

Lesson 54

Naaman the Syrian and Elisha's Greedy servant Gehazi

2 Kings 5:1-27



Teacher, please remember that the commentary below is intended to help you in your study, not to be read to your students. Make your own list of applications, using the help from the commentary, but don't necessarily try to cover everything! Think of the students in your class, then be prayerfully selective.

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1. Preparation

- 1) Choose memory verse
- 2) Select attention grabber to start off lesson / break the ice - optional, recommended for younger classes. (see point 7)
- 3) Suggested activities- optional, recommended for younger children (see point 8)

2. Memory verse

1 Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang" (NASB)

3. Theme

God's great works for us are free gifts when we trust Him, not when we depend on our own efforts.

4. Lesson introduction

(This lesson is a condensation of two lessons, one about Elisha's encounter with Naaman the Syrian soldier, and the next about Gehazi's covetous encounter with Naaman. Pick out the items God leads you to emphasize and do not try to cover all the details.)

Have you ever seen a miracle? What is a miracle? Is it always something big and spectacular like fire coming down from heaven or can it be a small thing to help us in our daily lives? The dictionary says that a miracle is a thing, fact, or event happening apart from the normal order of events and laws God has created for His world. Can you think of some examples of miracles in the Bible? (e.g. parting of the Red Sea at Moses' command, budding of Aaron's rod overnight, healing of people by Jesus' word or touch, even at a distance, Jesus' resurrection).

What would you do to see or to receive a miracle? Would you travel across the world and pay large sums of money if you were sick and thought you could be healed? In our lesson today, a certain army commander from the country of Syria was willing to do anything it took to be healed, or so it seemed.

5. Verse by Verse Commentary

2 KINGS 5:1

Naaman was a great army commander from Damascus, Syria. Because of his army record he was well thought of by both the king and the nation. He was like a hero in his country. And because he commanded a large army he was also very powerful. He was probably quite used to people giving him prompt obedience when he gave a command. When he said, "jump," most people said, "how high?"

But, Naaman had a terrible illness called leprosy. Leprosy was a skin disease that could have included the disease we know today as Hansen's disease, but most probably included other skin diseases and infections that could spread over the whole body, or even eat away some of the body parts by attacking the nerves that usually feel pain. There was not a cure for leprosy in that day. Because the disease could spread to others, people were afraid to be around a leper. Lepers usually had to live away from their families and friends in special colonies set up for lepers. In fact, in Bible times if lepers were in public, they had to keep a distance from other people and shout, "unclean, unclean" to let people know they were around. Can you imagine having to live like that?

(For more information on this disease see <https://answersingenesis.org/biology/disease/biblical-leprosy-shedding-light-on-the-disease-that-shuns/>)

2 KINGS 5:2-3

Naaman kept suffering day after day from the leprosy. It was getting worse and worse. One day he would have to be separated from the rest of his family. He was desperate to find a cure for it.

During one of the wars, a young Jewish girl was taken captive. She became a servant to Naaman's wife. She told her mistress that there was a prophet of God in Samaria who could help Naaman.

Maybe the girl had met Elisha or had heard about one of the many miracles that God had performed through him. The Lord used this young girl to help Naaman and to lead him to Elisha and the Lord.

The Lord can use any of us. We do not have to be someone great or famous. We can just be doing the simple things that God wants us to do and be used greatly by Him. There are countless people, like Naaman who are in desperate circumstances and need to hear the good news of God's love, power, and salvation.

2 KINGS 5:4-6

After hearing what the girl said, the King of Syria encouraged the commander to go to Israel to be healed. He sent him to the King of Israel with a large amount of money and goods and a letter of introduction requesting that the commander be healed.

2 KINGS 5:7

The King of Israel became very upset. He said that he was not God. He did not have power over life and death. Why was the commander sent to him to heal his leprosy? He thought that King Aram was trying to start another war with him. The King of Israel was in a tough situation, but not too tough for God. How we need to learn to trust the Lord when we get into tough situations!

