

REDLINED • Week 4: Control

Daily Briefing • Day 5 of 5 • The Small River

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5–6

This is the last briefing of the week, and it deals with a powerful man who almost walked away from the blessing he was seeking. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I give up my control over how You answer my prayers. I pray for Your blessing, Your healing, and Your work in my life, in whatever form You choose, whether miraculous or mundane. I accept Your answer and submit to the way You run Your world. I pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

Here is the question for the last day of this week. Will you forfeit the blessing you asked for because God did not deliver it the way you pictured it? Sunday landed on the bottom line that peace comes with release, and release is not only about letting go of people and outcomes. It also means letting go of the script you wrote for how God is supposed to answer.

This happens more often than people admit. You prayed about your marriage and God sent a counselor with an unimpressive office instead of a breakthrough weekend. You prayed about money and God sent a job you consider beneath you. You prayed for the anxiety to lift and the answer came back as ordinary obedience, which looked like sleep and confession and a schedule and a friend who tells you the truth. None of it resembled what you had in mind, so you treated it as though it were not an answer at all.

Today's story needs some setup. Around eight hundred and fifty years before Jesus, the nation of Israel had a hostile neighbor to the north called Syria, and the commander of the Syrian army was a man named Naaman. He was decorated and powerful, and he had the ear of his king. He also had leprosy, a skin disease with no cure in the ancient world. In Israel it would have put him outside the camp and cost him everything, but in Syria a man could carry it and still hold command, which is why he was able to travel to Israel with horses and chariots and a letter from his king.

Here is how he ended up in Israel looking for a miracle. A young Israelite girl had been captured in a Syrian raid and was working as a servant in Naaman's house, and she told his wife that a prophet back home could heal him. That is the whole chain. An enemy general heard about the God of Israel from a slave girl Syrian raiders had taken from her family. He went to his king, who sent him to Israel with a letter and a fortune in silver, gold, and clothing, and he eventually arrived at the house of a prophet named Elisha.

Two things are worth holding onto before you read what happened next. The first is that Naaman was not an Israelite and did not worship Israel's God. He was an outsider in every sense, and God was about to heal him anyway. The second is that he arrived with a fortune, a rank, a letter from his king, and every reason to expect a reception that matched his standing.

READ & MEDITATE

2 Kings 5:9–12

So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." ¹¹ But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage.

REFLECT

Reminder: honest introspection and Scripture-informed self-assessment are far more beneficial than self-delusion and wishful thinking.

Naaman says out loud what he had been expecting, and he says it while he is walking away.

What was the ceremony he had written in his head? List the steps he names.

He wanted the prophet to come outside, stand in front of him, call on the name of his God, wave his hand over the spot, and cure him. He had the whole sequence prepared. Instead of the prophet himself, he got a messenger at the door and an errand.

What does this passage say about God, who sent His answer through a messenger rather than a ceremony, and sent it to an enemy commander who did not worship Him?

Fill in the blank from 2 Kings 5:12:

“Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a _____.*

*These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.

The rivers back home really were bigger and cleaner, and he was not wrong about that.

Where have you judged God’s answer by how impressive it looked instead of by whether it came from Him?

He nearly went home with his leprosy. The people who stopped him were not prophets or officials; they were his own servants traveling with him, and they were the only ones willing to say the obvious thing to a furious man.

2 Kings 5:13–14

But his servants came near and said to him, “My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?”¹⁴ So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

What is the argument the servants make? Put it in your own words.

They point out that he would have done something difficult without hesitating, which means the problem was never the size of the task. The problem was that the task was too small and too mundane to flatter him.

Naaman eventually went down into the water and came up clean. God healed him, and He did it on His own terms. Notice what the obedience actually cost him. It cost him nothing but his dignity, and his dignity was the one thing he had not been willing to spend.

What has God already told you to do that you have not done, because it seemed too ordinary to matter?

Do some honest introspective self-assessment before moving on.

I WILL

Naaman’s healing was waiting on one unimpressive act of obedience, and he almost walked away from it because it was beneath him.

Write one sentence that begins with the words “I will.” Make it the ordinary thing God has already told you to do, name the day you will do it, and resist the urge to upgrade it into something more impressive.

PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud. Tell God plainly where you have been holding out for a more impressive answer, and ask Him for the humility to take the one He actually sent.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite Proverbs 3:5–6 from memory:
