

Why Humility Leads To Christ

2 Kings 5:1-27

Who has hurt you?

Now, if they are hurting, do you have compassion for them?

What Does The Bible Say?

The king of Aram had great admiration for Naaman, the commander of his army, because through him the Lord had given Aram great victories. But though Naaman was a mighty warrior, he suffered from leprosy. (2 Kings 5:1 NLT)

God controls everyone, even those who do not acknowledge Him.

How Can You Obey?

2 At this time Aramean raiders had invaded the land of Israel, and among their captives was a young girl who had been given to Naaman's wife as a maid. 3 One day the girl said to her

mistress, “I wish my master would go to see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy.” (2 Kings 5:2-4 NLT)

Would you help your enemy?

4 So Naaman told the king what the young girl from Israel had said. 5 “Go and visit the prophet,” the king of Aram told him. “I will send a letter of introduction for you to take to the king of Israel.” So Naaman started out, carrying as gifts 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and ten sets of clothing. 6 The letter to the king of Israel said: “With this letter I present my servant Naaman. I want you to heal him of his leprosy.” 7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes in dismay and said, “Am I God, that I can give life and take it away? Why is this man asking me to heal someone with leprosy? I can see that he’s just trying to pick a fight with me.” (2 Kings 5:2–7 NLT)

Isn't it intriguing that this man Naaman is traveling to the nation where Yahweh's chosen people reside, but the ruler of that nation doesn't even genuinely know Yahweh?

What Does The Bible Say?

8 But when Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes in dismay, he sent this message to him:

“Why are you so upset? Send Naaman to me, and he will learn that there is a true prophet here in Israel.” 9 So Naaman went

with his horses and chariots and waited at the door of Elisha's house. 10 But Elisha sent a messenger out to him with this

message: “Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan

River. Then your skin will be restored, and you will be healed of your leprosy.” 11 But Naaman became angry and stalked away.

“I thought he would certainly come out to meet me!” he said. “I expected him to wave his hand over the leprosy and call on the

name of the Lord his God and heal me! 12 Aren't the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than any of the rivers of Israel? Why shouldn't I wash in them and be healed?" So Naaman turned and went away in a rage. (2 Kings 5:8–12 NLT)

How many times have you gotten upset because of your pride?

Naaman lost his temper first, then his pride, and finally his leprosy; that is the usual order in which proud rebellious sinners are converted.

Before the gospel cures us, it must first humble us. The gospel is all about humbling us.

How Can You Obey?

13 But his officers tried to reason with him and said, "Sir, if the prophet had told you to do something very difficult, wouldn't you have done it? So you should certainly obey him when he

says simply, ‘Go and wash and be cured!’ ” 14 So Naaman went down to the Jordan River and dipped himself seven times, as the man of God had instructed him. And his skin became as healthy as the skin of a young child, and he was healed!

15 Then Naaman and his entire party went back to find the man of God. They stood before him, and Naaman said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.” (2 Kings 5:13–15 NLT)

Faith without obedience isn’t faith at all.

This baptism foreshadows Christian baptism:

It points to millions more Gentile baptisms in the future.

Like Christian baptism, Naaman's baptism identified him with God and His people.

And, like Christian baptism, his baptism represented the passage from death to life.

What Does The Bible Say?

16 When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. 17 The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, 19 and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come.”

20 He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently.

21 Then he began to speak to them. “The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!”

22 Everyone spoke well of him and was amazed by the gracious words that came from his lips. “How can this be?” they asked. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” (Luke 4:16–22 NLT)

How do you see Jesus? A historical figure or God in the flesh?

How Can You Obey?

23 Then he said, “You will undoubtedly quote me this proverb: ‘Physician, heal yourself’—meaning, ‘Do miracles here in your hometown like those you did in Capernaum.’ 24 But I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his own hometown.

25 “Certainly there were many needy widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the heavens were closed for three and a half years, and a severe famine devastated the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them. He was sent instead to a foreigner—a widow of Zarephath in the land of Sidon. 27 And many in Israel

had leprosy in the time of the prophet Elisha, but the only one healed was Naaman, a Syrian.”

28 When they heard this, the people in the synagogue were furious. 29 Jumping up, they mobbed him and forced him to the edge of the hill on which the town was built. They intended to push him over the cliff, 30 but he passed right through the crowd and went on his way. (Luke 4:23–30 NLT)

Don't ask God to jump through hoops; you do the jumping!

When we are humble, we are obedient, and we show our love for Christ through our obedience.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Additional Notes:

The talking Theology segment was inspired by Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 134–148.

Explore:

Although this week's passage involves important people like kings and the commander of an entire army, its main focus is on how God used a lowly servant girl and strange instructions from the prophet Elisha to point a mighty pagan commander to God. That commander was Syrian. The Syrians moved around with their livestock or lived in small villages before beginning to build cities in Syria. They fortified Damascus as their capital. They were usually military and economic rivals with Israel, but they also went through periods of cooperation. Their language,

Aramaic, saw wide use as a diplomatic language among nations of that region. It even became the common language spoken among the Jews of Jesus' day. The charge published on the Cross was written in Latin, Greek, and Aramaic.

God Can Use Anyone to Accomplish His Will (2 Kings 5:1-8)

Naaman, the commander of Syria's army, was a mighty warrior, but he also was a leper. He had employed his military skill against Israel. That is how the servant girl from Israel came to be serving in his house (verses 1-2).

The unnamed servant girl apparently wanted Naaman cured, even as others in her family might have rejoiced at his disease. Her attitude strikes us. Perhaps Naaman was a decent master after all. Perhaps serving in his household was better than what she had left behind. Perhaps respecting the God of Israel had shaped her character. Perhaps she wanted Naaman to see how great the God of Israel is. Whatever the cause, she told her

mistress, who wasted no time in sharing the news with her husband. He, in turn, went to speak with his master, the Syrian king, relaying what the girl had said (verses 2-4). The Syrian king sent a letter requesting that Israel's king cure Naaman. He also sent along some very impressive gifts with the request (verses 5-6).

If we had been able to travel through Israel and Syria during this time period to select someone who could set in motion important events, we most likely would not have chosen a captive servant girl. We sometimes fail to recognize that the things we view as limitations or qualifications count for little with God. What matters most for someone to accomplish God's will is for the person to love God, and to be available, obedient, and committed to doing what God says.

Israel's king was dismayed (verse 7). Healing was up to God, after all. He could imagine only one reason for such an

outrageous request: the king of Syria wanted to stir up trouble, perhaps create an excuse to attack Israel.

The king found himself trying to respond to events set in motion by a little servant girl whose existence he likely never even suspected. Their resolution depended on hearkening to a prophet he never respected. When Elisha heard what had happened, he sent word that the king was to send the Syrian to him, so Naaman would know that there was a prophet of the true and living God in Israel (verse 8).

Explore:

God's Methods Are Best, Even When They Seem Strange to Us (2 Kings 5:9-14)

As Naaman approached the home of the prophet, he was in for a

surprise. Elisha never even went out to see him, not even to ask who he was or why he came. Perhaps God had revealed all this to him. Perhaps what Elisha had already heard about the situation included these details (verses 9-10). Refusing to meet the official to whom he merely sent word may seem odd to us, perhaps even rude or unfriendly. It was neither. Elisha needed to make a statement about his Master, the God of Israel. Naaman served the master of the Syrians, who had defeated Israel. Elisha served the God of Israel and all the earth. By only sending a message through his servant, he established the hierarchy among the various powers involved.

As one might expect, Naaman was angry, perhaps even skeptical about the authenticity of this prophet (verses 11-12). His pride was wounded. He expected first to see the prophet, and then to see some special ritual or ceremony that would restore his health. Instead, he saw nothing special at all.

Fortunately for him, his servants' pride was not as wounded as his, and they saw more clearly (verse 13). Surely he would have undertaken any great task assigned to him by the prophet to bring healing. Might it not be worthwhile to give his unusual instructions a chance? Pride and stubbornness have blocked the road for many throughout history. Naaman could have been one of them, but for the logical open-mindedness of his servants. He humbled himself to do what Elisha had instructed. Obedience has its rewards. Naaman went to the river, dipped seven times, and found himself with perfectly restored health (verse 14).

God's healing in Naaman's case was not contingent upon some ritual or practice. It needed only Naaman's obedience. It mattered little what the precise instructions were—God could surely have chosen any number of things—it mattered greatly whether Naaman followed them.

We hear it said that nothing succeeds like success, but in God's world, nothing succeeds like obedience. What God tells us to do is not usually very complicated or hard to remember. Even little children can understand. It becomes difficult because we sometimes do not think it makes sense (as though we were the perfect judges of what makes sense). What we should understand is that obedience so often opens the door through which we come to understanding. We, too, need to swallow our pride and simply obey the Lord.

Explore:

Believers Must Guard Against Greed (2 Kings 5:15-27)

Naaman's attitude toward the prophet instantly changed. He understood that there was only one God, Israel's God, and he pressed Elisha to accept his gifts (verse 15).

Could Elisha have put the gifts to good use? Of course! There were prophets to feed, widows to protect, and perhaps even his old age to prepare for. He understood, however, that it was more important that his actions teach Naaman that the healing came from God, not the prophet. What gift could he accept for something God had done (verse 16)?

Naaman's actions in verses 17-18 may seem strange, even quaint, to us. "If I cannot leave anything, may I take something?" Naaman understood that Israel's God was the only true God. He misunderstood, as did so many of his time, much about God's nature. The pagan world often held that one could properly worship a deity only on the soil with which he was identified. Therefore, Naaman felt he could only truly worship Jehovah God if he could bow down upon the soil of Israel. He even asked forgiveness ahead of time for fulfilling his civic and military duty to accompany the king when he bowed before pagan deities. What a contrast with most of Israel, who gleefully

added many pagan deities to their worship of Jehovah God. This pagan cast them all aside, in favor of the true and living God.

Elisha's response demonstrated that he understood the limitations of Naaman's newborn faith. Rather than instruct him more fully concerning the nature of Jehovah, he told him what Naaman most needed to hear: go in peace (verse 19).

Naaman's gifts could not sway Elisha's devotion to God. It was different, however, for his servant Gehazi (verses 20-21). He bristled at the opportunity Elisha let slip through his hands. First his feet and then his mouth continued the perversion his heart had set in motion (verses 22-23). He built his deceptive story and took what he knew Naaman would willingly offer.

Gehazi's selfish deception indicated a heart problem. He apparently was not content with God's provision for him and coveted more for himself. He placed his own desires over God's glory.

Naaman's servants would surely have carried everything right up to the prophet's home again, and then the truth would have been out. As they got close, Gehazi took the gifts and hid them after the men were out of sight (verse 24). His lie to Naaman demanded a lie to Elisha (verse 25), which was especially unwise. Naaman's leprosy would move to Gehazi and his descendants (verses 26-27).

Explore:

What was the value of the gifts Naaman offered to Elisha?

Converted to our measurements, Naaman carried about 750 pounds (341 kilos) of silver and 150 pounds (68 kilos) of gold.

Explore:

Leprosy in both testaments of the Bible included much more than the disease we know today as Hansen's disease. It covered a variety of skin disorders, even psoriasis. Even fabric and

buildings could be said to have leprosy. This probably indicates discoloration from mildew or even efflorescence on stone or masonry walls. All cases, in Israel at least, called for the involvement of the priest. In Israel, lepers lived within a set of strict social restrictions because they were considered ceremonially unclean—unfit to participate in the worship of God. This would not have been an issue for a Syrian such as Naaman, but there may have been some restrictions. In addition, depending on the precise nature of his ailment, he may have experienced severe pain or discomfort. Leprosy was considered incurable at that time.

Explore:

Elisha's Miracles

There are a number of miracles associated with Elisha—some of them quite different from other miracles in the Bible.

He helps a community in Jericho by curing their foul spring water with salt (2:19–22).

He curses young hooligans who insult him. They challenge him to ascend into heaven—and tease him for his baldness; but his curse results in them being mauled by bears (2:23–24)! This is not just a fit of temper on Elisha’s part. The youngsters are attacking and mocking the authority of God in him.

He advises the kings of Israel and Judah how to trap rain from a flash flood, and so provide water for their armies (3:14–20).

He helps a prophet’s widow pay off her debts by telling her to pour her small amount of oil into her neighbours’ empty jars (4:1–7).

He promises a wealthy but childless woman of Shunem that she will have a son in a year’s time—and she does (4:8–17).

Some years later, the child dies suddenly. The mother rides to Carmel to find Elisha. For immediate help, the prophet sends his

servant Gehazi with his staff to lay on the boy's face. Then he follows, and stretches himself on the child and restores his life (4:18–37).

When a group of prophets fear their stew is poisoned, Elisha tells them how to make it safe (4:38–41).

He assures his servant that twenty loaves of barley bread and some ears of corn will be enough to feed 100 men. It is so—and there is some left over (4:42–44). This miracle is imitated and amplified by Jesus when he feeds a multitude. In John's Gospel they call Jesus 'the Prophet' because of it.

All these miracles demonstrate God's power to heal, help or judge. They are all linked with particular people or places as though they were valued and remembered by these communities for many years.

Some of Elisha's miracles (such as curing a water supply or using a staff for power) echo the great deeds of Moses. Others

(like the supply of oil for the widow or raising a child to life) are similar to the works of Elijah. Most of all, they foreshadow some of the miracles of Jesus, who raises Jairus' daughter to life and feeds a large crowd of people from a few barley loaves.

Unlike Elisha, Jesus does not use curses and acts of revenge—except in his condemnation of the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, and the cursing of a fig tree for its lack of fruit. On both occasions he is expressing God's frustration with pretence.

When Jesus' disciples want to call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village, he rebukes them (Luke 9:54–55). While Jesus preaches that God will certainly judge people, his own miracles are acts of mercy. As the Bible record unfolds, people get an ever-clearer concept of what God is really like.

Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 159.

Explore:

KEY TRUTHS:

1. God Can Use Anyone to Accomplish His Will.
2. God's Methods Are Best, Even When They Seem Strange to Us.
3. Believers Must Guard Against Greed.

HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the

Bible: The events of 2 Kings took place after the kingdom was divided following the reigns of David and Solomon. This section took place around 850 BC and covers the passing of the prophetic torch from Elijah to Elisha.

Explore:

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ-followers. When they do, Heaven will rejoice!

Question 1 of 5

What are the biblical and theological reasons why murder is wrong?

Question 2 of 5

Would you help your enemy?

Question 3 of 5

How can our words and actions demonstrate to those around us that we belong to God?

Question 4 of 5

What are some commands of God that don't seem to make sense?

Question 5 of 5

Why should you see Jesus as God in the flesh and not only as a historical figure?