2 KINGS 5:8-9

Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house. When Elisha heard that the king had become upset and tore his clothes (a sign in those days of mourning or being upset about something) he sent a message for the king to send the commander to him, so "he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." So, Naaman took his request to the house of Elisha. Elisha knew that God could do anything including healing Naaman. He knew God would use this opportunity to reveal his power to Naaman and to Syria. Follow and Obey In order for Naaman to be healed he had to follow the instructions that the Lord had given to Elisha. Naaman had a choice. He could either obey and receive the healing that God wanted to give him, or he could disobey and miss out on God's blessing. We have the same choice.

2 KINGS 5:10-12

Elisha told a messenger to go and tell Naaman to wash himself seven times in the river Jordan and he would be healed. Elisha did not even come out to meet with Naaman. Naaman became furious. Maybe he was thinking, "Elisha does not understand how important I am--I am the commander of the king of Syria's army! I've traveled a long way to see him. At least, he can greet me."

Perhaps, Naaman was looking for something spectacular. What Elisha told Naaman to do was very simple. God did not choose to heal Naaman with fire from heaven or trumpets sounding; He asked that he wash in the Jordan seven times. This was too simple for the proud commander, Naaman.

Naaman had to be willing to humble himself, believe God, and do a simple thing. Instead, he got angry. He said that he could have just stayed home and washed in the rivers there. Why did he need to go to the Jordan? In rage, he turned to leave. He almost let pride and refusal to obey stand in the way of the miracle he desperately needed.

God always acts with our best in mind. He knew that in order for Naaman to come to Him, he would need to humble himself and exercise simple faith.

So the Gospel, the Good News of our salvation, is simple. We need not do righteous works or perform certain rituals to be accepted by God. Simply believing in and receiving Jesus Christ will save us--faith in God's Son and acceptance of the work He did on the cross, dying for our sins. For some, salvation is too simple. They feel they must do something. May our pride never keep us away from Jesus! Let us come to the Lord with a humble heart.

2 KINGS 5:13-14 And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"

So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Naaman's servants went after him and reasoned with him. "If the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" Naaman's servants were wise.

Naaman went to the river Jordan and dipped into the river seven times. He was healed! His flesh became whole, clean and smooth like a young child. God had performed a miracle. God is all-powerful. There is nothing too big or too small for God.

How important that we learn to lay down our ideas or opinions and do what the Lord tells us to do. God alone knows what is best for us and can be our guide. Proverbs 3:5,6 states, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

Again, this is a good picture of salvation through Jesus. We have all sinned. Like leprosy, there is nothing we can do to help our condition. But, when we come to Jesus and ask Him into our hearts, believing and receiving God's gift of salvation, we will be made clean. May we come to Him with humble hearts, acknowledging our need of a Savior. Let us come to the Lord with a humble heart.

2 KINGS 5:15-16

Naaman came to Elisha with a different attitude; he was healed, humble, and a believer in the mighty God of Israel and he was humble. He had a heart of gratitude and desired to reward Elisha richly for this blessing. But Elisha refused to accept any reward for his ministry. It was not Elisha who had healed Naaman; it was God. God wanted Naaman to understand His work of healing was freely given by grace. God's grace is a free gift.

2 KINGS 5:17-19

Not only was Naaman's body healed, but his heart was healed as well. With a heart of humility and faith, he now was filled with an attitude of worship for the one true God. The worship of idols had brought him nothing, but the God of Israel gave him everything. He now had a new life and a new hope.

Since Elisha would not take anything, Naaman asked him to give as much earth as he could carry back to Damascus on two mules. Naaman wanted to make an altar to the Lord, believing that he needed dirt from Israel in order to worship the God of Israel. (Many who worshipped idols in that day believed that no god could be worshipped except in its own land or on an altar built with the dirt from that land.)

Back home, Naaman would have to fulfill his official duties, which included helping the king get down and up as he bowed, worshipping the god Rimmon. Because of his faith in the one true God of Israel, Naaman asks Elisha that he be granted forgiveness for bowing down to this idol. He did not intend to worship other gods. His request for pardon shows the differences between Naaman and the Israelites who were continually worshipping many idols. Elisha encouraged him to go in peace.

