

S T U D Y G U I D E



WHO *are* THEY?

LESSER-KNOWN CHARACTERS
of THE BIBLE

Derek W.H. Thomas

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Introduction

The Bible isn't merely a collection of familiar Sunday school stories. There are numerous people who, though lesser known, played important roles in God's acts of redemption. Because we might not know much about them, it can be challenging to understand their purpose and function in the overarching story of the Bible. In this teaching series, Dr. Derek Thomas describes the historical context of, redemptive significance of, and practical lessons that we can learn from the lesser-known characters of the Bible.

This study guide is a companion to the video teaching series. Whether you are using the DVDs, streaming the videos on Ligonier.org, or going through the course in Ligonier Connect, this resource is designed to help you make the most of the learning experience. For each message in the series, there is a corresponding lesson in this guide. Here is what you will find in each lesson:

INTRODUCTION	The introduction is a brief paragraph that summarizes the content covered in the lecture and considered in the study guide lesson. How to use: Use the introduction to each lesson to get a sense of the big picture before watching the video. Refer to these statements as you work through the study guide to remind yourself of what you have already covered and where you are headed.
LEARNING GOALS	The learning goals are the knowledge and skills that the study guide lesson will endeavor to equip you with as you work through the lecture content. How to use: Familiarize yourself with the goals of each lesson before engaging its contents. Keeping the overall purpose in mind as you watch each video and reflect on or discuss the questions will help you get the most out of each lesson.
KEY IDEAS	The key ideas are the major points or takeaways from the lecture. How to use: Use these ideas to prepare yourself for each lesson and to review previous lessons. They describe specifically the knowledge that each lecture is communicating.

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	The questions are the guided reflection and/or discussion component of the lesson that is intended to help you prepare for, process, and organize what you are learning. How to use: Reflect on individually or discuss in a group the questions in the order in which they appear in the lesson. The time stamps in the right margin indicate where the answers to questions during the video can be found.
PRAYER	The prayer section offers suggestions for how to close the lesson in prayer with respect to what was taught in the lecture. How to use: Consider using each lesson's prayer section as a guide to personal or group prayer. These sections follow the ACTS prayer model, which you can learn more about in R.C. Sproul's Crucial Questions booklet <i>Does Prayer Change Things?</i> This helpful guide is available as a free e-book at Ligonier.org.
REVIEW QUIZ	The review quiz is a set of six multiple-choice questions that appears at the end of each lesson. How to use: Use each quiz to check your comprehension and memory of the major points covered in each lecture. It will be most beneficial to your learning if you take a lesson's quiz either sometime between lessons or just before you begin the next lesson in the study guide.
ANSWER KEY	The answer key provides explanations for the reflection and discussion questions and answers to the multiple-choice questions in the review quiz. How to use: Use the answer key to check your own answers or when you do not know the answer. Note: Do not give in too quickly; struggling for a few moments to recall an answer reinforces it in your mind.

Study Schedules

The following table suggests four plans for working through the *Who Are They?* video teaching series and this companion study guide. Whether you are going through this series on your own or with a group, these schedules should help you plan your study path.

	Extended 14-Week Plan	Standard 12-Week Plan	Abbreviated 6-Week Plan	Intensive 4-Week Plan
Week	Lesson			
1	*	1	1 & 2	1–3
2	1	2	3 & 4	4–6
3	2	3	5 & 6	7–9
4	3	4	7 & 8	10–12
5	4	5	9 & 10	
6	5	6	11 & 12	
7	6	7		
8	7	8		
9	8	9		
10	9	10		
11	10	11		
12	11	12		
13	12			
14	*			

* For these weeks, rather than completing lessons, spend your time discussing and praying about your learning goals for the study (the first week) and the most valuable takeaways from the study (the last week).

The Maid of Naaman's Wife

INTRODUCTION

Second Kings 5 contains a strange account of the Syrian general Naaman's being healed of leprosy by the prophet Elisha. It contains truths about God's sovereignty, His servants, His acts that cause humiliation, and the grateful reaction of those who receive His salvation. But none of this would have happened apart from the simple faith and witness of an unnamed female Israelite slave in Syria. In this lesson, Dr. Thomas shows how the maid of Naaman's wife plays a central role in the healing of Naaman, and he highlights several truths that are revealed about God from this story.

LEARNING GOALS

When you have finished this lesson, you should be able to:

- Describe what the story of Naaman and Elisha teaches about God, His ways, and His servants
- Understand the important role of the maid of Naaman's wife, though she is often overlooked

KEY IDEAS

- God's providence governs the big and small details of life.
- God's servants can be seemingly weak and pathetic.
- God humbles people as He saves them.
- God's grace produces gratitude and faith.

