

Week 12: Naaman Is Healed: 2 Kings 5

Hook



Main Point: God's grace is free for all, no matter their background.

Q: Do you read instructions and warnings before using something, or do you just assume you've figured it out?

Q: And when you do read them, do you usually find them helpful – or kind of ridiculous?

Some warnings feel completely unnecessary (these come from actual products):

- "May cause drowsiness" (on sleeping pills)
- "Do not hold the wrong end of the chainsaw"
- "Do not use while sleeping" (on a hair dryer)
- "This costume does not enable flight or super strength" (on a Superman outfit)
- "Do not iron clothes on body" (on an iron)¹

We hear those and think, *Who would actually need to be told that?*

But here's the thing: those warnings exist because someone, somewhere, thought they knew better and it didn't go well.

Transition: In today's story, we're going to meet a man who almost missed out on a life-changing miracle – not because the instructions were unclear, but because they were *too simple* for him to take seriously. And it raises a question for all of us: what do we do when God's way doesn't match our expectations?

RECAP: In the first lesson, we talked about the role of the Old Testament prophets as God's messengers calling His people to repent and how they pointed ahead to Jesus. In week 2, we saw God's provision for both Elijah and the widow of Zarephath during the drought, which was a consequence of Israel's idolatry. In lesson 3, God raised the widow's son from the dead, which not only showed His sovereign power but also His

care for the vulnerable and His heart for all the nations. In lesson 4, we saw God's superiority over other "gods" as Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. In lesson 5, Elijah ran for his life from the wrath of Jezebel and found refuge in the Lord. God spoke to Him not in the thunder and lightning but in the still, small voice.

In lesson 6, Elijah called Elisha to succeed him, and Elisha left his old life behind. Then Elijah prophesied the deaths of Jezebel and Ahab but delayed the end of Ahab's dynasty because he repented. Ahab's first son died because he worshipped false gods, and his second son became king. In lesson 7, Elijah was taken up to heaven in the whirlwind, and Elisha took over his ministry with the same Holy Spirit upon him. In lesson 8, we explored exactly what it meant when Elisha asked Elijah for a "double portion" of his spirit. In lessons 9 and 10, we saw how God brings judgment on those who reject His prophets and His message but brings life, healing and blessing to those who come to Him in faith. In lesson 11, God fed the hungry through two miracles, healing the poison in the stew and multiplying food as Jesus did in the New Testament.

In this lesson, we will see Elisha heal a Gentile leper and refuse to take his thank-you gift, but his servant took the money instead. And we'll see how Elisha responded to that.

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Book

Main Point: God's grace is free for all, no matter their background.

2 Kings 5:1–14 [Read]

Talking Point 1: God can work in simple, small things to show His great power.

Q: Who told Naaman about Elisha? What does this tell us about the situation?

Q: Why didn't Naaman want to do what Elisha said?

Here, Elisha's healing of a leper foreshadows Jesus' healing many lepers in His ministry. In Israel, lepers were considered ritually unclean and had to live outside the community, alone or in designated colonies. Therefore, the healing of leprosy in Israel was not only about restoring the physical health of the leper but also restoring that person to the community. But this story is about a Gentile with leprosy. Naaman was the highest commander of Syria's army, so, apparently, they didn't have the same rules about isolating those with leprosy as Israel did. Naaman was not only able to be in community with others, but he was also a great leader among his people.

Syria is also called Aram. It is north of Israel, and throughout Israel's history, they alternated between being an enemy and an ally of Israel, depending on the time and the situation. At this point in history, they were enemies. The text tells us Yahweh had given victory to Syria over Israel (N). God was using Syria to accomplish His punishment of Israel (N) for their idolatry. This was one of the curses of the covenant, a consequence of idolatry, one of the things Elijah and Elisha were sent to warn the people about. This doesn't necessarily mean God was favoring Syria over any other nation. He also used Assyria to punish Israel later and Babylon to punish Judah after that. The text explicitly tells us this was orchestrated by God to remind us He is in control of all nations, not just Israel. He raises up kings and tears them down for His plans and purposes (Daniel 2:21).

When the Syrian army attacked Israel, Naaman brought a girl from Israel back as a slave. Though much of Israel worshipped false gods, this girl knew about the power of Elisha. She suggested to Naaman's wife that he go to Elisha to be healed. So, the king of Syria sent a letter to the king of Israel, and Naaman took 10 talents of silver and 6,000 shekels of gold with the letter. This was an exorbitant amount of money, a king's ransom. Converted to today's money, it would be about three-quarters of a *billion* dollars.² When the king of Israel received the letter, he tore his clothes. Aram had just attacked Israel, so he thought the king was trying to start a fight with him. If he couldn't cure this man, the king of Syria might use it as an excuse to attack him again.