Suggested activity: Puzzle Partners

2 KINGS 5:20-24

When Naaman saw Gehazi running towards him, he stopped his chariot to find out if anything was wrong. Naaman was concerned for Elisha and was eager to help in anyway he could. Gehazi lies to Naaman hoping to receive a talent (approx. EUR 2000) in silver and two suits of clothes. Wow, what a request! That was a lot of money. But Naaman reveals his generous heart and gives Gehazi EUR 4000 and two expensive robes!

Gehazi really made out, receiving more than he had hoped for. Naaman even sent two servants back with Gehazi to help him carry the gifts to his house. But Gehazi stopped them at the hill where Elisha lived and sent the servants away; then quickly, he hid the money in his house.

All throughout the Bible, we see displays of God's loving character. We also see the sad state of sinful man—his pride and selfishness. While Elisha had displayed a beautiful picture of God's loving grace by not accepting any payment for the work God had done, Gehazi, his servant displayed selfishness and greed.

As Elisha demonstrated, true service is motivated by love and devotion to God and seeks no personal gain. Gehazi had a heart filled with greed, desiring to capitalize on God's work. He carefully plotted his scheme to get money from Naaman.

2 KINGS 5:25-27

God revealed Gehazi's deceit to Elisha. Elisha did not waste any time in confronting Gehazi. Elisha gave Gehazi an opportunity to confess his sin. In order to cover one lie, Gehazi told another. Elisha reveals to Gehazi that he is aware of his scheme: "Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants?"

Many false prophets of that time were selfishly profiting from their position, bringing contempt on the prophetic office and sadly misrepresenting God. Gehazi was no better. A true servant of the Lord would not take personal rewards from people in return for blessings that God had given them.

The leprosy of Naaman had been removed from him by his humble obedience and trust in God, but now leprosy would cling to Gehazi for his lack of obedience and trust in God. He had misrepresented and dishonored God. The consequences were severe, he and his family would suffer the same fate. He left Elisha's house with his skin and his hair as white as snow.

As a servant of God, Gehazi had been given an awesome privilege. With that privilege came responsibility. Gehazi paid dearly for tainting God's beautiful picture of His grace, mercy, and love. God does not want His work to be smeared with our selfishness.

Naaman's gift of healing was free; he did not earn it; he received it by faith. As Naaman's leprosy was cleansed when he responded to God in simple faith; so our sins are cleansed when we by simple faith embrace the work that Jesus did for us on the cross. God's grace, mercy and love are free and freely given. If you have not already, receive God's free gift of grace, today—be washed and cleansed of your sins through faith in Jesus Christ. God's grace is a free gift.

6. Prayer

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to be humble when they come before the Lord and to submit their will to His. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

7. Attention Grabbers

Leprosy Glove

WHAT YOU WILL NEED: A plastic glove, baby powder, and a bowl of water. An 8' to 10' rope and a blindfold. Construction paper, scissors, as many copies of the "Jesus Loves Us All" template as the number of children in your class.

You will need a plastic glove, some baby powder, and a bowl with water. Before class begins, put some baby powder into the glove and put the glove on your hand. Try to act embarrassed about your hand and try to keep it hidden. If a child asks you about it, just say, "Oh, it's really nothing." Begin to tell the story of Naaman, keeping your glove on through the story.

Your glove will represent the leprosy that Naaman had. When you get to the place in the story when Naaman dips seven times in the Jordan you can then tell your class that maybe that would be a good idea for your hand. Dip your hands in the water seven times, and then remove the glove. Say, "7-6-5-4-3-2-1, Wow!" Allow the children to smell your hand, the baby powder helps your hand smell like a baby, like Naaman's childlike skin.

When someone in Bible times had leprosy, it was a very hard thing. They stood out from everyone else, and often had to be separated from their family and friends. There was no cure for leprosy, apart from a miracle from God.

Body Language

WHAT YOU WILL NEED: A 20 - 25 piece puzzle or a picture, poster board, glue, and scissors. As many "Keys to Living in the Spirit" templates as the number of children in your class, crayons or markers, scissors, yarn or pipe cleaners.

