

MAY 26, 2024

3.4

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

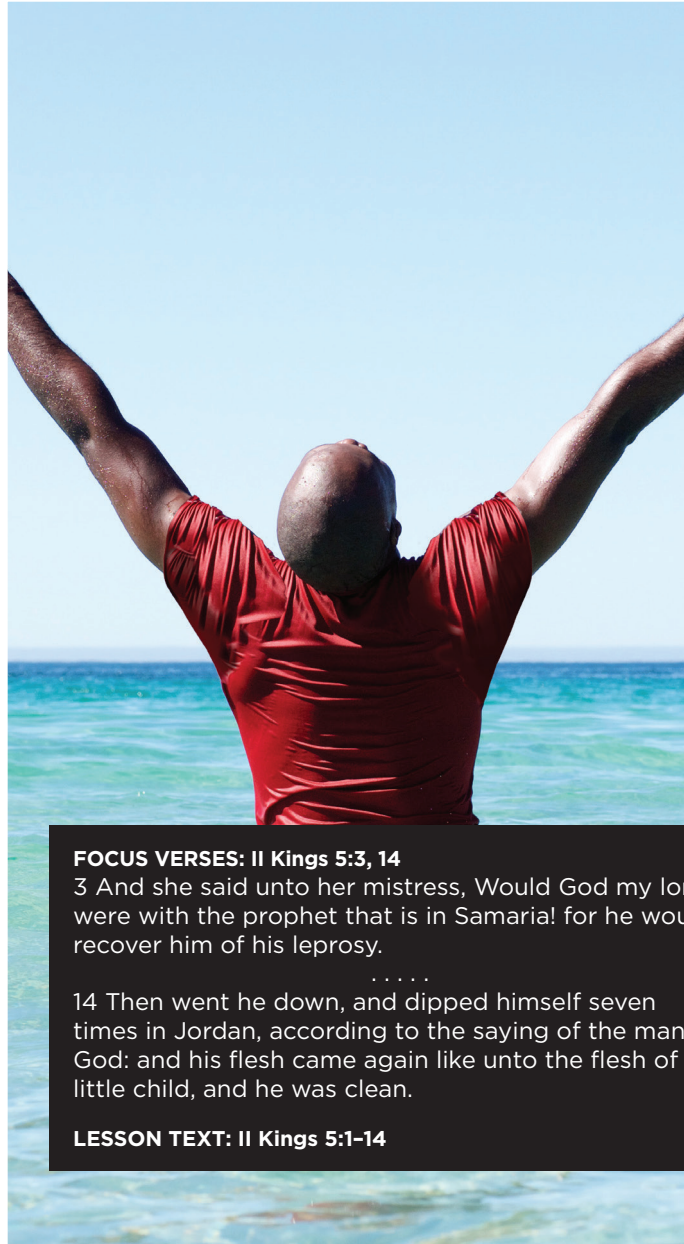
God honors
obedience.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will obey even
when God's
commands are
unusual.

SERIES 3: ELIJAH AND ELISHA

HEALING FOR THE OUTSIDER



FOCUS VERSES: II Kings 5:3, 14

3 And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

.....

14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

LESSON TEXT: II Kings 5:1-14



Lesson Title: Healing for the Outsider

Icebreaker: What's the best life advice you've ever received from an unlikely source?

- I. THE FAITH OF NAAMAN'S MAID
 - » *How can we know God is calling on us to speak up and give our testimony?*
 - A. Syria's War with Israel
 - B. I Will Share God's Good News Even with Those Who Hurt Me
 - » *How can we help hurting people receive healing for their wounds?*
- II. NAAMAN'S ENCOUNTER WITH ELISHA
 - A. Naaman Sought for the Prophet
 - » *How can we recognize when someone is not seeking an opportunity to do evil to us, but God is creating an opportunity for healing and salvation?*
 - B. Elisha's Unusual Instructions
 - C. God's Plans Often Challenge Our Expectations
 - » *What happens when we make our expectations more important than God's plan?*
- III. NAAMAN RECEIVED HIS HEALING
 - A. Naaman Listened to His Servants (Again)
 - B. Naaman Obeyed and Was Healed
 - C. I Will Obey Even When God's Commands Are Unusual
 - » *What miracle have you heard about where God moved in a mysterious way?*

Prayer Focus

- To share God's Word even with people who have hurt us
- To obey God even when His commands are unconventional

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: II Kings 5:1-14

The healing of Naaman demonstrated several key truths about God's nature. One of these truths is that God's compassion extends to all humanity, not just to a certain group. Another truth is that God responds to any who seek Him with humility, submission, and obedience.

