**1. Motivate**

When have you literally or figuratively “misjudged a book by its cover”?

* playing another sports team who ended up tougher than you thought
* went to a movie that was highly touted, but ended up being stupid or offensive
* dated someone that turned out to be a much nicer person than you anticipated
* ended up buying a car that at first you didn’t like, then when you actually tried it out, you liked it
* attended a church that on the outside looked too small/too large for your initial preference … but was/is a great place to worship and serve
* went to a restaurant that everyone said was great, but you found poor choices, poor service and high prices

**2. Transition**

Today we look at a man who initially rejected Elisha’s ministry.

* He ended up grudgingly going along with the instructions
* He found (and we will find) God restores us as we are obedient to Him, no matter what we think initially.

A video introduction to the Bible study is available. View it at <https://tinyurl.com/4xcyazt8> If you don’t have wi-fi where you teach, it is best to download the video file from <https://tinyurl.com/f8akfxpp>

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Listen for a Word from the Lord

Listen for unlikely advice.

2 Kings 5:1-3 (NIV) Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. 2 Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. 3 She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

What people are there and what are their roles in this scene?

* Naaman, an army commander, has leprosy
* Naaman’s wife
* Naaman’s wife’s servant, a young Jewish girl
* king of Aram (Syria)

What strengths did Naaman have that might have led him to believe he was above succumbing to sickness?

* a great man
* highly regarded
* a valiant soldier

What made these things pale in significance and caused Naaman to be desperate?

* he had leprosy
* bad skin disease
* we infer it was bad enough to ruin his career and social standing

How do you think a skin disease with no known cure would affect a brave warrior? What kinds of attitudes would he have? What actions would he take?

* I can conquer this just like I conquered all those armies
* I don’t have time for this, where’s a good doctor or a good medicine
* let’s get with it and find the cure … it just hasn’t been found yet
* if this doctor cannot cure it, let’s find one who can … it’s just a matter of looking
* we’ll attack this boldly and with good strategy, just like running a military campaign

What is remarkable about the wife’s servant girl sharing the help available from Elisha?

* she was a slave, a captive from a border raid into Israel
* she had compassion on her master, even though she was a slave
* she was probably treated well since she hoped/wished for his healing
* we don’t know her name and she is only mentioned this once
* she played a pivotal role in Naaman’s eventual healing … without her, he would not have known of the possibility of a miracle cure

How does it strike you that the first step toward Naaman’s healing came from a young Israelite slave girl? What does this say about how God uses unexpected people to accomplish His purposes?

* God can often accomplish important things through unexpected sources
* don’t reject words of advice or encouragement from someone, just because
	+ they might not seem to be a great source of wisdom or
	+ even whom you do not perceive as a person of great spirituality
* remember God got Baalam’s attention with a talking donkey!

What are some examples of how God could use someone unlikely in your life to point you toward Him or truth?

* your barber or hairdresser offers an idea or suggestion to you that ends up being exactly what you needed to head you in the right direction
* a neighbor mentions having been to a certain doctor that deals with the problem you are facing
* one of your young children makes an observation that hits the nail right on the head concerning something that is troubling you



3.2 Accept His Word as the Way



Listen for seven ducks in a muddy pond.



2 Kings 5:10-12 (NIV) Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." 11 But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. 12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage.

Naaman was a powerful man used to honor and ceremony. Why do you think he struggled with Elisha’s instructions?

* the prophet didn’t even come to the door in person
* only the servant was sent with a message
* the requirement for the healing was rather arbitrary and demeaning (7 ducks in a muddy pond)

What was Naaman expecting?

* personal and dramatic appearance by the prophet
* incantations, sacrifices, hand waving
* great payments changing hands

Why might Naaman have found the instruction to wash in the Jordan seven times offensive or beneath him?

* Famous generals do not just jump in a muddy river
* he hadn’t even brought his swim suit with him!
* why couldn’t it have been one of the nice clear rivers back home
* why come all this way to have to endure a muddy river – no fun to swim in at all
* besides, what has this muddy river to do with his skin disease
* in fact, a polluted river might make it worse

What does this reveal about human expectations versus God’s methods?

* we like to think we have things figured out
* we want to tell God how to go about fixing the problem
* we don’t want to get guidance that goes off in a different direction of what we think is the way to go
* God will quite often do things in a way that we *know* it is His intervention that met the need
* we need to have an open mind to allow God to work in His way and His timing

How can pride get in the way of obedience? How can our unwillingness to humble ourselves actually deprive us of good gifts from God?

* we want to keep up appearances with others – our self image might be “harmed”
* we think we know best how God should work – but that is not what we really need
* we don’t want to confess and repent of our own foibles in obeying God
* we don’t read it in our verses, but Naaman intended to *buy* his healing by bringing lots of gifts and using his royal connections of influence
* we need to realize that we can’t bargain with God to solve our problems, we must submit to His solutions

3.3 Obey His Word

Listen for good advice.

2 Kings 5:13-19a (NIV) Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed'!" 14 So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy. 15 Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant." 16 The prophet answered, "As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing." And even though Naaman urged him, he refused. 17 "If you will not," said Naaman, "please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the LORD. 18 But may the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I bow there also--when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this."

Naaman’s servants gave good advice … what was it?

* if the prophet had required some daring deed, you’d have done it
* this is a simple task …
* what have you got to lose?
* if he’s right, you’re healed … if not, you’ve lost little but your dignity

Naaman took the advice and was obedient to Elisha’s (God’s) direction. How did those around Naaman *also* experience the miracle of “7 ducks in a muddy pond?”

* their boss (master) was well and still doing his job (and they still had a job).
* he was apparently a well liked master and their concern for him was rewarded
* his blessing was their blessing

Elisha refused Naaman’s gift or payment. What do you think Elisha wanted to communicate to Naaman by this refusal?

* he (Elisha) was only God’s servant
* God was the one who had done the healing
* God deserved the credit, not Elisha
* God’s graces/blessings are free to us – we cannot buy God’s goodness

How can our obedience to God in the midst of illness impact those around us?

* faith is demonstrated (faith and obedience go hand in hand)
* it is always a testimony to others when we obey God
* God is glorified by our obedience, by His power demonstrated
* it encourages someone else’s faith
* it encourages another to obey, to do the right thing

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Review.

* Write down ways you demonstrate obedience to God during your weekly routine.
* Beside each one, list a benefit you receive from your obedience.

Request.

* Spend time in prayer asking God to show you areas in your life where obedience is a struggle.
* Pay close attention to those areas where pride can become a barrier.
* Choose one area and make it a matter of ongoing prayer.

Restore.

* Enlist a brother or sister in Christ to hold you accountable for your obedience in an area in which it is difficult to obey.
* Schedule meetings and give them permission to speak truthfully to you.

Cryptogram Puzzle

Our decryption team is at an end of semester middle school retreat at Camp Flint and Fire. One of the learning activities they were assigned was to create a coded message for you based on the same passage you have studied. Use the numbers in the blanks to determine the letters in the message. As a challenge, they left out the numbers for a few of the letters. They did leave a link to a solution and also to other fun Family Activities <https://tinyurl.com/f8akfxpp>