

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 16: Naaman Healed and Other Wonders

2 Kings 5:1–6:33

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Second Kings 5–6 is one of the richest passages in all of the Old Testament for doctrinal teaching that is simultaneously deeply personal. Naaman's story is not an interesting ancient episode; it is a precise and searching mirror held up to the perennial human resistance to humble obedience. The great doctrinal question running through these chapters is: will you do what God says, in the way God says to do it, even when it does not match your expectations of how things should work? Naaman almost answers no. His servants talk him into yes. He is cleansed. Gehazi answers the same question in his own way by refusing God's values in favor of his own desires, and the result is devastating. The teacher must make these characters vivid and personal, not merely historical.

The doctrinal stakes of Q9 are among the most important in the entire study. Naaman's story offers a natural and powerful illustration of the principle of obedient faith: that genuine trust in God expresses itself in doing what God commands in the specific way God has appointed. This principle, applied in the New Testament, underlies the church of Christ's understanding of baptism. The New Testament is consistent and explicit that baptism is God's appointed means of entering into Christ (Gal 3:26–27), of dying and rising with Him (Rom 6:3–4), and of receiving the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). It is not a human work of merit; it is the act of obedient faith by which a person submits to God's appointed way of salvation, as Naaman submitted to God's appointed way of cleansing. The teacher must draw this parallel carefully and accurately while making clear that Naaman's Jordan washing was not Christian baptism in the New Testament sense.

The formation aim of the lesson presses on pride as the great obstacle to obedient faith. Most people in the room are not struggling to believe in God; they are struggling with the gap between their preferred version of what God should require and what He actually requires. Naaman's question, 'Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel?' (5:12), is the question everyone asks when God's appointed means seems unworthy of the outcome God promises. The teacher should help students name their own 'rivers of Damascus' and press them toward the Jordan, toward the specific acts of obedient faith that their pride or preference is talking them out of.

Question 1

Student Question:

Read 2 Kings 5:1–5. Naaman is introduced as a great man, a mighty warrior, favored by his king, but he is a leper. The chain of events that leads him toward healing begins with a ‘little girl,’ a captured Israelite servant who says to her mistress, ‘Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy’ (5:3). What does this detail about the girl’s witness tell us about the kind of people God uses to set His purposes in motion, and what does her confident faith about Elisha’s God tell us about the testimony she carried from her home?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The introduction of the captive Israelite girl is one of the most striking compositional choices in 2 Kings. The narrator has just told us that Naaman is a great man, mighty, honored, victorious (5:1). He is the kind of man whose biography would fill a book. And then the very next verse introduces ‘a little girl’ (5:2), nameless, captured, enslaved, whose entire speaking role in the story is a single sentence of confident faith. The contrast is as deliberate as it is powerful.

What she says is theologically dense for its brevity. She does not just say ‘there is a prophet in Israel.’ She says ‘Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy’ (5:3). She is not uncertain. She has no doubt that Elisha could heal Naaman, because she has no doubt about the God Elisha represents. The testimony she carries is not institutional loyalty to Israelite religion; it is living faith in the God who acts.

For the teacher, this moment raises the question of what testimony we carry from our own home and community into the places where we are deployed by God, sometimes against our will. The girl did not choose to be in Syria. She was taken there. But she did not let the circumstances of her captivity extinguish her faith or silence her voice. She spoke the word that set the whole chain of events in motion, and she never appears again. She is the unnamed catalyst of one of the most important missionary moments in the Old Testament.

Jesus specifically cites Naaman’s cleansing in Luke 4:27 to make the point that God’s grace has always exceeded the ethnic and national boundaries Israel might have preferred. ‘There were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.’ The captive girl’s faith-filled word about the God of Israel became the instrument through which God demonstrated His sovereignty over a pagan nation’s suffering. God’s reach through the testimony of His people has always been wider than they expect.

The teacher should help the class see that the theology of witness in this passage is remarkably simple and remarkably demanding. The girl did not have a platform, a program, or a strategy. She had a situation, a fact about God, and a word spoken in faith. That combination is available to every person in the room.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God using the small, nameless, and powerless to set major redemptive events in motion
- The captive girl’s witness as an example of faith-filled testimony regardless of circumstance

- The reach of God's grace beyond Israel, established in the Old Testament and confirmed by Jesus in Luke 4:27
- The testimony we carry into our daily circumstances as the primary instrument of God's mission
- Naming and honoring the unnamed servants and witnesses who appear briefly in Scripture but matter enormously to God

Discussion Prompts

- What do you think enabled the captive girl to speak about God with such confidence given her circumstances?
- Why do you think the narrator leaves her nameless? What does that choice communicate about how God works and what He values?
- If God is willing to use a nameless captive girl's single sentence to begin one of the most significant miraculous healings in the Old Testament, what does that say about the potential of your ordinary words spoken in faith?

Question 2

Student Question:

The captive girl had been taken from her family by force, was living as a servant in a foreign land, and was under no obligation to help her captors. Yet she spoke up about the God of Israel with confidence and without apparent bitterness. Where in your own life have your circumstances made it easy to justify staying silent about God, and what does her example challenge you to do differently?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question moves the captive girl's example from observation to honest self-examination. She had every human reason to remain silent. She was a captive, taken by force from her family and her homeland. She served the household of the very commander whose army had taken her. If she felt anger, bitterness, or a desire to watch Naaman suffer the consequences of his leprosy, those feelings would have been entirely understandable. Instead she spoke up. Instead she pointed toward the God of the nation that had been invaded.

The teacher should explore what made that possible. The text does not explain the girl's interior life. But her action implies a faith that was larger than her circumstances, a knowledge of God's character that transcended the injustice done to her, and a genuine care for Naaman's suffering that went beyond the boundaries of her own grievance. This is not a passive or sentimental response to injustice; it is a spiritually formed response rooted in a God big enough to absorb her circumstances without collapsing.

For the class, the question is about the circumstances that become our justifications for silence. 'My coworkers would just think I'm weird.' 'My family has heard it before.' 'I'm not in a good

place spiritually right now.’ ‘I don’t want to be preachy.’ These are real concerns and some of them are worth taking seriously. But the captive girl’s example cuts through all of them. She spoke up from a position of maximum disadvantage, and the word she spoke is still echoing through Scripture two and a half millennia later.

The teacher should also note that the captive girl’s witness was directed at someone who could actually act on it: Naaman’s wife, who told Naaman, who told the king of Syria. She was strategic as well as faithful. Effective witness is not random. It is attentive to the person and the moment.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The circumstances that become our justifications for silence about God
- The relationship between our own spiritual formation and our capacity to witness under pressure or injustice
- The strategic dimension of witness: speaking to the right person at the right moment
- Faith larger than personal grievance as the condition for generous witness to the God of the gospel
- The long reach of a single word spoken in faith: what we say today may echo far beyond what we can see

Discussion Prompts

- What circumstances in your own life make it most tempting to stay silent about God, and how do you justify that silence?
- How does the captive girl’s example challenge your own sense of what it takes to be in a position to witness effectively?
- Who in your current circle of relationships is in a situation where a single sentence about God’s power or care could set something significant in motion?

Question 3

Student Question:

Read 2 Kings 5:6–14. Naaman arrives at Elisha’s door with letters from the king of Syria and a fortune in gifts. Elisha sends a servant with simple instructions: wash seven times in the Jordan. Naaman is furious. His expectation of a dramatic ceremony is thwarted by what seems like an insultingly simple command. What does Naaman’s initial response reveal about the relationship between pride and obedience, and what finally brings him to wash as Elisha commanded?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Naaman’s arrival at Elisha’s door is a study in collision between status and the word of God. He comes with all the trappings of greatness, letters from a king, a fortune in precious metals and garments, horses and chariots, the full expectation that his importance will be recognized. Elisha

does not come out to meet him. He sends a servant with a message. 'Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean' (5:10).

Naaman's fury is entirely predictable from a human standpoint. He had expected a dramatic ceremony, a personal audience with the prophet, the placing of a hand over the diseased place, a prayer to the God of Israel called down with appropriate theatrical weight. Instead he gets a servant with a message and a direction to a muddy river. 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?' (5:12). This question is the voice of pride in every generation. If the appointed means does not match my expectations, perhaps I can substitute something more impressive, something closer to home, something that involves less humbling of myself.

What finally brings Naaman to the Jordan is the voice of his own servants, speaking with the simple logic of love: '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?' (5:13). They are pointing out the absurdity of his resistance. He would have performed a great feat without hesitation. The simplicity of the command is precisely what his pride cannot accept. And yet it is exactly the simplicity that tests whether his trust is in God or in his own performance.

The moment he steps into the Jordan is the moment of obedient faith. He dips seven times, the number of completeness and covenant, and 'his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean' (5:14). The comparison is not accidental. The great general whose pride was the obstacle is now described in terms of a child's skin. The one who thought himself too grand for the Jordan is given the cleanness that belongs to the most humble and unassuming of creatures.

For the teacher, the pride-versus-obedience dynamic in Naaman is one of the most directly transferable patterns in the Old Testament. It applies to anyone who has resisted God's appointed means of any kind because those means seemed too simple, too undignified, or inconsistent with their sense of how God should work.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Pride as the primary obstacle to obedient faith: preferring one's own expectations over God's appointed means
- The word of God delivered through servants and simple commands, not always through grand ceremonies
- Naaman's 'rivers of Damascus' as the perennial human preference for a more dignified or culturally appropriate substitute for what God has actually said
- The number seven as a marker of completeness and covenant fulfillment in the act of washing
- The role of faithful, reasonable voices (Naaman's servants) in calling a proud person back to obedience

- The simplicity of God's commands as a test of whether trust is in God or in one's own performance

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think Elisha did not come out to meet Naaman personally? What was he communicating by sending a servant with a simple message?
- What are the 'rivers of Damascus' in your own experience, the more culturally acceptable or personally comfortable substitutes you have been tempted to offer in place of what God has actually required?
- Why is it often harder to obey God when His command seems simple than when it seems demanding? What does that reveal about where our confidence is actually placed?

Question 4

Student Question:

Naaman's servants reasoned with him: 'If the prophet had commanded you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'' (5:13)? His pride had almost talked him out of the miracle God had waiting for him. In what area of your walk with God has your pride or your expectation of how things should look been the obstacle between you and what God has for you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This transformation question takes the doctrinal ground of Q3 and presses it into the most personally confronting territory of the lesson. Naaman's pride was not an unusual character flaw; it was a completely normal human response to a command that did not match his sense of how things should work. The danger of that normal human response is that it can keep a person from the very thing God has prepared for them.

The phrase 'his servants came near and spoke to him' (5:13) deserves attention. Naaman was not a man who received advice from subordinates easily. His whole world was built on a hierarchy in which he gave the orders. But in this moment, the people below him in rank had a clearer view of reality than he did, because pride had clouded his vision. The teacher can use this to talk about the importance of surrounding ourselves with people who will speak truth to us when our pride is talking us out of obedience.

Practically, the question asks students to identify a specific area where pride or expectation has been the obstacle. This is not primarily about dramatic spiritual crises; it is often about the texture of daily obedience. The pride that resists confessing a sin to someone we have wronged because we do not want to appear weak. The pride that avoids a specific form of service in the church because it is not impressive enough. The pride that keeps us from asking for help when we need it. All of these are Jordan River moments where the simple, humbling act is precisely what God has appointed.

The teacher should also gently note that Naaman's pride was most visible in his expectations about how God should work. He had a picture of the healing in his mind, and when God's actual method did not match the picture, he nearly walked away. We do this too: we have a picture of how God should answer our prayer, and when the answer comes in an unexpected form, we can miss it entirely because it does not look like what we were waiting for.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The way pride constructs a picture of how God should work and resists what does not match that picture
- The need for truth-telling community: people around us who will call us back to obedience when pride is winning
- Practical pride in daily obedience: the small, humbling acts that our dignity resists and God has appointed
- Recognizing God's answers and God's means even when they do not arrive in the expected form
- The relationship between humility and the capacity to receive what God has prepared for us

Discussion Prompts

- What is your personal equivalent of Naaman's anger, a specific command or means God has given you that your pride resists because it does not match your expectations?
- Who are the servants in your life who can speak the equivalent of 'if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it?' and are you willing to hear them?
- How has your picture of how God should answer a particular prayer ever kept you from recognizing the answer He actually gave?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read 2 Kings 5:15–19. When Naaman is cleansed, he returns to Elisha and declares, 'Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel' (5:15). He offers gifts, which Elisha refuses. He asks to take home two mule-loads of Israelite soil, and he asks for Elisha's understanding when he is required to bow in the house of Rimmon with his master the king. What does Naaman's transformed confession and his two practical questions reveal about the nature of genuine conversion and the real challenges of new faith lived out in a hostile environment?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Naaman's confession upon his return is theologically remarkable for the era and the context. 'Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel' (5:15). This is monotheistic confession from a pagan Syrian general, standing before an Israelite prophet, after an encounter

with the God of Israel that he did not expect and did not deserve. His language ('I know') is not tentative. He has moved from proud expectation to genuine conviction.

His offer of gifts to Elisha is equally significant. He wants to give something, because the healing has transformed his understanding of what has value. Elisha's refusal is not an accident; it is a deliberate teaching moment. The grace of God cannot be purchased. It can only be received. If Elisha had taken the silver, Naaman might have concluded that God's favor operates like all other favors in the ancient world: you pay the right person the right price and you receive the service. Elisha's refusal preserves the integrity of the miracle as an act of sovereign grace.

Naaman's two requests are practically minded and spiritually sincere. He asks for Israelite soil, presumably because he believes he can worship Israel's God on Israel's ground (a common ancient Near Eastern assumption about territorial deities). This is theologically confused, but it is the best theology he has available. Elisha does not correct him on the soil request; he receives it as the genuine expression of a new faith learning to walk.

The request regarding the house of Rimmon is more complex. Naaman's duties require him to attend the king at the pagan temple. He is not asking for permission to worship Rimmon; he is asking for Elisha's understanding of a situation he cannot avoid. Elisha's response, 'Go in peace' (5:19), is neither a full endorsement nor a flat prohibition. It is pastoral wisdom for a new believer navigating genuine structural conflicts in a pagan context. The teacher should help students see that the text does not resolve every tension Naaman faces; it simply releases him into the grace of God to work it out.

The broader lesson for new believers and for the church is that genuine conversion does not instantly remove all the environmental pressures and structural obligations that the old life created. Naaman is going back to Syria. His king will still require his presence at the temple. His integrity in navigating that will be tested. The grace of God given at the Jordan must now be lived out in the house of Rimmon, and that requires ongoing wisdom, not just a one-time decision.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Genuine conversion producing genuine confession: Naaman's monotheistic declaration as a real transformation
- The refusal of payment for grace: Elisha's action preserves the integrity of sovereign, unearned mercy
- The theological confusion of new faith expressed in imperfect ways (the soil request) and God's patient reception of it
- The pastoral complexity of new faith lived in a still-pagan environment: the house of Rimmon problem
- The difference between endorsing compromise and offering pastoral wisdom to someone navigating genuine structural conflict

- The long road from encounter to formation: Naaman's conversion is a beginning, not an arrival

Discussion Prompts

- What does Naaman's confession after the healing tell you about what genuine transformation looks like, and how does it compare to how conversion is often talked about today?
- Why does Elisha refuse Naaman's gifts? What would it have communicated about God's grace if he had accepted them?
- How does the 'house of Rimmon' situation apply to the pressures believers face today from employers, families, or culture? What does it look like to navigate those without either compromise or self-righteous withdrawal?

Question 6

Student Question:

Naaman returned to a pagan king's court where he had to keep serving, where the pressures of his old world did not simply disappear. The compromises and pressures of his environment did not go away when his heart changed. Where in your own life do you face the equivalent of 'bowing in the house of Rimmon,' pressures from work, family, or culture to conform to expectations that conflict with your faith, and how do you navigate those tensions faithfully?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This transformation question takes Naaman's house of Rimmon dilemma and makes it personal. The question is not whether believers will ever face environments where their faith creates friction with the expectations around them. They will. The question is how they navigate those environments with both integrity and wisdom.

The teacher should help students distinguish between genuine structural obligation and lazy accommodation. Naaman was going back to his job. His job required attendance at the king's religious ceremonies. He did not have the option of simply resigning or telling the king he would no longer attend. His situation was not a choice between obedience and convenience; it was a situation where faithfulness and vocation were genuinely in tension. That tension is real for many people in the room: the employee whose workplace culture celebrates things Scripture condemns, the student in a classroom where faith is mocked, the family member whose holiday table is dominated by values at odds with the gospel.

The Elisha response, 'Go in peace,' is neither a blank check for compromise nor a call to martyrdom over every cultural pressure. It is pastoral wisdom that releases Naaman to navigate his specific situation under the grace of God, trusting that the God who met him in the Jordan will meet him also in Damascus. For the class, the parallel is that the God who meets us in the assembly on the Lord's Day goes with us into whatever Monday brings.

The teacher should encourage students to be honest about the specific pressure they are facing rather than staying at a general level. The gap between Sunday conviction and Monday behavior is one of the most common and most serious formation problems in the church, and this passage names it with unusual pastoral precision.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The tension between genuine structural obligation and lazy accommodation to cultural pressure
- The difference between navigating a pagan environment with integrity and simply accommodating it for comfort
- The God who meets us in the assembly also goes with us into every Monday: God's presence is not restricted to sacred spaces
- The gap between Sunday conviction and weekday behavior as a persistent formation challenge
- Pastoral wisdom for believers navigating genuine structural conflict as distinct from inviting unnecessary cultural conflict

Discussion Prompts

- What is your specific equivalent of the house of Rimmon, the place or situation where your faith creates friction with the expectations of your environment?
- How do you distinguish between genuinely navigating an unavoidable cultural situation with integrity and simply accommodating it because obedience is costly?
- What would it look like to carry the grace of God you encounter in the assembly and in prayer into the specific pressures you face this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Read 2 Kings 5:20–27. Gehazi watches Naaman's silver and garments leave with Naaman, then runs after him and lies to get them for himself. When he returns, Elisha confronts him: 'Did not my heart go with you when the man turned from his chariot to meet you?' (5:26). Naaman's leprosy transfers to Gehazi. What does Gehazi's sin reveal about the nature of covetousness, the specific danger of being close to God's work without letting it transform your own heart, and the connection between inner compromise and outward consequence?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Gehazi's sin is one of the most chilling episodes in the Elisha narratives precisely because of where it occurs. He is not a stranger to God's work. He is the prophet's personal assistant. He has been present for the widow's oil, for the Shunammite's son being raised, for the stew healed, for the feeding of the hundred, and now for Naaman's cleansing. He has a front-row

seat to the most sustained display of God's power in this era of Israel's history. And he runs after Naaman's silver.

Elisha's words of confrontation cut to the moral center of what Gehazi has done: 'Is it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants?' (5:26). The question is not primarily about the things themselves but about the 'time.' This is the era when God is demonstrating His sovereignty over the nations through His prophet. It is a time for testimony, not for transaction. Gehazi has taken the moment of God's grace toward a pagan general and turned it into a personal financial opportunity. He has defected from the kingdom of God to the kingdom of stuff.

The leprosy that transfers from Naaman to Gehazi is not merely poetic justice. It is a theologically precise consequence. Naaman came to Israel with leprosy and left without it. Gehazi served Israel's prophet with access to all of God's power and chose money instead. He leaves with the leprosy Naaman left behind. The disease that Naaman was freed from becomes the permanent condition of the man who chose greed over grace.

For the teacher, the Gehazi warning is directly relevant to anyone who serves in close proximity to the work of the church. Knowledge of God's word without transformation by God's word is not a stable condition. Covetousness is specifically named by Jesus as one of the heart conditions that defiles a person from within (Mark 7:22), and it is the one sin that most easily disguises itself as reasonable desire. Gehazi did not think of himself as greedy. He thought Naaman had brought gifts and it seemed wrong to let them go to waste.

The connection between Gehazi's inner compromise and the outward consequence is immediate and undeniable. But the teacher should note that not all inner compromise produces immediate visible consequences. The text gives us Gehazi as a warning about where covetousness ultimately leads, not as a promise that every sin will produce immediate visible punishment in this life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The danger of proximity to God's work without personal transformation: knowing without becoming
- Covetousness as a sin that disguises itself as reasonable desire rather than announcing itself as wickedness
- The 'time' question: the timing of God's work and the obligation to align our hearts with what God is doing rather than exploit it
- The theological precision of the leprosy transfer: consequences that are proportionate and revelatory, not merely punitive
- The difference between serving the church's mission and using the church's mission for personal benefit
- Immediate visible consequence as a warning about where unaddressed covetousness leads, not as a universal pattern

Discussion Prompts

- What do you think made Gehazi vulnerable to this specific temptation after everything he had witnessed?
- How does covetousness disguise itself as something reasonable or even deserved? Can you give an example from your own experience?
- What does it mean that Elisha said 'my heart went with you when the man turned from his chariot to meet you'? What does that tell us about the kind of integrity God expects from those who serve in His name?