Have you ever heard the phrase, "Actions speak louder than words"? Sometimes we can say something, but our "body language" is saying something else. Often times our expressions will represent what is in our hearts.

As an example, raise your arms, make fists, shake your arms, and make an angry face. Ask the children to guess what you are feeling. They should guess anger. Show them that they guessed without you even saying a word.

Pick volunteers to come up and display an emotion. See if the rest of the class can guess the emotion that is being displayed. Some examples of feelings might be: sorrow, anger, jealousy, greed, pity, happiness or joy. After a while, have the children gather in a circle and ask them how Jesus can make a difference in these feelings. We will learn in today's lesson that Elisha's servant has some greed in his heart. Even though he tries not to let it show, Elisha still knew that it was there.

8. Activities:

Follow and Obey

This activity will help us to understand what it is like to obey. You will need an 8' - 10' rope and a blindfold. Split the class into two groups. One of the groups will be the rope holders. They can stand on one side and hold the rope chest high. They should hold it in order to make a shape such as a large "V," "W," or "Z."

Next, the other team can take turns guessing the shape. Blindfold one of the children (blindfold before the first group makes their shape) and allow them to hold the rope and move to the other side.

They can then guess what the shape is. Take turns to allow the other children to do it, changing the shape each time.

Explain to the children that it is important to hold onto the Lord and His Word when we follow Him. He will lead us where He wants us to be. God wanted to heal Naaman, so He led him to Elisha. God will lead us if we will follow and obey. Let us come to the Lord with a humble heart.

Jesus Loves Us All

God loved Naaman even though he was not from the nation of Israel. God loves all people everywhere and wants them to come to Him. God sent His Son Jesus so that any one of us could have eternal life if we would believe in Him. This craft will help us to remember that Jesus loves every child everywhere.

You will need construction paper, scissors, copies of the enclosed template. Use the instructions on the enclosed template for your craft.

Remind the children that God used the young servant girl from Israel to lead Naaman to Elisha for his healing. God can also use us to lead others to come to know Jesus as their savior.

Puzzle Partners

Bring with you a 20 - 25 piece puzzle. If you do not have one, the children can make one by pasting a large picture to a piece of poster board. Cut the board into 20 - 25 pieces so that every child can have one piece.

You should keep two or more extra pieces hidden (do not let the children know). Have the class join together in putting the puzzle together in the center of the room. After they have put the puzzle together, they will notice that a few pieces are gone. Ask the children if they think the puzzle is complete?

Explain that when we choose to walk in sin or disobedience, it affects us and others. God has a plan for our lives. He desires to make our lives a beautiful picture. If we do not obey His plans for us, it is like holding back some pieces to the beautiful picture that He wants to make. Let's choose to obey Jesus in everything.

9. Bible text (NIV): 2 Kings 5:1-27

5 Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.^[a]

² Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

⁴ Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. ⁵ "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents^[b] of silver, six thousand shekels^[c] of gold and ten sets of clothing. ⁶ The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

⁷As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, “Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!”

⁸When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: “Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.” ⁹So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house. ¹⁰Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, “Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.”

¹¹But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. ¹²Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn’t I wash in them and be cleansed?” So he turned and went off in a rage.

¹³Naaman’s servants went to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed’!” ¹⁴So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

¹⁵Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.”

¹⁶The prophet answered, “As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.” And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.

¹⁷“If you will not,” said Naaman, “please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the LORD. ¹⁸But may the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I have to bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this.”

¹⁹“Go in peace,” Elisha said.

After Naaman had traveled some distance, ²⁰Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, “My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him.”

²¹So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. “Is everything all right?” he asked.

²²“Everything is all right,” Gehazi answered. “My master sent me to say, ‘Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent^[d] of silver and two sets of clothing.’”

²³“By all means, take two talents,” said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi. ²⁴When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left.

²⁵When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?”

“Your servant didn’t go anywhere,” Gehazi answered.

²⁶ But Elisha said to him, “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves? ²⁷ Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.” Then Gehazi went from Elisha’s presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow.