–22; 3:9–20
Literary & Structural Anchor	The question "Is there no God in Israel?" (1:3, 6, 16) frames the whole book. Parting the Jordan recalls the Red Sea and Joshua's crossing, and Elisha follows Elijah as Joshua followed Moses. Elijah's cloak passes to Elisha (2:13), the same cloak first thrown on him at his call (1 Kings 19:19). The double portion is the firstborn's share (Deuteronomy 21:17). The prophet, not the army, is Israel's real defense (2:12; 13:14).
Big Idea	The LORD alone gives life and speaks through his prophets, and his work continues when one servant passes the cloak to the next.

Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD **Know the Story:** Understand Elijah's last confrontation, his departure, Elisha's succession, and Elisha's first signs.

HEART **Seek the Living God:** Turn to the LORD, not to substitutes, and trust that his work continues beyond any one servant.

HANDS **Seek and Carry On:** Take one concrete step to seek the LORD first in a need, or to carry forward the faith you received from others.

Opening Frame: Is There No God in Israel?

1 Kings ended with Ahab dead, just as the LORD's word had said, and his son Ahaziah on Israel's throne, serving Baal as his father had (1 Kings 22:37–38, 51–53). 2 Kings picks up with that same Ahaziah and that same prophet, Elijah. When the injured king sends messengers to a foreign god for answers, Elijah meets them with a piercing question. Then Elijah's long ministry comes to an end. He walks one last journey with his faithful successor Elisha, is taken up by a whirlwind into heaven, and leaves his cloak behind. Elisha picks it up, strikes the Jordan, and the LORD's work goes on through a new servant. The question for this week: when life is on the line, whom will we seek, and what will we carry forward? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question): Think of a mentor, parent, or teacher whose influence on you continued after they were gone. What did they pass on to you?

Section 1.2

Historical & Literary Context: Prophets and Kings (2 Kings 1:1–3:27)

Passage 2 Kings 1:1–3:27

Entering the World of Elijah's Final Days

1. Historical Background

Ahaziah, Ahab's son, reigns briefly in Israel and is followed by his brother Jehoram (also called Joram). Jehoshaphat still reigns in Judah. Moab, ruled by King Mesha, rebels against Israel after Ahab's death.

2. Cultural Setting

Baal-zebub ("lord of the fly") was probably a mocking twist on Baal-zebul ("Baal the prince"), the god of the Philistine city of Ekron, consulted for healing. The "sons of the prophets" were communities of prophets gathered around a leader. A prophet's cloak symbolized his office and authority.

3. Literary Structure of 2 Kings 1:1–3:27

- **Ahaziah seeks Baal-zebub** (1:1–4)
- **Fire and mercy** (1:5–16)
- **Ahaziah dies** (1:17–18)
- **The last journey** (2:1–8)
- **A double portion** (2:9–10)
- **The whirlwind** (2:11–12)
- **The cloak and the Jordan** (2:13–18)
- **Water healed** (2:19–22)
- **The young men at Bethel** (2:23–25)
- **War against Moab** (3:1–12)
- **Water in the valley** (3:13–20)
- **Victory and a terrible end** (3:21–27)

4. Key Themes

Whom will we seek? The LORD backs his messenger; succession and continuity; the word that brings life and judgment.

5. Theological Considerations

The LORD, not Baal, holds life and death, water and victory. His power rests on his prophets by his Spirit, not by their own strength.

6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

The Moabite Stone, found in 1868, records Mesha's revolt against Israel and credits his god Chemosh, confirming the setting of chapter 3.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

1.2 Q1: Ahaziah was the son of Ahab and Jezebel. Why do you think he turned so quickly to a foreign god when he was hurt?

1.2 Q2: The question "Is there no God in Israel?" comes three times in chapter 1. What would that question sound like if it were asked of us today?

1.2 Q3: Elisha's succession recalls Joshua following Moses. Why do you think the LORD provides for the passing on of leadership among his people?

Section 1.3

Movement 1: Elijah's Last Word and His Departure (2 Kings 1:1–2:18)

Passage **2 Kings 1:1–2:18**

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: 2 Kings 1:1–4** (focal passage) — Ahaziah, injured, sends to Baal-zebub, and the angel of the LORD sends Elijah to meet his messengers.
- **Summary of 2 Kings 1:5–12** — The king sent a captain with fifty soldiers to seize Elijah, and fire came down from heaven and consumed them. A second captain and his fifty met the same end.
- **Reader 2: 2 Kings 1:13–17** (focal passage) — The third captain pleads humbly for his life; Elijah goes with him, gives the king the LORD's word, and Ahaziah dies.
- **Reader 3: 2 Kings 1:18–2:15** (focal passage) — Elijah's last journey, the double portion, the whirlwind, and Elisha parting the Jordan with Elijah's cloak.
- **Summary of 2 Kings 2:16–18** — The prophets at Jericho insisted on sending fifty men to search for Elijah, and after three days they found nothing.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **2 Kings 1:3:** But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?'"
>
> **2 Kings 2:9:** When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me."
>
> **2 Kings 2:11:** And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.
>
> **2 Kings 2:12:** And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.
>
> **2 Kings 2:14:** Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.
>
> **2 Kings 2:15:** Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.

Teaching Narrative: The Word, the Whirlwind, and the Cloak

1. Is There No God in Israel? (2 Kings 1:1–4)

The king of Israel seeks a Philistine god for healing. Elijah's question exposes his unbelief.

2. Fire and Mercy (2 Kings 1:5–16)

Two captains come with contempt and are consumed; the third comes humbly and is spared.

3. According to the Word (2 Kings 1:17–18)

Ahaziah dies as the LORD said.

4. I Will Not Leave You (2 Kings 2:1–8)

At each stop Elijah tells Elisha to stay behind, and three times Elisha refuses. Elijah parts the Jordan with his cloak.

5. A Double Portion (2 Kings 2:9–10)

Elisha asks to be Elijah's true heir, the firstborn of his ministry.

6. My Father, My Father! (2 Kings 2:11–12)

Chariots and horses of fire separate them, and Elijah goes up by a whirlwind. Elisha grieves.

7. Where Is the LORD? (2 Kings 2:13–18)

Elisha takes up the cloak, strikes the water, and the LORD answers. The prophets recognize that Elijah's spirit rests on Elisha.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

1.3 Q1: The angel of the LORD sent Elijah to ask, "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?" (1:3). What substitutes for God do people turn to in a crisis?

1.3 Q2: The first two captains came with orders; the third came pleading for his life (1:13–14). What made the difference between them?

1.3 Q3: Three times Elijah told Elisha to stay behind, and three times Elisha refused to leave him (2:2, 4, 6). What does Elisha's persistence teach about faithfulness?

1.3 Q4: Elisha asked, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me" (2:9). Why do you think he asked for this instead of anything else?

1.3 Q5: After Elijah was gone, Elisha struck the water and asked, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" (2:14). What does this moment teach about continuing in faith after a leader is gone?

Section 1.4

Movement 2: Elisha's First Signs and the Moabite War (2 Kings 2:19–3:27)

Passage 2 Kings 2:19–3:27

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: 2 Kings 2:19–22** (focal passage) — Elisha throws salt into Jericho's spring, and the LORD heals the water.

- **Summary of 2 Kings 2:23–25** — As Elisha went up to Bethel, a crowd of young men came out and jeered at him. He cursed them in the name of the LORD, and two bears came out of the woods and mauled many of them.
- **Summary of 2 Kings 3:1–8** — Jehoram became king of Israel. When Mesha king of Moab rebelled, Jehoram joined with Jehoshaphat of Judah and the king of Edom to march against him, taking a long route through the wilderness.
- **Reader 2: 2 Kings 3:9–20** (focal passage) — The armies run out of water; Jehoshaphat asks for a prophet of the LORD, and Elisha promises that the dry streambed will fill with water, and it does.
- **Summary of 2 Kings 3:21–27** — Moab attacked and was routed, and Israel overran the land. In desperation, Mesha offered his eldest son as a sacrifice on the city wall. Great wrath came against Israel, and they withdrew to their own land.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **2 Kings 2:21:** Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, "Thus says the LORD, I have healed this water; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it."
>
> **2 Kings 3:17:** For thus says the LORD, 'You shall not see wind or rain, but that streambed shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, you, your livestock, and your animals.'

Teaching Narrative: The Spirit at Work and a War in Moab

1. Life for a City (2 Kings 2:19–22)

Jericho, once under a curse (Joshua 6:26), receives healed water by the LORD's word.

2. Contempt for the LORD's Word (2 Kings 2:23–25)

Young men jeer at the LORD's prophet, and judgment follows.

3. An Alliance in Trouble (2 Kings 3:1–12)

Three kings march into the wilderness and run out of water; Jehoshaphat insists on inquiring of the LORD.

4. Water Without Wind or Rain (2 Kings 3:13–20)

For Jehoshaphat's sake, Elisha announces that the LORD will fill the dry streambed, and it happens at the hour of the morning offering.

5. Victory and a Terrible End (2 Kings 3:21–27)

Moab is routed, but Mesha's desperate act ends the campaign.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

> **1.4 Q1:** Elisha said, "Thus says the LORD, I have healed this water" (2:21). Why is it important that the healing came from the LORD's word and not from the salt?

1.4 Q2: Elisha's first two signs brought life to a city and judgment on those who mocked the LORD's prophet. What does this teach about how seriously God takes his word?

1.4 Q3: When the armies ran out of water, Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, through whom we may inquire of the LORD?" (3:11). Why do people often seek God only after they are in trouble?

1.4 Q4: The LORD promised, "You shall not see wind or rain, but that streambed shall be filled with water" (3:17). How does God sometimes provide in ways we would never expect?

1.4 Q5: Elisha helped the kings only for Jehoshaphat's sake (3:14). What does this say about the influence of one faithful person among others?

Section 1.5

Canonical Horizon: The Spirit Poured Out and the Prophet Greater Than Elijah

Passage 2 Kings 2:9

Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

Elijah's departure and the passing of his spirit to Elisha point forward to Jesus, who ascended to the Father and poured out his Spirit on his people, and who came not to call down fire but to save. Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

1. Not Fire, but Salvation (Luke 9:54–56)

When James and John wanted to call down fire like Elijah, Jesus rebuked them; he came to save.

2. Ascension and the Spirit (Acts 1:8–11; 2:1–4, 33)

As Elijah ascended and Elisha received his spirit, Jesus ascended and poured out the Holy Spirit on his followers, who carry on his work.

3. Heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17)

Elisha asked for the firstborn's share; believers are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

4. In Elijah's Spirit and Power (Luke 1:17)

John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for Jesus, whose ministry of healing and life far exceeded Elisha's.

Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **2 Kings 2:9:** When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.”

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

1.5 Q1: Jesus refused to call down fire on a village that rejected him (Luke 9:54–56). What does this show about how Jesus fulfills and goes beyond Elijah's ministry?

1.5 Q2: Jesus told his followers, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8). How is Elisha receiving Elijah's spirit a picture of what Jesus gives his church?

1.5 Q3: Paul says believers are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17). What does it mean for you to be an heir with Christ?

Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	When Ahaziah sought a foreign god, the LORD confronted him through Elijah; then Elijah was taken up, and his spirit rested on Elisha, whose first signs showed the LORD's word bringing life and judgment.
HEART	There is a God in Israel. Jesus ascended and poured out his Spirit, and we are heirs with him.
HANDS	Faith seeks the LORD first, stays faithful in transitions, and carries forward what it has received.

Section 1.6

Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

1.6 Q1: In what current need are you tempted to seek help everywhere except from the LORD?

1.6 Q2: What faith or example have you received from someone else that you need to carry forward?

1.6 Q3: Who is following your example in faith, and how can you invest in them this week?

Looking Ahead to Next Week

Recap: In Week 1, Elijah confronted a king who sought a foreign god, was taken up by a whirlwind, and passed his cloak to Elisha.

Transition: Elisha's ministry now begins in earnest, and much of it is mercy to people no one expected.

Week 2 Overview — Mercy for the Least Expected (2 Kings 4:1–5:27): Movement 1, Elisha's Works of Mercy (4:1–44), covers a widow's oil, a Shunammite woman's son, and food for the hungry. Movement 2, Naaman Healed and Gehazi's Greed (5:1–27), covers a foreign commander healed in the Jordan and a servant's greed exposed. The Canonical Horizon traces how Jesus cleanses lepers and welcomes outsiders.

Focal Readings to Preview

- 2 Kings 4:1–17
- 2 Kings 4:32–44
- 2 Kings 5:1–19

My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

Closing Group Prayer

Living God, you alone hold life and death in your hands, and there is no one like you. Forgive us for the times we seek help everywhere but from you. Thank you for the parents, mentors, and teachers who walked with us and passed their faith on to us. Comfort any here who are grieving a mentor, a parent, or a friend who has gone before them. Thank you for Jesus, who ascended to your right hand and poured out your Spirit on his people. Give us faithfulness to pick up the work you have entrusted to us and to carry it forward. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.