Question 8

Student Question:

Gehazi served alongside Elisha and witnessed miracle after miracle, yet his heart was captured by Naaman's silver and garments the moment the opportunity arose. Proximity to God's work does not automatically produce godly character. Where in your own life is there a gap between your knowledge of God and your actual desires, a Gehazi-shaped place where you know what is right but your heart is still reaching for something else?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question takes Gehazi's story and applies it to the specific danger of knowledge without transformation. The warning is urgent for anyone in a Bible study class, anyone who has been hearing God's word long enough to know it well but not long enough to have let it fully reshape their desires.

Jesus said that 'where your treasure is, there your heart will be also' (Matt 6:21). Gehazi's treasure was located in Naaman's silver, even while his body was serving Elisha. His physical presence was in the prophets' school; his heart was on the road to Damascus chasing the caravan. This is the defining characteristic of spiritual hypocrisy: the location of the heart is different from the location of the body and the appearance.

The teacher should help students identify the Gehazi-shaped places in their own lives honestly. Not dramatically, but practically. Is there a specific category of desire (financial, relational, reputational, comfort-related) where you know what God says is right but your heart is still reaching in a different direction? That is the gap that needs to be named, confessed, and brought into the light of God's word and the community of the church.

The connection to the formation aim of the lesson is direct: Naaman's pride was his barrier to obedience; Gehazi's covetousness was his. Both were barriers that the person in question did not fully see until the crisis forced them into the open. The question for the class is whether they are willing to do the self-examination before the crisis rather than after.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The gap between theological knowledge and heart transformation as the defining spiritual danger for the long-term church member
- Where your treasure is (Matt 6:21) as the diagnostic question for locating the actual residence of your heart
- Practical self-examination: naming specific categories of desire that remain unconformed to God's word
- The value of confession and community in bringing hidden covetousness into the light before it produces Gehazi-level consequences
- The long, slow work of desire-transformation as distinct from behavior modification: wanting what God says is right, not just doing it

Discussion Prompts

- Where in your life is there a Gehazi-shaped gap, a place where you know what God says is right but your heart is still reaching for something else?
- How do you distinguish between legitimate desire and covetousness in your own inner life?
- What practical discipline or community relationship helps you keep your actual desires aligned with what God values, rather than just keeping your behavior in line while your heart wanders?

Question 9

Student Question:

Read 2 Kings 5:1–14 carefully in light of Matthew 28:18–20, Acts 2:38, and Romans 6:3–4. Naaman's cleansing came through humble obedience to a specific, God-appointed means: washing seven times in the Jordan as the prophet commanded. His pride had nearly kept him from it because the means seemed too simple. How does Naaman's story illuminate the principle of obedient faith that does what God commands in God's appointed way, and how does this principle apply to the New Testament pattern of salvation, including baptism as God's appointed means of entering into Christ, without claiming that Naaman's washing was itself Christian baptism?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal center of the lesson and must be taught with both precision and pastoral warmth. The principle at work in Naaman's healing is the principle of obedient faith: genuine trust in God expresses itself in doing exactly what God has commanded in exactly the way God has appointed, even when the appointed means seems too simple, too undignified, or inconsistent with our expectations.

Naaman's pride nearly kept him from the Jordan. The rivers of Damascus were closer, more impressive, and more comfortable. But Elisha had not said 'wash in an impressive river.' He had said 'wash in the Jordan seven times.' The specific means mattered. It was not the water that

cleansed Naaman; it was the God who appointed the water and the act. But the God who appointed the act required the act. Substituting a more convenient alternative would have produced nothing, not because there was chemical magic in the Jordan but because the God who heals specified how and where He would do it.

This principle applies with full force to the New Testament pattern of salvation. The New Testament is not vague or ambiguous about how a person comes into Christ. It is specific and consistent. Peter on Pentecost: 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38). Paul in Romans: 'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life' (Rom 6:3-4). Paul to the Galatians: 'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ' (Gal 3:27). Mark: 'Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved' (Mark 16:16).

The parallel with Naaman is not that his washing in the Jordan was Christian baptism; it was not. It was an Old Testament act of obedience under Elisha's prophetic authority, without the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, without the New Covenant, without the promise of the Spirit. The parallel is the principle: God appoints a specific means, He requires exactly that means, and the person's willingness to submit to the appointed means rather than a preferred substitute is the expression of genuine faith. Naaman submitting to the Jordan is structurally identical as a principle of obedient faith to the believer submitting to baptism: both are cases of doing what God said, the way God said to do it, even when it seemed unworthy of the promise attached to it.

The 'faith only' position, that baptism is a mere human work of no salvific significance and that salvation is received by faith prior to and independent of baptism, runs directly into the pattern established by Naaman. Was Naaman's washing a mere human work? Was he 'doing something to earn' his cleansing? No. The washing was the act of faith through which he received what God had already promised. In the same way, baptism is not a human merit that earns salvation; it is the act of obedient faith through which the believer receives the forgiveness Christ has already purchased. The church of Christ does not teach baptismal regeneration in the sense of the water having power in itself; it teaches that God has appointed baptism as the moment of entry into Christ and into the forgiveness His blood provides, just as He appointed the Jordan for Naaman and the Jordan delivered what God said it would deliver.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Obedient faith as doing what God commands in God's appointed way, not substituting a preferred alternative
- The specific means of grace in the New Testament: baptism as God's appointed act of entry into Christ (Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27)

- The Naaman parallel as a principle illustration, not a claim that Naaman's washing was Christian baptism
- The 'faith only' position refuted by the pattern of obedient faith: genuine trust expresses itself in doing what God said
- Baptism is not human merit but the act of obedient faith through which God's forgiveness is received, not earned
- The New Testament pattern of salvation: hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, being baptized for the forgiveness of sins
- The rivers of Damascus error: substituting a more comfortable or culturally acceptable alternative for God's specific appointment

Discussion Prompts

- How does the Naaman story help you explain the importance of obedient faith doing what God has specifically said rather than what seems equivalent or more convenient?
- What would you say to someone who argued that Naaman's washing was just symbolic and that his faith before he stepped into the water was what actually healed him?
- How do Acts 2:38 and Romans 6:3-4 together paint a picture of what baptism is and what it does, and how is that consistent with the principle illustrated in Naaman's Jordan washing?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back over all of 2 Kings 5:1-6:33, from the captive girl's witness to Elisha's vision of the fiery army, name one specific truth about God or one specific call on your life that has become more vivid through this passage, and describe one concrete step you will take this week in response.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question asks students to draw the threads of 2 Kings 5:1-6:33 together and name one truth and one step. These chapters contain a remarkable range of material: a captive girl's witness, a general's pride and humbling, a servant's greed, a floating axe head, an army of fire, and the blinding of an enemy force. Behind all of it is the same God, demonstrating the same sovereignty over nations, armies, elements, sight, sickness, and death, through the same authenticated prophet.

Encourage students to be honest about which thread of this passage caught them. The girl's witness. Naaman's pride. Gehazi's covetousness. The fiery army that Elisha's servant could not see until his eyes were opened (6:17). That last image, the hills full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha while the Aramean army closed in, is one of the most visually arresting moments in the whole book. 'Those who are with us are more than those who are with them'

(6:16). It is a statement about the invisible realities that surround God's people in every generation, not just in miraculous eras.

The step should be concrete. If the passage hit on pride, the step is a specific act of obedience that pride has been resisting. If the passage hit on witness, the step is a specific person to whom one word about God could be spoken this week. If the passage hit on covetousness, the step is a specific conversation with God about a desire that has been pulling in the wrong direction. If the passage hit on the fiery army, the step is a specific act of trust in God's unseen presence in a situation where the visible circumstances are overwhelming.

Close with the wonder of 6:16–17. Elisha's servant woke up surrounded by an Aramean army and thought the situation was hopeless. Elisha prayed for his eyes to be opened, and he saw the hills full of fire. God's resources were always there. The servant simply could not see them until God opened his eyes. Every person in the room has a situation where they can only see the Aramean army. The invitation of this passage is to pray for opened eyes, and to trust that what surrounds the people of God is greater than what surrounds the people of this age.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Synthesis across a multi-chapter passage with a wide range of characters and events
- Specificity in application: naming which truth from the passage spoke most directly to one's current situation
- The fiery army as a standing image of the invisible resources that surround God's people in every generation
- The 'those with us are more than those with them' principle as a daily faith commitment, not just a miraculous-era promise
- Accountability in community: holding one another to the named steps

Discussion Prompts

- Which character or moment in 2 Kings 5–6 stayed with you most as you worked through this lesson, and what does that tell you about where God is speaking to you?
- What is the one specific truth about God that has become clearer or more vivid through these chapters, and what difference should it make in how you live this week?
- If God were to open your eyes to the unseen resources surrounding your current hardest situation, as He opened Elisha's servant's eyes, what do you think you would see?