

# **Lifestyles of Faith**

## **Book 2**

Naaman, Jonah, Josiah, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah

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Published by Q Place

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# CONTENTS

## **GETTING STARTED**

How to Use this Discussion Guide .....	5
What is a Q Place? .....	6
Q Place Guidelines .....	6
Q Place Discussion Tips .....	7
Tools for Studying the Bible in a Q Place .....	7
When You Are the Question-Asker .....	8

## **Lifestyles of Faith, Book 2**

Introduction .....	9
1. <b>Naaman, the Proud Leper</b> .....	11
2. <b>Jonah, the Petulant Prophet</b> .....	17
3. <b>Josiah, the Reformer, Part 1</b> .....	23
4. <b>Josiah, the Reformer, Part 2</b> .....	29
5. <b>Daniel, the Exiled University Man, Part 1</b> .....	35
6. <b>Daniel, the Exiled University Man, Part 2</b> .....	41
7. <b>Ezra, Priest and Teacher, Part 1</b> .....	47
8. <b>Ezra, Priest and Teacher, Part 2</b> .....	53
9. <b>Nehemiah, the Balanced Builder, Part 1</b> .....	61
10. <b>Nehemiah, the Balanced Builder, Part 2</b> .....	67
11. <b>Fresh Discoveries</b> .....	73



# GETTING STARTED

## How to Use this Discussion Guide

This study guide uses the inductive (discovery) approach to Bible study. It will help you discover for yourself what the Bible says rather than giving you prepackaged answers. People remember most what they see for themselves and what they express in their own words. To facilitate the discovery process, this study guide provides three kinds of questions:

1. What does the passage say? What are the facts?
2. What is the meaning of these facts?
3. How does this passage apply to your life?

Observe the facts carefully before you interpret the meaning of your observations. Then apply what you have discovered to life today. Resist the temptation to skip the fact questions since we are not as observant as we think. Find the facts quickly so you can spend more time on their meaning and application.

The purpose of Bible study is to understand the message of the Bible, and more importantly, to see how its message applies to life—in how you think and act, in your attitudes and relationships, and in the quality and direction of your life.

Each discussion requires about one hour. Decide on the amount of time to add for socializing and prayer.

Share the leadership. If a different person is the moderator or question-asker each week, interest grows and members feel the group belongs to everyone. The Bible is the authority in the group, not the question-asker.

When a group grows to more than ten, the quiet people tend to become even quieter. So plan to multiply groups as you grow. You can meet as two groups in different rooms or begin another group at another location or time so that more people can participate and benefit.

Be sure to share contact information so you can easily make plans with each other. Getting together outside of the regular meeting time helps to build community and can lead to richer discussions.

## What Is a Q Place?

The *Q* is for *questions*. A Q Place is a group of two to twelve people who meet regularly to discuss questions about life, God, and the Bible.

Q Place as an organization began as Neighborhood Bible Studies in 1960, and has helped thousands of groups and more than a million participants to question, discover, and grow in their relationship with God. To learn how to become a Q Place initiator, get a copy of the book *How to Start a Q Place*.

When group members agree to the following Q Place Guidelines and Discussion Tips and then keep each other on track, the stage is set for dynamic discussions and growth.

### Q Place Guidelines

1. The purpose of this group is to discuss questions about God.
2. The role of initiators is to facilitate a healthy small group process.
3. This group is not for experts. It's for new discoveries. If you think you are an expert, resist the urge to let the rest of us know. Try to listen and ask questions so that everyone can discover answers for themselves.
4. The format is informal discussion, not lecture.
5. If at all possible, read and think through the content and questions ahead of time. Share your ideas honestly and openly.
6. In each session a different person may ask the questions in order to encourage group ownership and dynamic discussions.
7. Maintain confidentiality, courtesy, and respect toward others, even if they don't agree with your position. Do not judge others and avoid side conversations.
8. Do not attempt to resolve all differences or conflicts of opinion. Keep moving when there seems to be an impasse.
9. Begin and end on time.
10. Review the discussion guidelines whenever there's a new person in the group.

