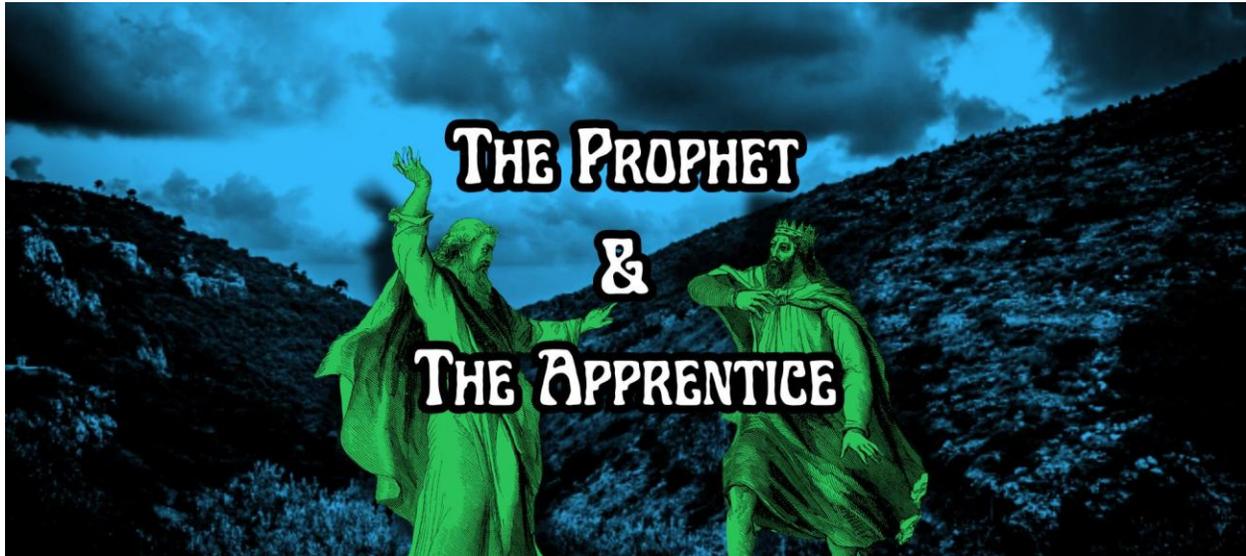


Small Group Guide: The Unexpected Ways of God

Based on 2 Kings 5 - The Story of Naaman



Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin your time together asking God to open hearts and minds to His unexpected ways of working in our lives.

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Question: Share about a time when something turned out completely different than you expected. Was it better or worse than what you anticipated?

Sermon Recap (5 minutes)

The story of Naaman teaches us that:

- God often works in unexpected ways
 - His grace extends to everyone, not just those we think "deserve" it
 - The people closest to God can still betray Him
 - We should never give up praying for those who seem far from God
-

Discussion Questions (30-40 minutes)

Understanding the Story

1. **What surprised you most about the story of Naaman?** Why do you think God chose to heal an enemy commander of Israel rather than someone within His own people?
2. **Naaman almost walked away from his healing because it didn't come the way he expected.** Have you ever almost missed a blessing from God because it didn't look the way you thought it should? Share your experience.
3. **The little servant girl had faith that the prophet could heal Naaman, even though he was her captor.** What does this teach us about forgiveness and seeing people through God's eyes?

Personal Application

4. **Naaman surrounded himself with wise counsel who stopped him from making a terrible mistake.** Who are the wise counselors in your life? How can you be better at listening to godly wisdom, especially when you're angry or disappointed?
5. **The pastor mentioned that "God will not always work the way we want Him to, but it doesn't mean we don't have the same desire."** What are you currently praying for where you need to release control over HOW God answers?
6. **Naaman asked for grace regarding his work situation—bowing in the temple while helping the king.** How do you navigate situations where your work or daily life puts you in morally complicated positions? Where do you draw the line?

Difficult Questions

7. **Gehazi, who walked closely with Elisha, became the villain of the story.** Why do you think people who are close to God sometimes fall away? What safeguards can we put in place in our own lives?
8. **The sermon connected this story to Judas betraying Jesus.** What warning does this give us about familiarity with God versus genuine relationship with God?
9. **The pastor warned about being discerning regarding ministries that take advantage of people financially.** How can we be generous while also being wise? What are red flags to watch for?

Reaching Others

10. **The sermon emphasized that "no one is too far gone" and mentioned Paul as an example.** Who in your life seems far from God? How does this story encourage you to keep praying for them?
 11. **Naaman came to faith because someone showed him unexpected love and healing.** How can you show unexpected love to someone who might be considered an "enemy" or difficult person in your life?
-

Key Takeaways (10 minutes)

Have group members share which of these resonated most with them:

- **Expect the unexpected** - God's ways are not our ways
 - **Surround yourself with wise counsel** - Don't let pride cause you to miss God's blessing
 - **Grace is for everyone** - The gospel extends to all people, even those we might not expect
 - **Don't put people on pedestals** - Anyone can fall; keep your eyes on Jesus
 - **Never give up on anyone** - The most unexpected people can come to faith
 - **Be discerning** - Test everything against Scripture
-

Practical Applications (15 minutes)

This Week's Challenge:

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice:

1. **Identify someone you've given up praying for** and commit to praying for them daily this week, believing God can do the unexpected.
2. **Reach out to a wise counselor** in your life and ask them to speak truth into a situation where you might be too close to see clearly.
3. **Show unexpected kindness** to someone who is difficult or who you might consider an "enemy" (coworker, neighbor, family member).

4. **Examine your expectations of God.** Journal about areas where you're trying to tell God HOW to answer your prayers rather than trusting His way.
 5. **Check your heart regarding money and ministry.** Are you giving out of obligation or joy? Are you supporting ministries that genuinely preach the gospel?
 6. **Have an honest conversation** about a work situation that puts you in a morally complicated position. Seek godly counsel on how to navigate it.
-

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

- Share specific people you're praying for who seem far from God
 - Pray for discernment in recognizing God's unexpected ways
 - Ask God to help you release control over HOW He answers prayers
 - Pray for protection against the love of money and betrayal of faith
 - Pray for wisdom in navigating morally complicated situations
-

Scripture for Further Study

- **2 Kings 5** (the full chapter)
 - **Luke 7:1-10** (The Roman Centurion's faith)
 - **Matthew 6:1-4** (Giving in secret)
 - **Proverbs 11:14** (Wisdom in many counselors)
 - **Isaiah 55:8-9** (God's ways are higher than our ways)
 - **Romans 2:11** (God shows no partiality)
-

Preparation for Next Week

Read the next passage in the Elisha narrative and come prepared to discuss how God continues to work in unexpected ways throughout Scripture.

5-Day Devotional: Expecting the Unexpected with God



Day 1: God Works Beyond Our Expectations

Reading: 2 Kings 5:1-7

Devotional:

Naaman expected healing to come with fanfare and ceremony, but God had a different plan. How often do we limit God by expecting Him to work only in ways we understand? The king of Israel tore his clothes in frustration, unable to see God's bigger picture. Yet God was already orchestrating healing for an enemy soldier through an unlikely prophet. Today, examine areas where you've been disappointed because God didn't answer the way you wanted. Perhaps He's working in unexpected ways you haven't recognized. God's methods may surprise us, but His purposes are always good. Are you willing to release your expectations and trust His wisdom? The blessing you're seeking might be coming in a package you don't expect.

Day 2: The Wisdom of Humble Counsel

Reading: 2 Kings 5:8-14; Proverbs 11:14

Devotional:

Naaman nearly missed his miracle because of wounded pride. A servant girl initiated his journey to healing, and his servants saved him from walking away from his blessing. Pride whispers that we deserve respect, recognition, and things done our way. Humility opens our hands to receive God's grace however it comes. Who are the wise counselors in your life speaking truth when your perspective narrows? Surround yourself with people who will lovingly challenge your blind spots and point you back to God's goodness. Naaman's healing came when he humbled himself enough to listen. Sometimes the most profound wisdom comes from unexpected voices—children, servants, those we might overlook. Don't let pride rob you of the blessing God is offering.

Day 3: Grace for the Unlikely

Reading: 2 Kings 5:15-19; Luke 7:1-10

Devotional:

The gospel is scandalously inclusive. A Syrian military commander—an enemy of Israel—received healing and came to faith in the one true God. This foreshadows the Roman centurion whose faith amazed Jesus. God's grace reaches beyond our tribal boundaries, our prejudices, our expectations of who "deserves" salvation. Who have you written off as too far gone? Paul murdered Christians before becoming Christianity's greatest evangelist. No one is beyond God's reach. The person you're praying for—the one who seems impossibly distant from faith—may be God's next unlikely hero. Naaman's story reminds us that geographical enemies can become spiritual family. Continue praying for those who seem far from God. Keep loving your enemies. You never know what blessing your faithfulness might release into their lives.

Day 4: Living Faith in a Broken World

Reading: 2 Kings 5:17-19; Daniel 1:8-16

Devotional:

Naaman faced a genuine dilemma: serving God while serving a pagan king. Elisha's response—"Go in peace"—acknowledges the complexity of living faithfully in a broken world. We face similar tensions: pursuing commission without greed, succeeding professionally without compromising spiritually, engaging culture without conforming to it. The key is your heart's orientation. Are you serving Christ in all things, even when circumstances require you to operate in imperfect systems? Daniel served pagan kings with excellence while maintaining devotion to God. Your workplace, your family dynamics, your civic responsibilities may place you in uncomfortable positions. God sees your heart. When you're doing your job faithfully, loving difficult people, and honoring commitments—even when it's complicated—He says, "Go in peace."

Day 5: Beware the Betrayal Within

Reading: 2 Kings 5:20-27; Matthew 26:14-16

Devotional:

The villain wasn't the enemy soldier but the prophet's servant. Gehazi walked closely with Elisha, witnessed miracles, yet betrayed him for silver—foreshadowing Judas's betrayal of Jesus. Proximity to God's work doesn't guarantee a transformed heart. This sobering truth calls for self-examination. Are there areas where you're serving God outwardly while harboring greed, bitterness, or deception inwardly? The most dangerous spiritual threats often come from within—our own compromises, our secret sins, our gradual drift. Gehazi thought he could have both worlds: appear faithful while secretly pursuing gain. His leprosy became a permanent reminder that God sees what we hide. Today, invite the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Confess hidden compromises. The gospel offers grace for genuine repentance, but judgment awaits persistent hypocrisy.