

# ELISHA'S PROPHETIC MODEL: LESSONS FOR CONTEMPORARY CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN OGUN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines Elisha's prophetic ministry within the Elijah–Elisha narrative as a theological and leadership framework for understanding contemporary church leadership within the Ogun Baptist Conference. It asks: What leadership principles can be derived from Elisha's prophetic model, and how can they inform church leadership practice and understanding in contemporary Baptist contexts? The study adopts a qualitative, desk-based design relying on biblical texts (2 Kings 2–7) and relevant scholarly literature in biblical theology, leadership studies, and African ecclesial research. Thematic analysis is used to examine Elisha's leadership across five dimensions: succession, transformational intervention, ethical accountability, communal responsibility, and integration of spiritual and practical leadership. The analysis suggests that Elisha's ministry presents a relational and mentorship-based model of leadership continuity that challenges purely administrative succession systems. It further demonstrates that his leadership is transformational, addressing material and social crises through practical intervention. Ethical integrity emerges as central to prophetic authority, particularly in resisting the commodification of spiritual power. In addition, Elisha's leadership is shown to be strongly communal in orientation, prioritizing collective restoration over individual benefit, while simultaneously integrating spiritual authority with practical problem-solving. The study concludes that Elisha's prophetic model offers a coherent framework for evaluating and strengthening church leadership in the Ogun Baptist Conference.

**Keywords:** Prophetic leadership, Elisha, succession, ethics, communal responsibility, Old Testament theology.

## Introduction

Contemporary Christian leadership faces increasing challenges relating to ethical credibility, leadership succession, institutional sustainability, ministerial accountability, and congregational transformation. Across many church traditions, concerns have been raised regarding leadership failures, inadequate mentorship structures, declining spiritual discipline, and the growing emphasis on personality-driven ministry (Kretzschmar 17-27; Ciulla 13-27). These developments have generated renewed scholarly interest in biblical leadership models that can provide theological and practical guidance for contemporary church leaders. Within the Old Testament, prophetic leadership occupies a significant position in the religious and social life of Israel. Prophets functioned not only as messengers of divine revelation but also as moral reformers, community advocates, and agents of covenantal accountability (Heschel 3-19; Blenkinsopp 23-41). Their ministries addressed spiritual, social, political, and ethical issues affecting the covenant community. Among the prophetic figures of the Old Testament, Elisha represents a distinctive model of leadership characterized by mentorship, succession planning, community engagement, ethical integrity, and transformational influence (Simmons 49-67). The narratives concerning Elisha in 2 Kings portray a leader whose ministry extended beyond prophetic proclamation to practical intervention in the lives of individuals, communities, and national institutions. Through his interactions with the sons of the prophets, political leaders, vulnerable families, and wider society, Elisha demonstrated a leadership style that combined spiritual authority with service, compassion, and organizational continuity (Brueggemann 6-23; Rice 1-5). His ministry therefore provides an important biblical framework for examining contemporary leadership challenges within Christian ministry.

Recent studies have highlighted growing concerns regarding leadership practices within contemporary Christianity, particularly in African contexts. Scholars have identified challenges such as ministerial commercialization, leadership excesses, weak accountability structures, poor succession planning, and ethical failures that undermine the effectiveness of church leadership (Ngwoke 1-8; Abolaji and Ajide 85-101; Agazue 1-16). These concerns underscore the need to recover biblical models of leadership capable of promoting integrity, sustainability, and transformational ministry. Despite the growing body of literature on prophetic leadership, limited scholarly attention has been devoted specifically to Elisha's leadership model as a framework for contemporary church leadership. Existing studies often focus on prophetic authority, miracles, or succession narratives without systematically examining the broader leadership principles embedded within Elisha's ministry (Barstad 39-60; Pugh 125-142). Consequently, there remains a gap in scholarship regarding how Elisha's prophetic model can inform contemporary ecclesiastical leadership and leadership development. This study examines Elisha's prophetic model and explores its implications for contemporary church leadership. Through a qualitative analysis of relevant biblical texts and scholarly literature, the study identifies key leadership principles reflected in Elisha's ministry and evaluates their relevance for contemporary Christian leaders. Particular attention is given to themes of leadership succession, transformational leadership, ethical accountability, community engagement, spiritual authority, and practical service. The study contributes to biblical leadership scholarship by providing a theological analysis of Elisha's ministry as a model for contemporary leadership practice. It also contributes to ongoing discussions on church leadership, ministerial formation, and leadership sustainability within contemporary Christianity.

## Statement of the Problem

Leadership remains one of the most critical factors influencing the effectiveness, sustainability, and credibility of Christian ministry. However, contemporary churches increasingly face challenges associated with leadership succession, ethical misconduct, inadequate mentorship, declining accountability, and institutional instability. These challenges have raised questions concerning the adequacy of existing leadership models and the need for biblically grounded approaches to leadership development. Although numerous studies have examined leadership from managerial, organizational, and ecclesiastical perspectives, comparatively little attention has been given to the leadership dimensions embedded within the ministry of Elisha. Existing scholarship frequently emphasizes Elisha's miracles and prophetic authority while paying less attention to his role as a mentor, community leader, ethical reformer, and successor to Elijah. This gap is particularly significant because the Elisha narratives contain important insights regarding leadership continuity, spiritual formation, social responsibility, and organizational sustainability. Without a clear understanding of these leadership principles, contemporary church leaders may overlook valuable biblical resources for addressing present leadership challenges. The problem addressed by this study, therefore, is the insufficient scholarly exploration of Elisha's prophetic model as a framework for understanding and strengthening contemporary church leadership.

## Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine Elisha's prophetic model and evaluate its relevance for contemporary church leadership.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the nature and characteristics of Elisha's prophetic leadership as presented in 2 Kings.
2. Identify key leadership principles embedded within Elisha's ministry.
3. Analyse how Elisha's leadership model informs contemporary church leadership understanding and practice.

## Research Questions

1. What are the major characteristics of Elisha's prophetic leadership model?
2. What leadership principles emerge from the ministry of Elisha?
3. How does Elisha's leadership model contribute to and inform contemporary church leadership practice and understanding?

## Literature Review

### Prophetic Leadership

The concept of prophetic leadership has attracted considerable scholarly attention within biblical studies, leadership theory, and contemporary ecclesiology. In biblical tradition, prophetic leadership refers to leadership exercised under divine commissioning and characterized by moral courage, spiritual discernment, social critique, and covenantal accountability. Unlike secular leadership models that often emphasize organizational efficiency and hierarchical control, prophetic leadership is fundamentally rooted in divine purpose, ethical transformation, and communal wellbeing. Brueggemann argues that prophetic leadership functions as an instrument of "counter-imagination," challenging dominant social systems and confronting structures of injustice through moral and theological critique (Brueggemann 6–8). This understanding positions prophetic leaders as transformative agents who call communities back to divine standards of justice, righteousness, and faithfulness. Similarly, Birch describes prophetic leadership as the recovery of moral responsibility within religious and social institutions, emphasizing that prophetic leaders serve as custodians of ethical consciousness within society (Birch 11–15).

Within Christian leadership studies, prophetic leadership is increasingly associated with ethical and transformational leadership paradigms. Kretzschmar 17-27 maintains that prophetic leadership is essential for sustainable leadership because it confronts moral compromise, promotes accountability, and nurtures spiritual formation among leaders and followers alike (Kretzschmar 17-27). This perspective is particularly relevant in African church contexts where leadership crises, corruption, and institutional instability continue to challenge ecclesiastical credibility. Nullens also emphasizes that prophetic leadership generates justice and responsible leadership through discernment, spiritual maturity, and ethical engagement with society (Nullens 75–96). Contemporary leadership scholarship further reinforces the importance of moral and spiritual dimensions in leadership effectiveness. Reave's study on spiritual values and leadership effectiveness demonstrates that qualities such as integrity, humility, compassion, and honesty significantly enhance organizational leadership outcomes (Reave 655–687). These perspectives align closely with biblical models of prophetic leadership where leadership authority is derived not merely from institutional office but from character, spiritual credibility, and commitment to communal welfare.

African theological scholarship has also contributed significantly to the discourse on prophetic leadership. Ishola-Esan and Olabode argue that prophetic leadership provides contextual strategies for transformational change by integrating vision, ethical guidance, and spiritual authority within institutional administration (Ishola-Esan and Olabode 15–27). In the Nigerian context, prophetic leadership is often viewed as a response to social decay, political instability, and moral decline. However, scholars also caution against distortions of prophetic leadership through commercialization, authoritarianism, and spiritual manipulation. Owojaiye observes that false prophetic practices in Africa have undermined the credibility of authentic prophetic ministry by prioritizing personal gain over ethical responsibility (Owojaiye 6).

### **Prophetic Leadership in the Old Testament**

The Old Testament presents prophetic leadership as a divinely instituted office central to Israel's covenantal relationship with God. Prophets functioned as intermediaries between God and the people, communicating divine will concerning spiritual, political, social, and ethical matters. Unlike kings and priests whose offices were often hereditary or institutionally structured, prophetic authority was rooted primarily in divine calling and spiritual empowerment. Heschel's classical study on the prophets remains foundational in understanding Old Testament prophetic ministry. According to Heschel, prophets were individuals deeply sensitive to divine pathos and profoundly concerned with justice, righteousness, and covenantal fidelity (Heschel 3–19). Their ministries were characterized not merely by prediction but by ethical confrontation and social transformation. Similarly, Blenkinsopp situates prophecy within Israel's socio-political history, arguing that prophets played critical roles in shaping Israel's religious consciousness and communal identity (Blenkinsopp 23–41).

Old Testament prophetic leadership also involved confronting political authorities and challenging societal corruption. Nathan confronted King David over his abuse of power (2 Sam. 12:1–7), while Amos condemned economic exploitation and religious hypocrisy within Israel (Amos 5:21–24). Akande's Nigerian-contextual analysis of Amos 5:21–24 emphasizes that prophetic leadership must challenge empty religiosity and social injustice within contemporary society rather than merely promoting ritualistic spirituality (Akande 1–6). Likewise, Awojobi and Adesina observe that prophetic conflict in ancient Israel often emerged from tensions between authentic prophetic voices and institutional or political powers resistant to divine correction (Awojobi and Adesina 185–193). The prophetic office also incorporated dimensions of mentorship

and succession. The relationship between Elijah and Elisha particularly demonstrates intentional leadership transfer and continuity within prophetic ministry. Rice argues that Elijah's prophetic leadership involved rigorous preparation, spiritual discipline, and transmission of prophetic responsibility to Elisha (Rice 1–5). Simmons further interprets the Elijah–Elisha succession narrative as a biblical model for sustainable leadership continuity and institutional stability within ministry contexts (Simmons 49-67).

### **Elisha's Prophetic Ministry and Leadership Model**

Elisha occupies a significant place within Old Testament prophetic history because of the multidimensional nature of his ministry. His prophetic activities extended beyond spiritual proclamation into areas of social welfare, political intervention, economic relief, healing, mentorship, and national guidance. The Elijah–Elisha succession narrative in 2 Kings 2 demonstrates the importance of mentorship, spiritual inheritance, and continuity in leadership. Elisha's request for a "double portion" of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:9) symbolizes not greed for power but desire for spiritual empowerment necessary for effective ministry continuity. Simmons 49-67 interprets this narrative as evidence of intentional succession planning rooted in spiritual formation and relational mentorship (Simmons 49-67). Elisha's ministry further reveals strong dimensions of servant and transformational leadership. Unlike models of leadership based on domination or self-promotion, Elisha consistently used prophetic authority for communal wellbeing and restoration. His interventions in cases involving famine, debt, poisoned food, military crises, and healing illustrate a leadership model responsive to practical human needs (2 Kings 4–6). Awojobi and Adesina describe prophetic ministry in the Elijah–Elisha tradition as an instrument of community development and social transformation because it engages directly with societal suffering and communal restoration (Awojobi and Adesina 185-193). Furthermore, Elisha's relationship with the "sons of the prophets" demonstrates intentional leadership development and institutional continuity within prophetic ministry. This aspect of Elisha's leadership is especially relevant within contemporary church contexts where succession crises and leadership discontinuity frequently undermine organizational stability. Westphal notes that prophetic leadership contributes to resilient organizations when leadership functions are balanced with mentorship, accountability, and role differentiation (Westphal 139–151).

### **Leadership Challenges in Contemporary Nigerian Christianity**

Contemporary Nigerian Christianity has witnessed significant growth, particularly within Pentecostal and charismatic movements. However, this expansion has also generated increasing concerns regarding leadership ethics, accountability, commercialization, and spiritual abuse. Scholars observe that some church leaders increasingly function within celebrity-oriented leadership cultures characterized by authoritarianism, materialism, and personality-centered ministry. Abolaji and Ajide identify prophetic ministry in Nigeria as a rapidly expanding religious enterprise often associated with commercialization, manipulation, and exploitative spiritual practices (Abolaji and Ajide 85-101). Similarly, Ngwoke's study on Pentecostal churches in Port Harcourt documents concerns relating to prophetic extortion, commercialization of spirituality, and exploitative leadership practices within some church contexts (Ngwoke 1-8). These studies suggest that leadership within contemporary Nigerian Christianity is increasingly confronted with ethical and theological tensions requiring critical reflection and reform.

Ademiluka also critiques the growing quest for miracles within Nigerian Christianity, arguing that economic hardship and social insecurity have contributed to increased dependence on miracle-centered spirituality and personality-driven leadership (Ademiluka 1-8). This environment often creates opportunities for leadership manipulation and unhealthy spiritual dependency among

congregants. Leadership toxicity has equally emerged as an important concern in both religious and organizational studies. Simmons defines toxic leadership as leadership behavior that negatively affects followers through manipulation, abuse of authority, and unethical conduct. Ciulla similarly warns that leadership without moral accountability often degenerates into exploitation and institutional dysfunction (Ciulla 13–27). Within church contexts, such leadership patterns undermine spiritual credibility and organizational sustainability. In response to these challenges, scholars increasingly advocate for recovery of ethical, servant-oriented, and prophetic leadership models grounded in biblical principles. Kretzschmar argues that moral formation and spiritual disciplines are essential for developing authentic Christian leaders capable of resisting corruption and ethical compromise (Kretzschmar 17-27). Gill and Negrov likewise emphasize that love, compassion, and moral influence are indispensable dimensions of healthy leadership within Christian communities (Gill and Negrov 29–56).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the theory of Prophetic Leadership, complemented by the biblical-theological understanding of prophetic ministry as reflected in the life and ministry of Elisha. Prophetic leadership provides an appropriate framework for examining how spiritual leadership can influence organizational transformation, ethical conduct, and institutional renewal within contemporary church contexts. The framework is particularly relevant because the study seeks to evaluate Elisha’s prophetic model and its implications for contemporary church leadership in the Ogun Baptist Conference. Prophetic leadership refers to a form of leadership that combines divine vision, moral courage, ethical accountability, and transformational influence. Unlike authoritarian or purely administrative leadership models, prophetic leadership emphasizes discernment, justice, spiritual integrity, and commitment to communal well-being. Louise Kretzschmar argues that prophetic leadership is fundamentally ethical and transformative, as it challenges corruption, injustice, and moral failure while promoting responsible and sustainable leadership practices (Kretzschmar 17-27). This understanding aligns with the biblical role of prophets who served not merely as predictors of future events but as agents of reform, accountability, and covenantal faithfulness.

The Old Testament prophetic tradition provides the theological basis for this framework. Prophets such as Elijah and Elisha functioned as divinely commissioned leaders who confronted political corruption, guided national affairs, mentored successors, and demonstrated spiritual authority grounded in obedience to God. Walter Brueggemann describes prophetic leadership as the capacity to nurture an alternative moral imagination capable of challenging oppressive systems and inspiring transformative change (Brueggemann 6–23). Within this perspective, prophetic leaders do not simply preserve institutional structures but call communities toward renewal, justice, and faithfulness. The study particularly draws from the prophetic model of Elisha as presented in the Books of Kings. Elisha’s ministry demonstrates several leadership dimensions relevant to contemporary church administration, including mentorship, succession planning, compassion-oriented leadership, spiritual discernment, crisis intervention, and community development. Simmons argues that the transition from Elijah to Elisha represents an intentional process of prophetic succession that ensured continuity of mission and leadership stability (Simmons 49-67). Similarly, the Elijah–Elisha prophetic tradition reflects a leadership model that integrates spiritual authority with communal responsibility and transformational engagement.

This framework also incorporates transformational leadership principles. Transformational leadership emphasizes the leader’s ability to inspire followers toward higher moral commitment, shared vision, and organizational change. Ishola-Esan and Olabode maintain

that prophetic leadership within educational and religious institutions can serve as a contextual strategy for transformational change by fostering integrity, accountability, and visionary leadership (Ishola-Esan and Olabode 15–27). The relevance of this perspective to church leadership in Nigeria is significant, particularly within contexts where churches face challenges related to moral decline, leadership crises, commercialization of ministry, and institutional instability. Furthermore, the framework recognizes that prophetic leadership must be balanced with ethical accountability and servant leadership principles. Reave notes that spiritual values such as integrity, humility, compassion, and self-discipline are strongly connected to leadership effectiveness (Reave 655–687). In the same vein, Pugh argues that biblical leadership rejects exploitative hierarchies and instead promotes leadership characterized by service and communal responsibility (Pugh 125–142). These insights are particularly important in evaluating contemporary prophetic leadership within Nigerian Christianity, where concerns regarding abuse of authority and commercialization of ministry have become increasingly prominent. The theoretical implication of this framework is that effective church leadership should not be understood merely in administrative or managerial terms but also in spiritual, ethical, and transformational dimensions. By applying prophetic leadership theory to Elisha’s ministry, this study provides a framework for assessing how biblical prophetic values can contribute to leadership effectiveness, organizational stability, mentorship, ethical accountability, and transformational change within the Ogun Baptist Conference.

### **Theoretical Gap and Relevance of the Study**

Existing scholarship on prophetic leadership has provided significant insights into biblical prophecy, transformational leadership, ethical leadership, and African Christianity. Studies such as those by Heschel, Blenkinsopp, Brueggemann, and Kretzschmar have explored prophetic leadership from theological and ethical perspectives, while contemporary African scholars have examined the challenges and opportunities associated with prophetic ministry within modern church contexts. However, limited scholarly attention has been given specifically to Elisha’s prophetic model as a framework for evaluating and strengthening leadership within Baptist church contexts in Nigeria. Many studies focus either on general prophetic theology or on Pentecostal prophetic practices without sufficiently examining how Old Testament prophetic leadership models can contribute to contemporary denominational leadership structures. Furthermore, while leadership challenges within Nigerian Christianity have been extensively discussed, fewer studies engage the relevance of prophetic mentorship, succession planning, servant leadership, and community-oriented ministry within Baptist ecclesiology. This study therefore seeks to bridge this gap by examining Elisha’s prophetic leadership model and its implications for church leaders within the Ogun Baptist Conference. By integrating biblical theology, prophetic leadership theory, and contemporary leadership scholarship, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on ethical leadership, spiritual formation, mentorship, and sustainable ministry within African Christianity.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative desk-research design utilizing historical-biblical analysis and documentary review. The study is non-empirical in nature and relies exclusively on secondary data sources. Rather than collecting primary data from church leaders, congregants, or denominational officials, the research examines biblical texts and relevant scholarly literature to explore the leadership dimensions of Elisha’s prophetic ministry and their implications for contemporary church leadership. A historical-biblical approach is employed to examine the ministry, leadership practices, and prophetic activities of Elisha as recorded primarily in the Books of 1 Kings and 2 Kings. Particular attention is given to biblical narratives relating to leadership

succession, mentorship, community engagement, ethical accountability, crisis intervention, and spiritual authority. These texts are interpreted within their historical, literary, and theological contexts to identify key leadership themes embedded in Elisha's ministry.