## Q Place Discussion Tips

1. **Stick to the topic or passage under discussion** in order to build a common frame of reference. Refer to other material only if your group has studied it together or if it is mentioned in the discussion questions.
2. **Avoid tangents.** Many ideas will surface during the discussion. If the subject is not dealt with in any detail in the material, do not let it occupy too much time. Discuss peripheral topics later.
3. **When discussing the Bible, let it speak for itself.** Instead of quoting other books, religious leaders, or notes in the Bible, try to discover the facts, meaning, and application of the passage together while avoiding religious jargon.

## Tools for Studying the Bible in a Q Place

1. A study guide for each person in the group.
2. A modern translation of the Bible such as the:
  - Contemporary English Version (CEV)*
  - English Standard Version (ESV)*
  - New American Standard Bible (NASB)*
  - New International Version (NIV)*
  - New King James Version (NKJV)*
  - New Living Translation (NLT)*
  - New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*
3. An English dictionary.
4. Historical maps of biblical accounts (found in the back of many Bibles and some Q Place Bible study guides).
5. Your conviction that the Bible is worth investigating.

## When You Are the Question-Asker

Each time a Q Place meets, a different person may ask the discussion questions so the group can make discoveries together. The following guidelines will help you prepare for this role.

1. Prepare by reading the passage several times, using different translations if possible. Consider asking for God's help in understanding it. While thinking through the questions, observe which questions can be answered quickly and which may require more time.
2. Begin on time.
3. If your group has decided to start each discussion with a short prayer, then lead the group or ask someone ahead of time to pray. Don't take anyone by surprise.
4. Begin the study by reading the background notes in the discussion guide at the beginning of the chapter.
5. Ask for a different volunteer to read each Bible section. Read the question. Wait for responses. Rephrase the question if necessary to spark discussions. Resist the temptation simply to answer the question yourself. Move to the next question. Skip questions already answered in the group's discussion.
6. Encourage everyone to participate. If one or two people are talking more than the rest, ask the group, "What do the rest of you think?" "What else could be added?"
7. Receive all answers warmly. If needed, ask, "In which verse did you find that?" "How does that fit with verse . . . ?"
8. If a tangent arises, ask, "Do we find the answer to that here?" Put interesting tangents on hold until after the day's discussion. Suggest writing down important questions that aren't addressed in the current discussion so the group can watch for more information as the study continues.
9. Use the summary questions to bring the study to a conclusion on time, allowing time for the group to share how they can pray for each other.
10. Decide on one person to be the host and another person to ask the questions at the next discussion.



# Lifestyles of Faith

## Book 2

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### Introduction

**T**his series of character studies continues the story of the people of God begun in Book 1 of *Lifestyles of Faith*. The Syrian general Naaman travels to Israel for help during the time of the prophet Elisha, Elijah's successor. During the following century, Jonah reluctantly goes to Nineveh, the capital of Israel's enemy Assyria, to preach repentance. More than a hundred years later, after the northern kingdom of Israel has been conquered and exiled, King Josiah of the southern kingdom of Judah seeks to bring his people back to God from the idolatry they have embraced under the reign of his predecessors.

Soon after Josiah's death, Judah is conquered and its people deported to Babylon. The life of Daniel provides a glimpse of God's people in exile in Babylon. The lives of Ezra and Nehemiah tell about the return from Babylon of a remnant of Judah to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem and reestablish the people as a united worshiping community faithful to the Lord.

This study includes larger sections of Scripture for reading and discussion. Since the approach in this study is to discover the attitudes and actions of each character, it is not necessary to do a careful verse-by-verse analysis of the narrative passages. It's more important to grasp the movement of events so that you can get to know each of these characters, and so that you can come to know more about God.



# 1

## 2 Kings 5

### ———— Naaman, the Proud Leper

**N**aaman came from the land of Syria, just north of the kingdom of Israel. Elisha, successor to Elijah, was the Lord's prophet in Israel at the time. Although the king of Israel is not named, he was one of Ahab's successors, perhaps Jehu, who reigned from about 841 to 814 B.C.