Although Ahab had been slain, Israel remained in sin. Israel was now ruled by Ahab's son Jehoram, another wicked king (II Kings 3:1-3). All of Israel continued to reject Jehovah's lordship and refused to repent of their idolatry. However, God's love and mercy were still present for anyone who would seek Him, even if that person was a Syrian warlord who had fought, killed, and enslaved Israelites.

When Naaman arrived in Israel, Jehoram tore his garments in despair, fearing another conflict with Syria like the one that resulted in his father's death. (See I Kings 22:34.) Jehoram never even thought to call Elisha or any other prophet. Incredibly, Naaman was more aware of the prophet of God than Jehoram was. Elisha said to Jehoram: "Let [Naaman] come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel" (II Kings 5:8). These words can be read as a rebuke of Jehoram's apostasy; Naaman would know there is a prophet in Israel even if Jehoram did not.

Naaman's healing was so significant that Jesus recalled it one day while teaching. When commenting on the fact that no prophet is accepted in his own country, Jesus said: "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:27). Jesus' words served as further indictment upon Israel during Elisha's day. How many Israelite lepers could have been saved if they had demonstrated the same obedience as Naaman?

Not only was Naaman the lone leper healed during Elisha's ministry, but later Elisha's own servant Gehazi would be afflicted with leprosy after lying to Naaman and Elisha for selfish gain (II Kings 5:15-27). Gehazi's response to Jehovah sharply contrasts with Naaman's obedience. One chose humility and obedience and received healing; the other chose pride and selfishness and received affliction.

GOD'S COMPASSION EXTENDS TO ALL
HUMANITY, NOT JUST TO A CERTAIN GROUP.

DAY 1

II Kings 5:1

Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.

Biblical Insight

Interestingly, Naaman rose to prominence by the LORD who provided deliverance to Syria. While this may seem strange, Ahab had to be judged for leading Israel into idolatry, so it was God's will that Syria bested Israel in battle. Jewish rabbinical tradition identified Naaman as the "certain man" whose arrow killed Ahab in battle, securing victory for the Syrians (I Kings 22:34). Such an act would explain why Naaman rose to military prominence (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on II Kings 5:1).

Daily Devotion

God can use anyone to fulfill His purpose. Throughout the Bible, God has used unbelievers to help His people. Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho who saved the lives of two Hebrew spies. Egyptians hosted Joseph's family during a worldwide famine. The Persian emperor Cyrus permitted captive Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple. God led the Magi from the east to bring gifts to Jesus.

Even today, God can use unbelievers to help us in our faith journey. Unbelievers may ask good questions that give us a fresh perspective on our salvation and faith. When we encounter those questions, we study more and invest time in learning to explain our faith in understandable terms. Unbelievers will also hold us accountable. They are watching us to see if we will practice what we preach.

Reflect on previous encounters with unbelievers. How has God used them to help deepen your faith?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

II Kings 5:2-4

² And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.

³ And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

⁴ And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.

Biblical Insight

Possibly the most unsung hero of this story is Naaman's Israelite child slave who had been kidnapped by Syrian raiders and forced into servitude. Far from her family, her homeland, and any semblance of comfort and convenience, she remained a faithful witness to the power of Jehovah and His prophet Elisha. Instead of looking upon her captors with anger and bitterness, she felt compassion and wished for Naaman's healing. Her response foreshadowed the necessary but unpopular teaching of Christ in Matthew 5:44: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Daily Devotion

Patrick was born into a Christian family in Britain in AD 387. At the age of sixteen, he was captured by a group of Irish pirates and sold into slavery. Six years later, Patrick escaped and returned home to Britain where God called him to return as a missionary to the people who enslaved him.

