



# DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

**Week of November 6, 2022 (2 Kings 5:1-15a)**

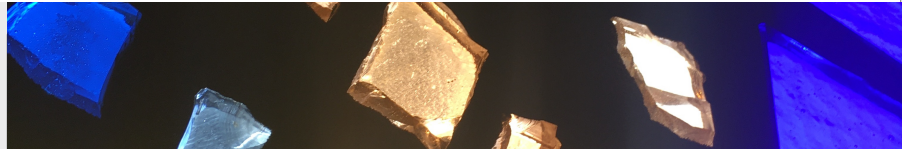
## Prayer for Groups & Personal Devotion:

God, we thank you that your will for us is always good and so much more than we would ever imagine. You take whatever we have and make it marvelous.

So God we offer you our mediocrity for you to make us amazing, we offer you our stumbling for you to make us sure footed, we offer you our hesitation for you to make us confident.

With all the simple gifts that you transform in us we go into the world to serve you.

God, we pray for all those who are constantly told that they are worthless: may they begin to see themselves as you see them. We pray for all those whose hopes are denied, whose ambitions are quashed, who are continually being put down: may they know that in your eyes and by your will they are loved and valued and their deepest longings will become reality...



## Devotions for Life

### The Story: 2 Kings 5:1-15a

**Context:** Today's story is one that can essentially stand on its own as a story. However, there is one vitally important thing that has happened since last week's story and this week's: This promised nation, Israel, has now split into two kingdoms: A Northern Kingdom and a Southern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom is now known as "Judea" and the Northern Kingdom is now known as "Israel. And this gets confusing, because sometimes the Jewish people as a whole are also still known as Israel.

This does not have a lot of bearing on this week's story, other than to say that we are in the Northern Kingdom. Where it does have significance is that the Northern Kingdom is the one that will eventually start to intermarry, and is the region where Samaria lies. This has significance in much of Jesus' work, particularly with the Samaritan Woman at the Well in John 4, and with the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10.

As far as this week's story, know that we are dealing with a primary player named Elisha (not "Alicia"). Elisha is a prophet in the Northern Kingdom. There are essentially three types of prophets in the Hebrew Bible: There are prophets like Nathan (from a couple weeks ago) who is part of the King's court and speaks to and advises the king. Then there are prophets like Amos and Habukkuk who are outside of the court and speak challenging truth

...We pray too, O God, for those who feel so insecure that they stifle the talents of others, for those so desperate to shine that they tarnish the reputation of others, for those who in their race to get ahead kick dust in the eyes of those they see as competition.

God help us to look at others and see not just potential but the greatness that you see, may we continually lift up others so that your marvelous light may be seen.

God, we pray for those around us today who need to be reminded of the brightness of your love for them, who need to be dazzled by your smile and cradled in your concern until they are able to stand once again on the firm ground on which you've placed them and step out in the faith that you walk with them #every step of the way.

Lord God, help us today to see you and to reveal you in every simple thing and in every complex creature and to glorify you, God of all. Amen.

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to power. Then there are prophets like Elisha who are known less for their words and more for their powerful deeds. That's the kind of story, and prophet, we have this week.

Finally, while many translations may say that Naaman had Leprosy, the Hebrew text merely says "skin disease". And because he's not cast aside as some kind of untouchable, many scholars believe he did not actually have Leprosy, but perhaps something with less of a stigma. That said, it's still perfectly fine to talk about Leprosy in the context of this story, as the whole notion of a skin disease still applies.

**Reading the Story:** First of all, let's get our protagonist's name right. It's Naaman and is pronounced "nah-ah-MAHN" (emphasis on the last syllable). But it is also very common, and ok, for English speakers to pronounce it "NAY-men". As you read, note that we are dealing with multiple nations and religious expressions. Naaman is a commander in the army of a neighboring nation, which today would geographically be, roughly, Syria. Also pay attention to the various characters. Harken back to the Social Power Wheel from a few weeks ago, and try to place the characters on that wheel. Who is close to power? Who is not? But mostly, just let the narrative be what it is, and seek to wonder what God might be saying to you through it.

#### **Questions for Reflection & Discussion:**

1. What stood out to you in this story? What words or phrases stood out to you?
2. Who are the characters in this story? Where are they in their proximity to socio-political power? What significance might this have?
3. What you would say is the point of this story? In all of the big stories we've had so far this year, why do you think the lectionary includes this one.