#### **Read 2 Kings 5:1-7**

1. What do you learn here about Naaman's personal and public life?

What do the little Israelite girl's concern and action reveal about her faith and about Naaman's character?

2. Upon hearing of the prophet in Samaria who could cure Naaman's leprosy, what action does the king of Syria take, and why?

However, what motive does the king of Israel attribute to the king of Syria?

3. As someone whose army has made border raids against Israel in the past, how must Naaman feel as he goes there now to seek healing of his disease?

To what lengths will people today go to obtain physical healing?

### **Read 2 Kings 5:8-19**

4. At Elisha's request, the king of Israel sends Naaman to see him. Describe the scene as Naaman arrives at Elisha's door.

What is Naaman expecting from the prophet?

*Note: **The LORD his God** in verse 11 translates to be the divine name YHWH (Jehovah), the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

5. What reasons does Naaman give for his unwillingness to follow Elisha's instructions?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How is Naaman persuaded to do what Elisha says?

What does it cost Naaman to obey Elisha?

7. As soon as Naaman is healed, what does he do?

What does he know now?

8. In refusing to take any gift or payment, what does Elisha want Naaman to realize about his healing (verses 8, 15, 16)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What difficulties does Naaman foresee in carrying out his intention to worship only the Lord when he returns home to Syria?

*Note: Naaman recognizes now that the Lord, the God of Israel, has healed him, but his understanding is incomplete. Although he recognizes Israel's God as the only God, he may feel that the Lord's action is limited to Israel's soil, somewhat like that of a tribal deity. Or his thought may be that the God of Israel would be more pleased to hear him if he worships on Israelite soil. Elisha tells him to go in peace because he recognizes that Naaman's heart attitude is right, although his comprehension is faulty.*

**Rimmon** (verse 18), translates to "thunderer," and refers to a title of the storm-god worshiped in Syria.

**Read 2 Kings 5:20-27**

10. Motivated by greed, Elisha's servant Gehazi runs after Naaman with a plausible request. What is Naaman's response to Gehazi's request?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What is wrong with Gehazi's thoughts and actions?

What will Gehazi's actions lead Naaman to think about the source of his healing?

12. Why is the punishment on Gehazi so severe?

In what situations could you be tempted to act like Gehazi?

*Note: In essence Gehazi has taken credit and payment to himself for a work of the Lord. He has stolen from God by interfering with Naaman's understanding of God's work and character.*

13. Imagine the reactions in Syria in the royal court and in Naaman's own home when he returns. Whose faith has been rewarded?

## **SUMMARY**

1. What qualities of character do you see in Naaman from this whole incident?

Which do you want to emulate and which do you want to change in your own life?

2. What evidence do you see that Naaman begins to understand God's true nature?

3. In what ways is the faith and concern of the little Israelite girl an example and challenge to you?
  
4. Think through what you have observed about Naaman regarding his family background and social position, the crisis experiences that he faced, and the ways that he interacted with God. Note your observations in the chart on pages 74-75. After each discussion in this study you'll have an opportunity to jot down fresh insights, and then in Discussion 11 your group will talk about what you have discovered together.

## CONCLUSION

Naaman was a great man, a good man, a man of valor, an outstanding national leader. He had the best of this world—but he was a leper. Awareness of his need drove him to listen to the least significant person in the nation, because this person held out hope, a way of escape. He went to Israel thinking that Elisha would be the one to cure him. He came away knowing that God had cured him. His pride had been brought to light and for a moment had jeopardized his healing, but when he was willing to sacrifice his pride and become humbly obedient to God's word through his prophet, Naaman received life.

## PRAYER

*O Lord, thank you for the faith of the little Israelite girl. Grant us the same concern and courage to share with others what we know about you and your power. Help us not to take credit to ourselves for your work in our lives or in the lives of others. Guard us from hindering in any way those who are beginning to come to you in faith. Amen.*