The text doesn't specify which king of Israel this was, but the king most recently referenced is Jehoram, whom Elisha did not respect because of his lack of faith in

Yahweh (3:1, 13–14). It is telling that his reaction was despair instead of going to Elisha in faith that he could heal Naaman. It is frustrating but not surprising that he didn't start to trust in Yahweh after the water miracle at Moab. Elisha heard about it and sent word to the king that he would heal the man so Syria would know there is a true prophet in Israel. This wasn't about Elisha's glory but Yahweh's. Like Elijah's showdown with the prophets of Baal, it was to show both Syria and Israel that the true prophet of the true God who could heal disease was in Israel, that the one true God is Yahweh.

Naaman came to the door of Elisha's house in all his military power with horses and chariots. But Elisha didn't even come to the door; he sent a messenger. He didn't acknowledge Naaman's lavish gifts. Elisha was not kowtowing to Naaman's authority, wealth or power. The messenger told Naaman that Elisha said to go wash in the Jordan seven times, and his flesh would be restored.

From Samaria, a trip to the Jordan would have been about 40 miles. There was no easy or direct route. Naaman was angry; this was too simple. He had expected Elisha to come out and call upon the name of his God, wave his hand, and cure him. He said the rivers of Damascus were better than the Jordan anyway. His servants said if Elisha had asked him to do something complicated or difficult, he would have done it, so why not try something simple? So Naaman did it, and it worked. This miracle reminds us of when Elijah heard God not in the great wind, earthquake, or fire but in the gentle whisper. Many of us expect that God only works in big, loud ways, but often He works in the small, simple things.

Q: What does it tell us about God that He doesn't have to be flashy?

Q: What simple truths and reminders from God's Word have been impactful to you?

2 Kings 5:15–19 [Read]

Talking Point 2: There is no other God in all the earth but Yahweh.

Q: Why did Naaman come to believe Yahweh alone is God?

Q: What did he ask Elisha to ask Yahweh to pardon him for and why?

In the same way Elijah's raising of the widow of Zarephath's son caused her to declare that Yahweh alone is God, so Naaman's being healed of leprosy caused him to declare that Yahweh alone is God. These were both Gentiles who came to faith in Yahweh after He performed personal miracles for them. This points us ahead to the theology of the Gospel – that we are saved by faith, regardless of our ethnicity, background or works. That theology is explained in detail in the New Testament, but we see it throughout the Old Testament in many accounts of Gentiles who came to faith in Yahweh.

Naaman tried to give Elisha the gifts he had brought, which were fit for a king, and called himself a servant of Elisha, a statement of great humility for a man of such power,

wealth, and honor. But Elisha refused to accept them, even when Naaman urged him. Elisha had no need for excessive gifts. The Lord would provide for him everything he needed.

Naaman also committed himself to never worship any god but Yahweh. He asked to take with him two mule loads of dirt from Israel so he could build an altar to Yahweh with dirt from His Holy Land.³ Then he explained to Elisha that when his master, the king of Syria, went into the Temple of Rimmon (another name for the storm god of the Arameans, Baal-Hadad), the king had to lean on Naaman's arm. Therefore, when the king bowed, Naaman would have to bow, but he would only be bowing his body, not his heart; he would not be worshipping Rimmon. He asked Elisha's pardon for this and Elisha gave it.

Naaman would still live in the world of the Arameans; he wasn't going to move to Israel and physically join their covenant family. But he was committing his life to Yahweh and Yahweh alone, so he did join the covenant family spiritually. Naaman shows us what it looks like for a Gentile to come to faith in Yahweh, even hundreds of years before Peter and Paul were called to preach to the Gentiles.

Q: Naaman committed himself to Yahweh while still living in a pagan culture. What does it look like for Christians today to remain faithful to God in environments that may not share their beliefs?

Q: Naaman came seeking healing, but left worshipping Yahweh. What does this teach us about the ultimate purpose of God's blessings and miracles?

Q: What are some other passages that remind us that God is the ultimate authority?

2 Kings 5:19–27 [Read]

Talking Point 3: Scripture condemns those who use God or ministry for personal gain.

Q: What did Gehazi ask Naaman for? Why did he say it was for Elisha?

Q: What would leprosy mean for Gehazi as an Israelite?

Gehazi had been Elisha's servant for a while, but he wasn't called a disciple of Elisha. He wasn't his chosen successor as Elisha had been for Elijah. Nothing is said about its leading to this, and now we see why. His heart was not pure. He may not have started out serving Elisha for personal gain, but when he saw a chance to use him for personal gain, he took it. Considering what Naaman had offered Elisha, Gehazi's request was extremely modest, but it was still an incredible sum for one person. A talent of silver was 300 years' worth of wages for a typical laborer. In today's terms, for someone making \$35,000 a year, it would be like receiving \$10 million. Gehazi was trying to set himself up for life, not with "just enough" but with a substantial amount of wealth.

Elisha called him out with the language he used, which described a royal level of wealth (v. 26, cf. 1 Samuel 8:14–17).⁴

Both Elisha and Gehazi used the phrase “as the Lord lives” (oath language), but for opposite reasons, highlighting a huge contrast between their hearts. Elisha used the phrase to anchor himself in God’s presence and authority. His oath shows integrity; for Elisha, the healing was an act of God’s grace that could not be bought. Gehazi used the same phrase to justify doing the exact opposite, to pursue personal gain.

He had also convinced himself he was executing some kind of justice. He said Elisha had “spared Naaman.” Gehazi believed Naaman should have had to pay for his miracle, for whatever reason. Gehazi appears to have rationalized his greed by convincing himself that, because Naaman was an Aramean and therefore an enemy of Israel, it was acceptable to profit from him.⁵ Gehazi’s actions demonstrate a lack of understanding of grace. Regardless of his justification, he went against his master’s wishes, which he knew to be wrong, and he used God’s name to do it. And his behavior was deceptive. He lied to Naaman about Elisha’s asking for the money. He hid the money from Elisha and then lied to him about where he had been.

Elisha knew supernaturally what Gehazi had done (v. 26) and confronted him when he returned. Regardless of the justifications Gehazi had made to himself, Elisha knew he was really dreaming of personal wealth, indicated by the way he talked about orchards and vineyards, animals and servants. He cursed Gehazi with the leprosy of which he had just healed Naaman, which had much more serious consequences in Israel than just the disease. He would also be cut off from the community.

This theme of people’s trying to profit from ministry runs throughout Scripture. Gehazi is an early, vivid example of what later writers explicitly warned against. Ezekiel condemned the “bad shepherd” leaders of Israel who used the people for personal gain (Ezekiel 34). Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple for turning it into a “den of robbers,” a quote from Jeremiah, who condemned religious leaders for using the temple for personal gain in his day (Matthew 21:12–13; Jeremiah 7:11). Early in the history of the Church, a magician tried to buy the power of the Holy Spirit from the disciples (Acts 8). Peter described false teachers as exploiting the people out of greed or using their leadership roles for shameful gain (1 Peter 5:2–3). This is still a concern today. Most ministry leaders are in it for the right reasons, but there are grifters who use God to swindle people out of money. Scripture tells us it is right to pay our ministry leaders fairly for their work (1 Timothy 5:17–18), but no one should be motivated by profit to preach the Gospel (2 Corinthians 2:17).

Q: How does the undeserved nature of God’s grace free us from jealousy toward others and the blessings God has given them? In what ways does comparison distract us from God’s goodness or create division among His people?

Q: Compare Naaman's gratitude with Gehazi's greed. What does this contrast reveal about the condition of each man's heart?

Q: How can we tell when someone is trying to use spiritual things for personal gain?

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Took

Main Point: God's grace is free for all, no matter their background.

In today's passage, Naaman almost missed out on miraculous healing and an introduction to the one true God because the answer seemed too simple, too beneath him. But he responded, and it changed his life. You too have experienced a miracle. God has rescued you from the grip of sin – you have been freed from its stranglehold on your life, and your future has been secured. The presentation you responded to was simple: place your faith in Jesus, repent, and make him the King of your life. 1 Corinthians 1:18 speaks to this idea:

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

But our Christian walk goes beyond salvation. There are a number of spiritual disciplines that the Lord has called you to – and although they seem simple, they come with a promise.

- **Abide in Christ** – John 15:4–5 – Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. *Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*
- **Be in God's Word** – 2 Timothy 3:16–17 – All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, *that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*
- **Pray consistently** – Philippians 4:6–7 – Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
- **Confess sin and pursue holiness** – 1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, *he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
- **Walk by the Spirit** – Galatians 5:16 – But I say, walk by the Spirit, and *you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*
- **Be consistent in your church engagement** – Hebrews 10:24–25 – And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to

meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

This week, commit yourself to a spiritual discipline you may have been neglecting. Whether it is prayer, time in God's Word, confession of sin, or consistent fellowship with the church, trust that God works through faithful obedience.

CHALLENGES

THINK: Think about what it must have been like for Naaman to experience healthy skin for the first time. What difference would this make in his life? Why was this miracle so valuable to him that he would offer so much money for it? Why did it make him believe Yahweh was the only real God? Think about miracles God has done in your life, big and small. How did you know they were from Him? How did they affect the way you think about God? The way you trust in Him for your future?

PRAY: Pray for those who need healing of any sort – physical, emotional, mental, relational, or anything else. Ask God to bring healing and restoration to their lives. Pray for that healing to lead them closer to God and give them a greater trust in Him.

ACT: Offer grace to those who need healing. Take some time this week to offer support and encouragement to those who are going through cancer or other kinds of treatment. You could visit sick church members in the hospital, donate snacks to a radiation center or nursing home, or decide among many other ways you can support someone in need of healing.

¹ https://www.forbes.com/2011/02/23/dumbest-warning-labels-entrepreneurs-sales-marketing-warning-labels_slide.html

² John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Intervarsity Press, 2000). Other commentaries give different values.

³ Paul R. House, [1, 2 Kings](#), vol. 8, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 273.

⁴ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Intervarsity Press, 2000).

⁵ Thomas L. Constable, "2 Kings," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 548