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

What Do You Think?

Take a moment to answer the following questions. They will prepare you for the lecture.

- What kind of person makes the biggest impact for the kingdom of God?
- When have you been overlooked or unseen? What was that experience like?

Scripture Reading

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa. . . . And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.

—Acts 10:1–8, 45

- Why do you think it is significant that Cornelius and his household were gentiles?

During the Video

Answer the following questions while you watch the video. They will guide you through the lecture.

God's Providence

0:00–6:21

- Where was the Israelite maid, and what had happened to her?
- How far does God's providence extend over human experience?

God's Servants

6:21-23:47

- What is the defining characteristic of one who truly serves God? How does the maid differ from the king in this way?
- Why do we need to be humbled? How did Naaman respond after he was humbled?
- Although she is overlooked, why is the maid of Naaman's wife necessary in these events?

After the Video

Answer the following questions after you have finished the lecture. They will help you identify and summarize the major points.

- What is God's providence, and how do you see it displayed through the events of Naaman's life?

If you are in a group, have the members discuss the challenges and blessings of God's providence. Ask: Why can we struggle with the idea that God orders everything that happens in the way that it happens before it happens? How does that reality bring you comfort when you are suffering or overlooked like Naaman and the Israelite maid? Do you relate more to Naaman or to the maid?

- What does the Israelite maid teach you about the kind of person who makes the greatest impact in the kingdom of God?

If you are in a group, have the members reflect on their various answers from before the lesson. Ask: How does the maid's faith confirm or challenge your initial thoughts?

- According to Dr. Thomas, humility and gratitude are two genuine fruits of the gospel in a person's life. How has the gospel humbled you recently? Where do you see pride in your life? Do you tend to be more grateful for things in your life or God's work in your life?

If you are in a group, encourage the members to confess their pride and lack of gratitude to one another. Then go to God in prayer.

PRAYER

Commit what you have learned from God's Word in this lesson to prayer.

- Praise God for the salvation that Christ offers to every tongue, tribe, and nation.
- Confess how your pride has convinced you that you and your ways are right.
- Thank God for using the faith of lesser-known people to bring change in His kingdom.
- Ask God to help you trust His providence in your life—even when it is hard—and to help you bear witness about Christ to the people that God brings into your life through all those circumstances.

REVIEW QUIZ

Use these multiple-choice questions to measure what you learned from this lesson.

1. Where was Syria located?
 - a. Northwest of Israel
 - b. Northeast of Assyria
 - c. Southwest of Israel
 - d. Northeast of Israel
2. To whom did the Israelite maid send Naaman?
 - a. Elijah
 - b. Elisha
 - c. Isaiah
 - d. Ehud
3. How did the Israelite king respond to Naaman's request?
 - a. Joyfully
 - b. Cautiously
 - c. Fearfully
 - d. Faithfully
4. Whom does Elisha treat Naaman like?
 - a. A servant
 - b. A godless gentile
 - c. A general
 - d. A leper
5. Naaman was "baptized" in the Jordan River.
 - a. True
 - b. False
6. Why did Gehazi become a leper?
 - a. He touched Naaman.
 - b. He said the wrong thing.
 - c. He was filled with greed and unbelief.
 - d. He had a lack of love for Israel.

Answer Key—The Maid of Naaman's Wife

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

What Do You Think?

These are personal questions. The answers should be based on your own knowledge and experience.

Scripture Reading

- Why do you think it is significant that Cornelius and his household were gentiles?

In this lesson, Dr. Thomas will mention how John Calvin viewed Naaman's coming to Elisha as being similar to Cornelius' coming to Peter in Acts 10. In each circumstance, a pagan gentile came to a prophet of the one true God, and each of them was blessed with healing. Naaman experienced physical healing, and Cornelius received spiritual healing. In both cases, the unclean became clean. In Acts 10, it is significant that Cornelius and his household were gentiles because the Holy Spirit was being poured out on the nations and not only on Israel. This event is what all redemptive history anticipated. When Naaman came to the prophet of God and was healed on account of his faith, his actions foreshadowed the time when all nations would come to God and be healed of their uncleanness through His Son, Jesus Christ.

During the Video

God's Providence

- Where was the Israelite maid, and what had happened to her?

The Israelite maid was in Syria, also known as Aram. She had likely been taken captive in the Syrian raids of Israel, and she was a servant of Naaman's wife. The text explains that these events occurred at the hand of God.

- How far does God's providence extend over human experience?

God's acts of providence extend to every aspect of human experience, which is illustrated by the life of the Israelite maid and the affairs of nations. He directs the most insignificant events and people for His purposes, as well as the most significant decisions of kings. He is Lord of all.

God's Servants

- What is the defining characteristic of one who truly serves God? How does the maid differ from the king in this way?

The one who truly serves God is characterized by faith in the living God. This unnamed Israelite maid possessed this faith, and it led to Naaman's healing. She is contrasted with the king of Israel—a son of David—who was supposed to be characterized by faith in God. The king did not believe, however, and he did not trust God. His unbelief and fear revealed themselves in the fruit of his actions. Although the king enjoyed prestige and honor, it was the unimpressive and unnamed captive who was the true servant of God because she possessed true faith.

- Why do we need to be humbled? How did Naaman respond after he was humbled?

Like Naaman, all of us need to be humbled because we are filled with pride. That pride keeps us from experiencing the grace of God. God's ways require that we come to the end of ourselves and understand that we are like lepers. Until we are humbled to the point of feeling our need and sensing our unworthiness, we will not receive or understand the love and grace of God. Naaman was certainly humbled, but once he experienced the gracious healing of God, he was filled with joy and gratitude. This type of response is typical in the gospel, but it is always preceded by being humbled before God for our sin. Gratitude is the only reasonable response for those healed like us.

- Although she is overlooked, why is the maid of Naaman's wife necessary in these events?

Her faith prompted the entire outcome. If she had not told Naaman's wife about the Lord's prophet, Naaman would not have been healed. God used this forgotten and overlooked girl as a way to prefigure the amazing gospel that brings healing for the nations. The account of Naaman's healing is an important event in the Old Testament and ministry of Elisha. Yet it would not have occurred without the faith of this captive Israelite maid. This is a lesson for us all: God uses insignificant people and circumstances to advance His kingdom.

After the Video

- What is God's providence, and how do you see it displayed through the events of Naaman's life?

"God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions" (Westminster Shorter Catechism 11). He does this by ordaining everything that happens, before it happens, and in the way that it happens. One can observe this in Naaman's life because Scripture states that God gave victory to Syria and caused this young Israelite girl to end up in Naaman's household. God orchestrated everything for Naaman's good, even his leprosy. Additionally, God's providence in salvation is demonstrated here, since Naaman foreshadows something that God will do on a much bigger scale by offering spiritual healing to the nations through His Son.

- What does the Israelite maid teach you about the kind of person who makes the greatest impact in the kingdom of God?

It is not the person with the most influence, power, money, or friends who makes the greatest impact in God's kingdom. Nor is it the person who is outgoing, passionate, able to convince people to follow him because of his attractive personality, and known by all. The person who makes the greatest impact in the kingdom of God is the one who believes God's Word, trusts Him wholeheartedly, and simply bears witness about His greatness and salvation in Christ. This unnamed servant in Syria is an example of this.

- According to Dr. Thomas, humility and gratitude are two genuine fruits of the gospel in a person's life. How has the gospel humbled you recently? Where do you see pride in your life? Do you tend to be more grateful for things in your life or God's work in your life?

Since these are personal questions, the answers will vary from person to person. If you are leading a group, help the members make the gospel connection between humility and gratitude.

REVIEW QUIZ

1. D.

Syria, also known as Aram, was located northeast of Israel. David previously went northeast to conquer the Arameans, but years had passed, and Syria was now strong. They eventually went southwest into Israel for a raid, and they took slaves back with them.

2. B.

The prophet to whom the maid bore witness was Elisha. By this point, Elijah had been taken into heaven, and Isaiah was not called until later in Israel's history. Ehud was raised up by God to deliver Israel from Moab. He killed the evil king Eglon by stabbing him with a sword (Judg. 3:12–30).

3. C.

Scripture describes the king's response as fearful. This shows his unfaithfulness and unbelief. The king, David's son, should have believed God's promises about deliverance and preservation. Disbelief and fear were a sinful reaction for the king of Israel, who sat on David's throne.

4. D.

Elisha refused to go out and meet Naaman, which was an uncommon action toward a man of Naaman's high status. In this way, Elisha treated him as he was—a leper. He refused to see him, but he spoke to him through a servant.

