

“When in Doubt - Follow God’s Plan”

Scripture: 2 Kings 5:1-14

Graphics: Elijah, Elisha, mantle

Big Truth: The people of the Panama UMC are invited to be encouraged by God in times of doubt. Doubt comes in many forms - doubts of faith, self-doubts, and doubts about the future. This series will look at the lives of Elijah and Elisha as they faced doubts about their futures. They didn’t doubt God, but doubted themselves. God spoke to Elijah and Elijah went where God sent him. Elijah died and passed the mantle of leadership to Elisha. Elisha followed God’s plan and was used to heal Naaman. When we doubt ourselves and the future, we’re called to listen, pick up the mantle, and follow God’s plan.

Focus Phrase: When I am in doubt, God will show me the Way.

1. Introduction

- A. This morning’s message is the final one in our **When in Doubt** series. If you’ve been worshiping online or right here, we’ve heard these truths:
 - i. (1) When I am in doubt, **God will speak** into my circumstance.
 - ii. (2) Last week, we heard this: When I am in doubt, **God is with me**.
 - iii. This week, we’ll end with this (make a note): **When I am in doubt, God will show me the Way**.
- B. This *doubt* we’re talking about is not a faith crisis, but an uncertainty or lack of clarity about a decision or circumstance in our lives. In our doubt, God speaks into our lives. In our doubt, God is right there with us. And, today, in our doubt, God will show us the Way.
- C. We’re spending this time in 1 and 2 Kings, learning truths from the lives of Elijah and Elisha. Both were prophets of Yahweh God. Both followed God’s mission and were voices for holiness and fear of the Lord to the nation of Israel. Elisha was Elijah’s protegee, and last week, Elisha took over for Elijah when Elijah was carried up into heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha then took up the mantle - the cloak of God’s authority - and knew that God was with him.
- D. So, **Elisha** is now God’s man. To prove that...
 - i. In 2 Kings 2, Elisha performed miracles by making clean water out of a salty well. In a bizarre story, Elisha cursed a group of boys who were mocking him (they said, “Go away, baldhead!”). 42 of the boys were then mauled to death by two she-bears! Yikes! I’m not sure why we haven’t seen THAT story in any VBS curriculums?!
 - ii. In 2 Kings 4, Elisha called on God to make more oil for a widow, so she could sell it and pay her debts. Elisha also raised a boy from the dead. He made a poisoned pot of stew edible. You get the idea. He was God’s man!
- E. And then we get to today’s scripture from 2 Kings 5.

- F. Now, today's scripture is generally about Elisha, but it's also about a military leader named Naaman, who was sick and needed to be healed. The problem was that Naaman didn't want to follow God's plan, given to him by Elisha.
- G. Let's pray and then we'll see what happened. Then, we'll get some application for US today...
- H. The title of this message is *When in Doubt - Follow God's Plan*. Let's Pray...
- I. PRAY! (Jesus, You are Lord...)**
- J. Let's open our bibles to 2 Kings 5, whether it's a paper copy or e-version... let's open God's Word...2 Kings 5...

2. Scripture

A. READ 2 Kings 5:1-7

- i. Naaman was sick. "He suffered from leprosy." This affliction (known today as Hansen's disease) was as feared and dreaded then as perhaps cancer is today. It was a diagnosis no one wanted to hear. You can imagine Naaman seeing his doctor, and praying, "Don't let it be leprosy! Don't let it be leprosy."
- ii. The Bible says, "Though a mighty warrior, Naaman suffered from leprosy." This is the thing about disease: it's no respecter of status. He was a big man. A powerful man. A wealthy man. But he had leprosy and had to bear the social stigma that went with it.
- iii. Contrast that with the Hebrew servant girl we read about in verse 2. She was weak. She had virtually no status in the Assyrian culture. She was a spoil of war - a captive, a servant, a youth, and a girl. But...she didn't have leprosy.
- iv. Naaman was rich and powerful, but had an incurable disease; she was weak and powerless, but had her health.
- v. And even though she was a nobody, she had the courage to speak up. She saw a need and filled it. She lifted her voice to offer encouragement to her oppressor: "There is a fix for his condition," she said to Mrs. Naaman. "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."
- vi. It's amazing to me that God's plan for Naaman didn't start with Elisha...but with an enslaved Jewish slave girl serving Naaman's wife!
- vii. Mrs. Naaman (we'll call her) had a chat with her husband, who conferred with the Assyrian king. Arrangements were made for a quick trip to their sworn enemy, Israel...based on the word from the servant girl.
- viii. For Elisha's king, Jehoram, King of Israel, however, this trip was a political nightmare. Jehoram thought the Assyrians were trying to start a fight. And, besides that, he was offended that they would assume he could heal anyone! And he was right, of course...he couldn't!

ix. Let's go back to the text and see what happens in verse 8...

B. READ 2 Kings 5:8-14

- i. Elisha heard about King Jehoram's dilemma, and the fact that he tore his clothes in disgust, and simply said, "Send Naaman to me..."
- ii. See, Elisha had the plan from God because Elisha was connected TO God. That wasn't the case for anyone else in this mess, except the servant girl. God used her to get Naaman to Elisha...and then Elisha had God's plan.
- iii. But pay attention here: the plan is not just to heal Naaman physically. God wanted more. God wanted Naaman's whole LIFE. More about that in a minute...
- iv. The Assyrian general arrived "at the entrance of Elisha's house" (v. 9).
- v. Immediately, things went south. Elisha didn't even appear! He barely acknowledged the general and the effort he made to travel such a great distance to see him. Elisha just sent him a text message: "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean."
- vi. This was totally unacceptable to Naaman! He threw a little hissy fit...even insulting the waters in Israel!
- vii. See, here's the issue: Suddenly, Naaman was a nobody. It's like he had to take a number at the clinic. He felt disrespected. He felt like he was being treated as any other leper waiting for a word or touch from the prophet.
- viii. Naaman, in his pride, had forgotten - like we do so often - that he was, in fact, no different than anyone else in their hour of need. He was the beggar, the sinner, the leper, the human, the needy. In the sight of the prophet and of God, there was zero about Naaman that distinguished him from other lepers.
- ix. He was forced to bow in humility. He realized a truth that's so hard to accept. Like all of us, he was in need of help. He couldn't go it alone. He'd have to accept Elisha's help. He could be humbled and healed, or proud and leprous. He could go big and go home a leper, or he could go small and go home, healed and whole. It was his call...his decision. **He was in doubt.**
- x. God HAD a plan. Naaman needed to decide if he would **follow** the plan.
- xi. Naaman's problem was not leprosy. His problem was pride. God does things in God's way, but Naaman had this all figured out. He wanted God to do things in HIS way. His pathway out of the confusion.
- xii. When God had other plans, he had a royal fit. "I thought that **for me** he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy!"
- xiii. Notice the telling words, "**for me.**" Don't we secretly feel this way, too? Perhaps we know at some level that God has many sheep in his pasture, but

at a deeper level, we know that we're special. We're some of God's favorites. God will surely "wave his hand," or use a magic wand, or cast some spell, so that my life can be changed for the better.

- xiv. Surely, God knows I need this promotion. God will do something to save my marriage, to heal my disease, or to patch the holes of my ruined and broken life.
- xv. "All He needs to do is bless my plan...and things will work out," we think.
- xvi. The Good News is : "There is a balm in Gilead!" Help is available, and often it comes from an unlikely source.
- xvii. In Naaman's case, it came from unnamed servants, who called an emergency intervention. They had a "come to Jesus" meeting with Naaman: "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" I LOVE that!
- xviii. And so, finally, the mighty Naaman, reduced to humbling himself before the God of Israel, enduring the snub from the prophet, walked down to the muddy Jordan.
- xix. He removed his clothes revealing his scabrous and broken body to his servants. He lowered himself into the water until he was seen no more. Then, he shot up out of the river, gasping for air, and took a second plunge and repeated that until the seven-fold baptism was complete.
- xx. We know the rest of the story. When he emerged from the final rinse, he was whole and healed. His doubting yet humbled faith, along with some help from his friends, had made him whole. Praise God!
- xxi. When Naaman was in doubt, God showed him the Way. It began with the servant girl...then Elisha...then the servants around Naaman. And in the end...Naaman was healed.

3. Application

A. When you are in doubt, God will show you the Way!

B. To begin that journey, **Humble yourself before the Lord.**

- i. There's a great hymn written in the 1745 by William Williams called *Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah*. When you are in doubt, this hymn can be a balm in Gilead in YOUR life. Verse 1 goes like this: *Guide me O Thou great Jehovah, Pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak, but Thou art mighty; Hold me with Thy powerful hand. Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, Feed me till I want no more; Feed me till I want no more.*

- ii. Naaman eventually humbled himself in order for God's plan to come to fruition. The servant girl humbled herself. Elisha knew who God was and what He does. The unnamed servants humbly guided Naaman.
- iii. How humble are you before the Lord today? Are you willing to listen and not tell God your plan? Are you willing to wait on God's guidance?
- iv. Your plans may very well line up with God's plans. OR, your plans may be contrary to God's best plan for your life. It's not until you and I humble ourselves before the Lord - praying and listening and waiting on Him - that we'll be able to hear His plan...and find the way out of your doubt.
- v. Instead of telling God your plans from your doubt, begin today by asking God for His plans and then begin to understand those.

C. Then, **Be obedient to God's plans**

- i. Back to our hymn (verse 2): *Open now the crystal fountain, Whence the healing stream doth flow; Let the fire and cloudy pillar Lead me all my journey through. Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer, Be Thou still my Strength and Shield; Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.*
- ii. Obedience is not something that comes naturally to us. Our sin nature wants OUR plans to become God's plans. Yet, obedience calls us make God's plans OUR plans.
- iii. It's one thing to know God's way out of our doubt and confusion. It's a whole other level to be willing to be obedient to those plans!
- iv. That takes even MORE humility. And that needs to be mixed with courage and boldness to trust in God more than ever before.
- v. How trusting are you today in God? Are you willing to trust God in order to be obedient to His guidance...that pillar of cloud and pillar of fire that He's putting into your life.

D. Finally, **Let God's plan heal you and increase your faith.**

- i. One final verse from our hymn (verse 4): *Lord, I trust Thy mighty power, Wondrous are Thy works of might; Thou hast saved and freed helpless sinners, "It is finished" ends our night: Thou didst conquer, Thou didst conquer, Sin, and Satan and the grave, Sin, and Satan and the grave.*
- ii. The one final piece of the story of Naaman comes in verse 15, after the last verse we read this morning. I think that, of this whole story, verse 15 is the point. Here's what it says, "Then, he [Naaman] returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, 'Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel...'"

- iii. Thank about that for one second. This pagan, who was serving a pagan king as a military general with leprosy, finally arrived at the place where he understood the whole reason for everything he'd gone through.
- iv. The plan from the beginning was never to just heal Naaman. The plan from the beginning (of Creation, really) was to SAVE Naaman...to save his soul from everlasting separation from God.
- v. The plan was for him to come to FAITH!
- vi. Here's what I want us to understand today: God's plan for your life is not to heal you, help you, love you, or guide you. Those are all things that God WILL and DOES do. But hear me now...**God's plan for you is for you to be SAVED by God's grace through faith in the healing power of the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross.**
- vii. This whole series about doubt comes to THIS: in your doubt, God will speak into your life...in your doubt, God will raise you up as a servant leader...He will be with you and will give you a pathway...ALL FOR THE SINGULAR PURPOSE TO SAVE YOU for everlasting life.
- viii. In your seasons or moments of doubt, God heals you and guides you, speaks into your life and abides with you, and your faith in HIM increases...SO THAT you KNOW that you KNOW that you are SAVED by Him!

4. Conclusion

- A. When I am in doubt, God will show me the Way. That Way is Jesus.
- B. I pray that the times of doubt in your life are few and far between.
- C. I pray that when those times of uncertainty and confusion come, the first thing you do is seek the Lord, allowing Him to guide you by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that you will find the Way...Jesus.
- D. When in doubt, follow God's plan, take the mantle, He will speak to you...to us. Amen!
- E. The final verse of our hymn will be the beginning of our prayer today: ***Thinking on my Glorious Savior, Thinking on my heav'nly home, Fills my soul with hungry longings: Come, my Jesus, quickly come; Vanity is all I see; Lord, I long to be with Thee! Lord, I long to be with Thee!***
- F. Let's pray...