In addition, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical documentary approach to review relevant scholarly literature on prophetic leadership, transformational leadership, ethical leadership, servant leadership, church administration, and leadership development. Sources consulted include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, theological commentaries, dissertations, conference papers, and other scholarly publications. Particular attention is given to works by Brueggemann, Kretzschmar, Reave, Simmons, Awojobi, Ishola-Esan and Olabode, and other scholars whose studies contribute to contemporary understandings of prophetic and transformational leadership. Data derived from biblical texts and secondary literature were analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring leadership patterns within Elisha's ministry, including leadership succession, mentorship, ethical integrity, community service, spiritual authority, crisis management, and transformational influence. These themes were subsequently examined in relation to broader discussions of contemporary church leadership and ministerial practice.

A limitation of the study is its reliance on secondary sources and biblical texts. As a desk-based investigation, the study cannot make definitive claims regarding the actual leadership practices, experiences, or challenges of church leaders within the Ogun Baptist Conference or any other specific ecclesiastical setting. Future studies may complement this study through interviews, surveys, focus group discussions, or case studies involving Baptist pastors and church leaders in order to evaluate the practical applicability of Elisha's leadership model within contemporary ministry contexts.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

### **Research Question One: What are the Major Characteristics of Elisha's Prophetic Leadership Model?**

#### **1. Prophetic Succession and Leadership Continuity**

The analysis of the Elijah–Elisha narratives reveals that one of the most prominent characteristics of Elisha's prophetic leadership model is its emphasis on intentional succession and leadership continuity. The transition from Elijah to Elisha in 2 Kings 2:9–15 demonstrates that prophetic leadership in ancient Israel was neither accidental nor individualistic but was sustained through mentorship, spiritual formation, and deliberate transmission of leadership responsibility. Elisha's request for a "double portion" of Elijah's spirit reflects a desire for empowerment to continue the prophetic mission rather than a quest for personal prestige. Consequently, leadership continuity emerges as a defining feature of Elisha's ministry. This observation aligns with Simmons' argument that the Elijah–Elisha transition represents one of the clearest biblical examples of succession planning within a faith-based leadership context (Simmons 49-67). Rice similarly maintains that prophetic leadership in the Elijah–Elisha tradition involved the transfer of spiritual responsibility, discipline, and divine mandate across generations (Rice 1-5). The narrative therefore frames leadership development as a relational and formative process rather than a purely institutional arrangement.

A significant dimension of this continuity is mentorship. Elisha's prolonged service under Elijah highlights experiential learning, character formation, and spiritual preparation as essential leadership requirements. Awojobi emphasizes that Old Testament prophetic leadership was sustained through intentional moral and spiritual formation processes that prepared successors for effective ministry (Awojobi 207-215). This suggests that leadership continuity depends not only

on structural succession systems but also on the depth of formative relationships between leaders and protégés. In the context of contemporary Baptist ministry within the Ogun Baptist Conference, this model challenges leadership transition practices that are primarily procedural or administrative. While denominational systems provide structural order, Elisha's model emphasizes that sustainable leadership requires intentional mentoring and discipleship structures that prepare future leaders beyond formal appointment processes. Furthermore, the Elijah–Elisha transition shows that leadership legitimacy was communally affirmed. The sons of the prophets' recognition that “the spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha” (2 Kings 2:15) demonstrates that leadership authority was validated through communal discernment rather than self-assertion. Simmons notes that prophetic authority in the Old Testament was closely tied to demonstrated faithfulness and communal recognition rather than institutional designation alone (Simmons 49-67). This reinforces the importance of accountability structures within leadership transitions.

From a contemporary perspective, weak mentorship systems remain a major contributor to leadership discontinuity in many Nigerian churches. Awojobi and Adesina argue that inadequate leadership preparation frequently leads to instability and conflict within church settings (185–193). Elisha's model therefore provides a corrective framework that prioritizes long-term leadership formation over immediate replacement. Finally, Elisha's succession demonstrates mission continuity rather than personality replication. Although his leadership style differed from Elijah's, he remained committed to covenantal faithfulness, spiritual restoration, and communal service. Brueggemann 6-23 highlights that prophetic leadership sustains covenantal imagination across generations, even when leadership expressions evolve (Brueggemann 6-23 2011). Elisha thus embodies continuity of purpose rather than uniformity of method.

## **2. Transformational and Service-Oriented**

Elisha's leadership is also characterized by its transformational and service-oriented orientation. The narratives in 2 Kings 4–6 present a prophet whose ministry directly addressed human suffering, economic hardship, and communal crises. His interventions in cases of debt relief, famine response, healing, and social restoration demonstrate leadership that is both spiritually empowered and practically responsive. This aligns with Ishola-Esan and Olabode 15-27's argument that prophetic leadership functions as a contextual strategy for transformational change by integrating vision, ethical guidance, and practical intervention in institutional settings (Ishola-Esan and Olabode 15–27). Elisha's ministry reflects this integration by moving beyond proclamation to tangible societal impact. Transformational leadership theory further supports this dimension, particularly in its emphasis on inspiring change and improving collective wellbeing. Elisha's actions reflect leadership that mobilizes spiritual authority for communal restoration rather than institutional self-preservation. His engagement with vulnerable populations illustrates leadership as service rather than domination. In addition, Reave emphasizes that leadership effectiveness is strongly linked to spiritual and moral values such as integrity, humility, and compassion (Reave 655–687). Elisha's ministry consistently reflects these values through his responsiveness to human need and rejection of self-centered authority structures.

## **3. Ethical Accountability and Integrity**

Another defining characteristic of Elisha's leadership model is ethical accountability. His ministry consistently reflects resistance to corruption, rejection of material manipulation, and maintenance of moral boundaries in prophetic service. This dimension is consistent with Kretzschmar's assertion that prophetic leadership is fundamentally ethical and serves as a corrective force against corruption, injustice, and moral failure in leadership systems (Kretzschmar 17-27). Elisha's refusal of undue influence and his emphasis on obedience to divine instruction

demonstrate this ethical orientation. Ethical accountability in Elisha's model also implies that spiritual authority must be exercised with moral restraint. This contrasts with contemporary Nigerian churches where prophetic authority is sometimes commercialized or exploited for personal gain. Within Nigerian Christianity, such distortions have been widely documented as undermining trust in religious leadership structures.

#### **4. Communal Responsibility**

Elisha's leadership is deeply communal in orientation. His ministry consistently prioritizes collective wellbeing over individual advancement, reflecting a leadership ethic grounded in covenantal responsibility. The communal recognition of his authority by the sons of the prophets (2 Kings 2:15) illustrates that leadership in the prophetic tradition is embedded within community validation and participation. Simmons reinforces this by emphasizing that prophetic authority is sustained through communal recognition and demonstrated faithfulness (Simmons 49-67). Moreover, Elisha's interventions in national crises demonstrate leadership that is socially embedded rather than isolated. His actions consistently serve the broader community, reinforcing the prophetic role as a social and moral guardian.

#### **5. Spiritual Authority and Practical Leadership**

Finally, Elisha's leadership integrates spiritual authority with practical problem-solving. His ministry demonstrates that prophetic authority is not abstract but operational within everyday life challenges. Simmons emphasizes that effective leadership requires the integration of vision with adaptive execution in dynamic contexts (Simmons 49-67). Elisha embodies this by translating divine instruction into practical solutions for famine, health crises, and national instability. This integration distinguishes prophetic leadership from purely ritual or administrative forms of authority. It demonstrates that spiritual legitimacy is validated through tangible impact in human experience.

#### **Research Question Two: What Leadership Principles Emerge from the Ministry of Elisha?**

The analysis of Elisha's ministry reveals several leadership principles that remain relevant for contemporary church leadership. Beyond the characteristics of prophetic succession and continuity, the biblical narratives present practical leadership values that shaped Elisha's effectiveness and contributed to the stability of his prophetic ministry. These principles include servant leadership, transformational engagement, ethical accountability, community-centered leadership, and the integration of spiritual authority with practical action.

#### **Servant Leadership and Humility**

One of the most prominent leadership principles emerging from Elisha's ministry is servant leadership. Before assuming prophetic leadership, Elisha served Elijah faithfully and demonstrated willingness to learn through observation, obedience, and commitment (2 Kings 2:1-6). His leadership development was rooted in service rather than personal ambition. This principle aligns with Christian leadership scholarship, which emphasizes that effective leadership begins with service to others rather than the pursuit of power. Roxburgh argues that Christian leadership is fundamentally missional and community-oriented, requiring leaders to prioritize service above status (183-220). Similarly, Reave maintains that humility and selflessness are among the spiritual values most strongly associated with leadership effectiveness (655-87). The analysis suggests that Elisha's leadership authority was strengthened by his willingness to serve before leading. For contemporary Baptist leaders within the Ogun Baptist Conference, this principle highlights the importance of viewing leadership as stewardship rather than privilege. Ministers who approach leadership from a servant perspective are often better positioned to build trust, encourage participation, and sustain healthy congregational relationships.

### **Transformational and Solution-Oriented Leadership**

A second principle emerging from Elisha's ministry is transformational leadership. Throughout his prophetic career, Elisha consistently responded to situations requiring intervention, restoration, and practical solutions. Whether addressing contaminated water in Jericho (2 Kings 2:19–22), assisting a widow facing economic hardship (2 Kings 4:1–7), or responding to famine conditions (2 Kings 4:42–44), his leadership focused on producing positive change within communities. Brueggemann describes prophetic leadership as the capacity to challenge existing conditions and create alternative possibilities for renewal (6–23). In a similar manner, Ishola-Esan and Olabode argue that prophetic leadership contributes to institutional transformation by promoting vision, accountability, and constructive change (15–27). The analysis demonstrates that Elisha did not exercise leadership merely through proclamation but through practical engagement with human needs. This principle challenges contemporary church leaders to move beyond administrative maintenance toward transformational ministry that addresses social, spiritual, and developmental concerns within their communities. For Baptist churches in Ogun State, such an approach may include educational support, community outreach, poverty alleviation initiatives, and youth empowerment programmes.

### **Ethical Accountability and Integrity**

Another important leadership principle emerging from Elisha's ministry is ethical accountability. The narrative concerning Gehazi's deception and unauthorized acceptance of gifts from Naaman (2 Kings 5:20–27) illustrates Elisha's uncompromising commitment to integrity. His response demonstrates that spiritual authority must be governed by ethical responsibility. Ciulla argues that leadership is fundamentally a moral activity and that ethical failure undermines leadership legitimacy. Likewise, Kretzschmar contends that prophetic leadership must be grounded in justice, accountability, and moral credibility (17-27). The analysis indicates that Elisha understood leadership authority as inseparable from personal integrity. This principle is particularly relevant within contemporary Nigerian Christianity, where concerns regarding financial accountability, ministerial ethics, and leadership transparency continue to attract scholarly attention. For Baptist leaders, ethical accountability remains essential for maintaining congregational trust and preserving the credibility of ministry.

### **Community-Oriented Leadership**

The ministry of Elisha also demonstrates a strong commitment to communal welfare. His prophetic interventions consistently addressed collective concerns rather than personal interests. Whether responding to famine, supporting prophetic communities, or providing guidance during national crises, Elisha's leadership was directed toward the well-being of the wider covenant community. Awojobi maintains that biblical prophets served as agents of social change whose ministries addressed broader societal needs rather than individual advancement (207-215). The analysis suggests that effective leadership extends beyond personal influence to include responsibility for communal flourishing. This principle challenges contemporary church leaders to balance individual pastoral care with broader social engagement. Within the Ogun Baptist Conference, such a perspective encourages churches to participate actively in community development, social advocacy, and humanitarian initiatives.

### **Integration of Spiritual Authority and Practical Leadership**

A final principle emerging from Elisha's ministry is the integration of spiritual authority with practical leadership competence. Elisha's prophetic identity was consistently expressed through actions that addressed real-life challenges. His spirituality informed practical decision-making and community engagement rather than remaining confined to religious rituals. Reave

655-687 argues that effective leadership emerges when spiritual values are integrated into organizational practice (655–87). Similarly, Simmons notes that leadership effectiveness depends on the ability to translate vision and influence into practical outcomes. Elisha exemplifies this integration by combining divine guidance with concrete responses to social, economic, and institutional problems (Simmons 49-67). The analysis indicates that spiritual maturity and practical competence are complementary rather than competing dimensions of leadership. For Baptist church leaders, this principle underscores the need to combine theological depth with administrative capability, strategic planning, and effective ministry management.

### **Research Question Three: How does Elisha’s Leadership Model Contribute to and Inform Contemporary Church Leadership Practice and Understanding?**

A primary way in which Elisha’s leadership model contributes to contemporary church leadership is by reframing leadership as a spiritually grounded yet functionally engaged vocation. Unlike modern tendencies that often separate spiritual authority from administrative competence, Elisha’s ministry demonstrates that effective leadership is inherently integrated. His prophetic identity was continuously expressed through concrete responses to social, economic, and communal challenges (2 Kings 2:19–22; 4:1–7). This integrated model challenges contemporary church systems that may prioritize either spiritual charisma without structure or administrative efficiency without spiritual depth. Reave’s emphasis on the integration of spiritual values and leadership effectiveness reinforces this perspective, suggesting that leadership grounded in ethical and spiritual formation produces more coherent and sustainable outcomes (Reave 655–687). In addition, Elisha’s model contributes to contemporary leadership understanding by emphasizing leadership formation as a process rather than an event. The Elijah–Elisha transition illustrates that leadership development is gradual, relational, and mentorship-based rather than instantaneous or purely institutional. This insight is particularly significant for church contexts where leadership succession is often determined by tenure, election, or administrative appointment. Simmons (49-67) highlights that prophetic succession involves intentional preparation and spiritual transmission, which implies that leadership readiness cannot be assumed based solely on organizational position. Within Baptist structures such as the Ogun Baptist Conference, this contribution suggests the need for structured mentoring systems that intentionally cultivate emerging leaders through sustained spiritual and practical formation.