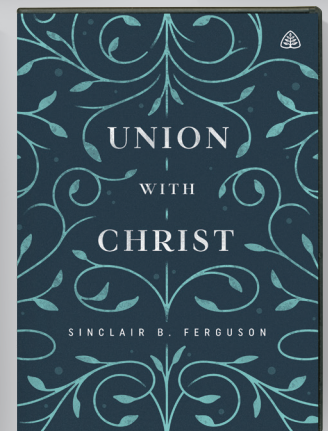
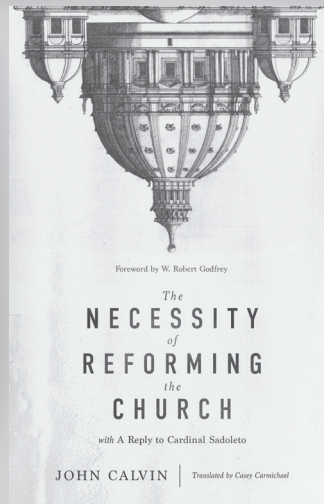
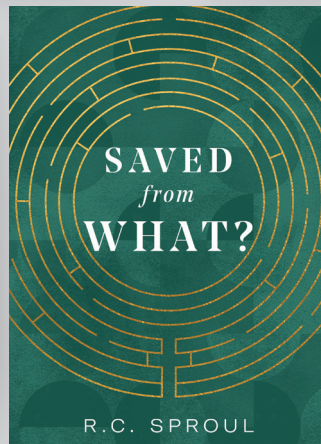
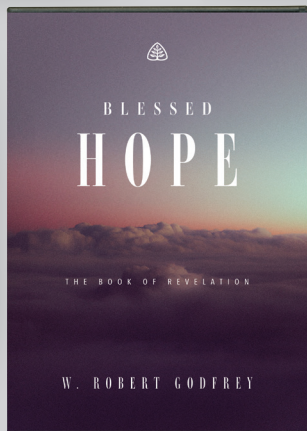
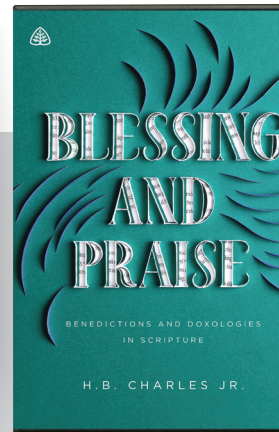
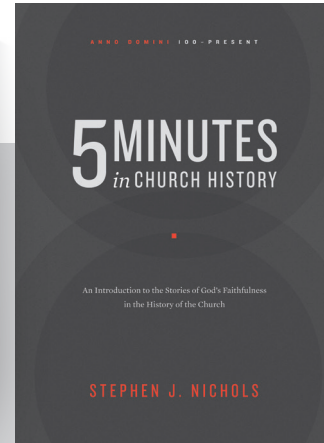
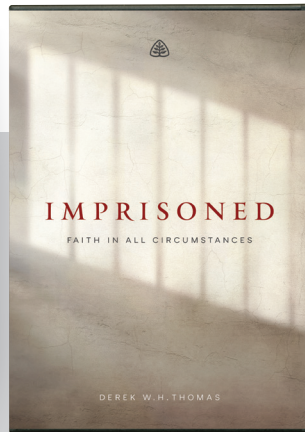
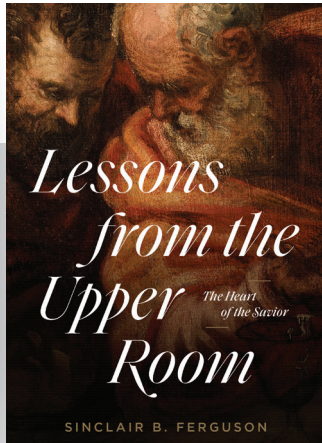
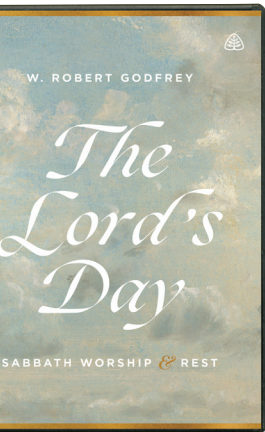
5. A.

The translation of the Greek word used to translate the Hebrew word for "dipping" is the word baptize.

6. C.

Gehazi's actions revealed his profound unbelief and greed. He lied and bore false witness about Elisha to get money and clothing. Because of his actions, he received the leprosy that Naaman was healed from. This is a picture of the sure outcome for all who are greedy and unbelieving—they will receive the verdict of death and judgment rather than life. Those who believe will be healed.

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