God reminded Patrick that while the Irish were physically free, they were spiritually bound. Patrick's heart was filled with a love for his former captors, and he devoted the rest of his life to sharing Jesus with them. If he had allowed bitterness, anger, and hatred to fester in his heart toward his captors, countless people would never have heard the gospel.

If there is a person who has harmed you, pray for them today. Pray for God to forgive them and heal you. Do not let bitterness or anger harden your own heart.



Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

II Kings 5:5-8

⁵ And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

⁶ And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

⁷ And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

⁸ And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

Biblical Insight

The king of Syria valued his commander and was willing to do anything for his healing. He had reason to be confident sending Naaman into Israel. Syria had demonstrated their military superiority in recent history. However, as a gesture of good will, the king of Syria sent gifts to the king of Israel. Jehoram, the Israelite king, was only slightly less wicked than his father, Ahab (II Kings 3:1-3). The fact that Jehoram never thought to call for Elisha or any prophet of God demonstrated how spiritually out of touch he was.

Daily Devotion

On April 26, 1952, while traveling in the darkness 490 nautical miles southwest of St. John's, Newfoundland, new commanding officer of the USS Hobson, Lt. Commander William J. Tierney, began ordering a series of turns that caused concern among the deck crew. Tierney ignored his crew's worry and counsel until suddenly, the officer on deck yelled "Prepare for collision! Prepare for collision!"

At the Court of Inquiry, it was determined that Lt. Commander Tierney had "committed a grave error in judgment." This grave error resulted in the deaths of over 170 crew members. Throughout the Old Testament, we see examples of kings who ignored the wise counsel of godly men. In each case, the king's life ended in ruin.

Today, reflect on the wise counsel and warnings you have received from men or women of God. Take time to thank them for helping you in your walk with God.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

II Kings 5:9-12

⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

¹⁰ And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

¹¹ But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

Biblical Insight

Naaman's opinion of Israelite waters was consistent with Syrian attitudes about Israel in general; everything Israelite was inferior. This negative view would be fully subverted after Naaman was healed, when Naaman requested to bring bags of dirt back to Syria upon which to sacrifice to Jehovah. Naaman went from mocking Israelite water to begging for Israelite dirt. What a difference a miracle makes!

Daily Devotion

During World War II, Allied fighter planes were being hit by anti-aircraft guns. The Air Force turned to mathematician Abraham Wald to help them determine where to put additional armor. The officers believed that the anti-bullet shield should be placed on the tail since the tail portions of the planes had the greatest density of bullet holes.

Wald asserted that more protection was needed where the bullet holes were not as concentrated—around the plane's engine. His assessment revealed people's biases. Wald explained, "We are counting the planes that returned from a mission. Planes with lots of bullet holes in the engine did not return at all."

Uncovering our unconscious biases and assumptions has the potential to change the way we think about situations, people, and God. Reflect on different biases that have been uncovered in your life. How did recognizing them change the way you think?



Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

II Kings 5:13-14

¹³ And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

¹⁴ Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Biblical Insight

The comments by Naaman's servants were reflective of his military status. Naaman was used to performing grand and mighty feats; that was how he rose to military prominence. However, in God's economy, blessings do not come through lifting oneself up, but rather through demonstrating humility. God had provided divine assistance to elevate Naaman to his current status (II Kings 5:1), but Naaman was not aware of God's presence and power. Naaman only experienced God when he humbled himself in submission and obedience.

Daily Devotion

In Matthew 18, the disciples were once again concerned about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. In response, Jesus called over a little child and responded that the greatest in the kingdom are those who can be humble like a child (Matthew 18:3-4).

If you have ever been around children, you may wonder why Jesus would call a child humble. Children can be just as selfish and braggadocious as adults. However, there is a unique quality to most children; they are often oblivious to others' opinions of them.

They are not embarrassed to wear mismatched clothes in public or too afraid to play games that make them look ridiculous. They will sing loudly in restaurants and are not ashamed to talk about Jesus in front of others.

Think about your own heart. When you look at yourself and you look at how God sees you, are you humble like a child? If not, repent of any pride and ask God to help you be humble.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*