The model also contributes to contemporary leadership understanding by redefining leadership effectiveness in terms of transformation rather than visibility or institutional status. Elisha’s ministry is consistently validated through its impact on human conditions, restoring health, alleviating poverty, resolving communal crises, and sustaining prophetic communities. This performance of transformative engagement aligns with Brueggemann’s understanding of prophetic leadership as counter-imaginative action that introduces alternative possibilities within broken systems (6–23). In modern church leadership discourse, this shifts the evaluation criteria from numerical growth or institutional expansion to measurable spiritual and social transformation. Furthermore, Elisha’s leadership model informs contemporary understanding of ethical leadership by demonstrating that spiritual authority is inseparable from moral accountability. The Gehazi narrative (2 Kings 5:20–27) illustrates that leadership credibility is compromised when ethical boundaries are violated. Ciulla’s leadership ethics framework supports this interpretation by emphasizing that leadership is fundamentally a moral practice whose legitimacy depends on integrity (Ciulla 13–27). In contemporary Nigerian church contexts, this insight is particularly relevant given ongoing concerns about financial accountability and misuse

of spiritual authority. The model therefore contributes to reinforcing ethical safeguards and accountability structures within church leadership systems.

The communal orientation of Elisha's leadership further expands contemporary understanding of church leadership as a socially embedded practice rather than an individualistic pursuit. His interventions consistently served collective needs, suggesting that leadership responsibility extends beyond internal church administration to broader societal engagement. Simmons (49-67) affirm that prophetic leadership functions as a mechanism for community transformation, reinforcing the idea that church leadership must engage with social realities such as poverty, injustice, and vulnerability. For Baptist churches in Ogun State, this implies that leadership effectiveness should be assessed not only within congregational boundaries but also in terms of community impact and social responsibility. Finally, Elisha's model contributes to contemporary leadership understanding by reinforcing the necessity of integrating spiritual authority with practical competence. His ministry demonstrates that theological insight must translate into actionable leadership responses. Ishola-Esan and Olabode (15-27) argue that prophetic leadership becomes transformational when it is contextualized within institutional realities and applied to practical challenges. This integration challenges contemporary church leadership to develop competencies that combine theological depth with organizational, administrative, and social engagement skills.

### **Conclusion**

This study critically engaged Elisha's prophetic ministry as a theological and leadership construct within the Elijah–Elisha narrative and evaluated its implications for contemporary church leadership, with particular reference to Nigerian Baptist ecclesial contexts. Rather than treating Elisha's ministry as a collection of miracle episodes, the analysis demonstrates that it represents a coherent leadership paradigm structured around succession formation, ethical regulation, communal responsibility, and the integration of spiritual and practical leadership intelligence. A key synthesis emerging from the study is that prophetic leadership in the Elisha tradition is fundamentally relational and developmental, challenging leadership systems that treat succession as a procedural or administrative event. The Elijah–Elisha transition presents leadership continuity as a process of spiritual apprenticeship and generational transmission of mission identity rather than institutional replacement. This has direct implications for contemporary church systems where leadership transition often lacks sustained mentorship structures.

The study further establishes that Elisha's leadership cannot be reduced to charismatic interventionism. His ministry reflects a consistent orientation toward social restoration, ethical restraint, and community-centered service. The narrative demonstrates that prophetic authority is validated through measurable social impact, moral discipline, and responsiveness to communal crises rather than institutional status or rhetorical performance. Importantly, the study also highlights a structural tension between the biblical model and certain contemporary ecclesial practices in Nigeria, where leadership is sometimes fragmented between spiritual authority and administrative competence, or weakened by ethical lapses and individualized ministry expressions. The Elisha model therefore functions not only as a descriptive theological account but also as a normative interpretive framework for evaluating church leadership effectiveness. In sum, Elisha's prophetic leadership offers a holistic paradigm in which spiritual authority, ethical accountability, communal responsibility, and practical competence are integrated into a single leadership vision. Its relevance lies in its capacity to critique fragmented modern leadership systems while providing constructive principles for sustainable ecclesial governance.

## Recommendations

Based on the analytical insights of this study, the following recommendations are advanced:

1. Churches, particularly Baptist associations and conferences, should institutionalize long-term, relationship-based mentorship systems that mirror the Elijah–Elisha apprenticeship model. Such systems should emphasize gradual leadership exposure, shared ministry practice, and spiritual formation rather than short-term administrative handovers.
2. Church leadership development programs should deliberately train ministers to respond to social and economic realities within their contexts, ensuring that ministry effectiveness is measured not only by internal church growth but also by external community impact, consistent with Elisha’s interventionist leadership pattern.
3. Ecclesial bodies should strengthen accountability structures that regulate financial integrity, prophetic claims, and ministerial conduct. This is particularly necessary in preventing the commodification of spiritual authority, as highlighted in the Gehazi narrative, where ethical compromise directly undermines prophetic legitimacy.
4. Churches should expand their leadership focus beyond individualized spiritual needs toward structured engagement with poverty alleviation, education, health support, and community development initiatives, reflecting Elisha’s communal and covenantal leadership orientation.
5. Leadership training frameworks should intentionally combine spiritual formation with administrative, managerial, and organizational competence to avoid the artificial separation between “spiritual” and “practical” leadership functions evident in contemporary church settings.
6. Baptist and wider Christian bodies should develop theological review mechanisms that critically evaluate emerging prophetic practices to ensure alignment with biblical standards of integrity, communal accountability, and doctrinal coherence.

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