

Small Group Study Guide: Restoration and Reality

Based on 2 Kings 8:1-15



Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word, and to give wisdom as you discuss both the hope of restoration and the reality of spiritual warfare in our world.

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Share a time when you lost something important and later had it restored to you. How did that experience change your perspective?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. God's Protection Through Difficult Times

The Shunammite woman was removed from Israel before judgment came, protected during seven years of famine, and then had everything restored.

2. The Tension of Prophetic Ministry

Elisha experienced both the joy of delivering good news and the burden of knowing terrible things were coming that he couldn't prevent.

3. We Live in a Broken World

Humanity lost access to Eden, and we now live in a world where evil persists and grows, even as God's promises remain true.

4. The Church Will Persevere

Despite growing darkness, Jesus promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against His church.

Discussion Questions

Section 1: The Shunammite Woman's Restoration (2 Kings 8:1-6)

- 1. What motivated the Shunammite woman's generosity toward Elisha, and how did that generosity ultimately lead to her blessing?**
- 2. The woman was away from her home for seven years but avoided the devastation of war and famine. How does this illustrate that sometimes our difficulties are actually blessings in disguise?**
- 3. Share a time when you were frustrated with God about your circumstances, only to later realize He was protecting you from something worse.**
- 4. How does the Shunammite woman's story parallel the gospel message of exile and restoration? (Think about Eden, the fall, and our future restoration)**

Section 2: Elisha and Hazael (2 Kings 8:7-15)

- 5. Why do you think Elisha wept when he saw Hazael? What does this reveal about the burden of knowing truth that others don't want to hear?**
 - 6. The pastor mentioned that "sometimes telling the truth or speaking the truth and sharing God's message is easy...and other times it's as difficult as can be." When have you experienced the difficulty of speaking God's truth?**
 - 7. Hazael acknowledged that the evil things Elisha prophesied were "gross," yet he still went on to do them. What does this teach us about human nature and the progression of sin?**
 - 8. Ben-Hadad tried to use wealth (40 camel loads of gifts) to manipulate God's blessing. How do we see this same mindset in modern Christianity? How is this different from biblical generosity?**
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Theological Reflection

The Already-But-Not-Yet Kingdom

9. **The sermon described how Adam and Eve were meant to "spread Eden across the globe." How does the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) mirror this original mandate?**
 10. **We live between the "already" of Christ's victory and the "not yet" of His return. How should this reality shape how we view both cultural decline and gospel advancement?**
 11. **Jesus promised the church would prevail (Matthew 16:18), but also promised persecution (John 15:18-20). How do we hold both truths in tension without becoming either triumphalistic or despairing?**
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Personal Application

Spiritual Warfare and Readiness

12. **The pastor asked: "Are we armed with the gospel? Are we armed with the armor of God?" Take inventory: Which piece of spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:10-18) do you feel weakest in right now?**
 - Helmet of salvation
 - Breastplate of righteousness
 - Belt of truth
 - Shoes of the gospel of peace
 - Shield of faith
 - Sword of the Spirit (God's Word)
 13. **What practical steps can you take this week to strengthen that area?**
 14. **The sermon mentioned that the fastest growing religion globally is not Christianity. How does this reality affect your urgency about sharing the gospel?**
 15. **The pastor expressed a desire to see the gospel win in our local region. What role can you personally play in gospel advancement right where you live?**
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Practical Action Steps

Choose one or two to commit to this week:

- **Generosity Check:** Like the Shunammite woman, look for ways to be generous to God's servants or those in ministry without expecting anything in return.
 - **Truth-Telling:** Identify one relationship where you've been avoiding a difficult gospel conversation. Pray for courage and opportunity to speak truth in love.
 - **Armor Assessment:** Spend time each morning this week intentionally "putting on" each piece of spiritual armor through prayer and Scripture.
 - **Local Mission:** Research and pray for one specific area of spiritual darkness in your community. Ask God how He might use you to bring light there.
 - **Gratitude in Difficulty:** Journal about a current difficulty you're facing, asking God to reveal if there's a hidden blessing or protection you haven't recognized.
 - **Deeper Study:** Commit to going deeper in theology and church history. Choose one book or resource to begin studying.
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Prayer Focus

Pray together for:

- Eyes to see the hidden blessings in our difficulties
 - Courage to speak difficult truths when needed
 - Protection from the prosperity gospel and other false teachings
 - Revival in our local region and communities
 - Strength to endure as evil grows darker
 - Faithfulness to spread the gospel regardless of cultural opposition
 - The persecuted church around the world
 - Hearts prepared for Christ's return
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Closing Reflection

Read together: Jeremiah 20:9 *"But if I say, 'I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name,' his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot."*

Even when the message is difficult, even when the world grows darker, God's Word is too good to keep inside. May we be people who cannot help but speak of what we have seen and heard.

For Further Study

- **The Shunammite Woman's Story:** 2 Kings 4:8-37
 - **Spiritual Armor:** Ephesians 6:10-20
 - **The Great Commission:** Matthew 28:16-20
 - **Persecution Promise:** John 15:18-25
 - **Church Prevailing:** Matthew 16:13-20
 - **Jeremiah's Burden:** Jeremiah 20:7-18
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Leader Note: This is heavy material. Make space for honest emotions and questions. Some may be wrestling with fear about cultural decline or personal persecution. Point them consistently back to Christ's victory and promises while acknowledging the real spiritual battle we face.

5-Day Devotional: Standing Firm in Troubled Times



Day 1: The Blessing of Divine Protection

Reading: 2 Kings 8:1-6; Psalm 91:1-16

Devotional:

The Shunammite woman's story reveals a profound truth: God's warnings are acts of mercy. When Elisha told her to flee before the famine, she trusted and obeyed without fully understanding the devastation she would avoid. Sometimes God removes us from situations not to punish us, but to protect us from judgments we cannot see coming. Her seven-year exile seemed like loss, but it was actually salvation. When we face unexpected changes or feel displaced from what we love, we must trust that God sees what we cannot. Our wilderness seasons often shield us from greater harm. Like this faithful woman, our obedience in difficulty positions us for eventual restoration. God's protective hand guides us through valleys we don't understand, preparing us for the restoration only He can orchestrate.

Day 2: Restoration After the Wilderness

Reading: Job 42:10-17; Joel 2:25-27

Devotional:

After seven years away, the Shunammite woman returned to find her land restored. This mirrors our spiritual journey. Humanity lost Eden through sin, wandering in a broken world far from God's perfect presence. Yet Scripture promises restoration. Just as the woman's faithfulness led to her land being returned with accumulated blessings, our faith in Christ positions us for ultimate restoration to the Tree of Life. The wilderness seasons we endure are not wasted time. God is working even when we cannot see it, preparing both us and our circumstances for redemption. The number seven in Scripture represents completeness. After the complete season of testing, God brings complete restoration. Whatever you have lost, whatever feels broken, God specializes in restoration that exceeds what was originally taken.

Day 3: The Weight of Prophetic Truth

Reading: Jeremiah 20:7-13; 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Devotional:

Elisha wept before Hazael, knowing the devastation to come yet unable to prevent it. This captures the burden of speaking God's truth in a fallen world. Like Jeremiah, who tried to stop prophesying because of the persecution it brought, those who speak for God often bear heavy weights. The gospel message includes both beautiful redemption and sobering warnings about judgment and evil. We cannot cherry-pick only comfortable truths. Speaking truth means sometimes delivering difficult messages that ruffle feathers and create opposition. Yet like Jeremiah discovered, God's word burns too deeply within us to remain silent. The same Spirit that brings us joy in sharing salvation compels us to warn against deception. If you feel burdened by the responsibility of truth-telling, you are in good company with the prophets who went before you.

Day 4: Recognizing Spiritual Warfare

Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20; 1 Peter 5:8-11

Devotional:

The conflict between Elisha and Syria was more than political—it was spiritual warfare. Today, we face similar battles disguised as cultural conflicts. The rapid spread of false gospels, the rise of apostasy, and increasing hostility toward biblical truth are not merely societal trends but spiritual attacks. We cannot fight spiritual battles with physical weapons. Paul instructs us to put on God's armor: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and God's Word. These are not passive accessories but active weapons. The darkness is growing, but Christ promised the gates of hell will not prevail against His church. We must recognize we are soldiers in a war, not spectators in a debate. Are you equipped? Have you put on your armor today? The battle is real, and neutrality is not an option.

Day 5: Persevering Through Dark Times

Reading: Matthew 24:9-14; Romans 8:31-39

Devotional:

Jesus warned that if the world hated Him, it would hate His followers. We were promised persecution, not comfort. As darkness increases, we may face trials the Western church has avoided for generations. Yet this is not cause for despair but for preparation. The same God who preserved Israel through judgment, who restored the Shunammite woman after exile, who sustained Elisha and Jeremiah through their tears—this God walks with us through every dark valley. Our hope is not in avoiding difficulty but in Christ's presence within it. The gospel will advance. The church will persevere. Individual believers may suffer, but the body of Christ cannot be destroyed. Prepare your heart now. Deepen your roots in Scripture. Build your faith on the solid rock. When persecution comes, those with shallow faith will fall away, but those grounded in truth will stand firm and shine brighter in the darkness.

