



Living as God requires

This study is of the Old Testament story of the healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5:2-14). It compares what Naaman expected his healing would require with what God asks him to do (through Elisha). It applies this to our attitudes to making the lifestyle choices that will be required to avert a climate catastrophe.

Establish the context

Averting the climate emergency will require us all to change our lifestyles to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases that we are responsible for emitting. In time some of this may be required by law, but at present most of the choices are left up to us.

- ✈ Make a list of some of the lifestyle choices that you have made or could make to reduce your carbon footprint.

(Note that most choices will be to reduce activities rather than to give them up entirely).

Listen [to this podcast](#) in which Rachel Mander talks about how her faith has led her to make decisions about her lifestyle [3¼ mins]. If this makes you aware of any other ways you could reduce your carbon footprint, then add them to the list.

Read and reflect on the passage

Read 2 Kings 5:2-3, 5 & 9-14 (NRSV):

¹Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favour with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. ²Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

⁵... He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments... ⁹So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. ¹⁰Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." ¹¹But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "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!" ¹²Are not ... the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. ¹³But his servants approached and said to him, "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?'" ¹⁴So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

Discuss your answers to the following questions:

- ✿ What does Naaman expect will need to happen for him to be healed?
- ✿ How do Elisha's actions and instructions confront this?
- ✿ Why did Naaman get angry?
- ✿ Who has Naaman had to listen to in order to be healed?
- ✿ What do we expect will need to happen to avert the climate emergency?
- ✿ What should we expect?
- ✿ How might our answers be guided by the insights from our answers to the earlier questions?

Review the list of lifestyle choices that are open to you. For each choice on the list:

- ✿ If you have not made that choice, share with the group why you have found it difficult.
- ✿ If you have made the choice, share with the group how you have experienced this.

Pray (using a bowl placed in the middle of the group)

In light of the discussion, select one specific action you could take to further reduce your carbon footprint (for example – “I will not eat meat during the week” or “I will only take holidays within the UK for the next year” or “I will turn the house thermostat down to 18°C”). Write it on a piece of paper, fold the paper over to conceal your commitment and place it in the bowl.

Have a time of open prayer over the bowl of commitments.

- ✿ Share prayers about any issues that have arisen in the discussion.
- ✿ Share prayers that you might have strength to persevere with the commitment you have made.
- ✿ Finish by sharing the Grace together.

Large Blue Bible Studies

These studies use a series of questions to explore a passage from the Bible in the context of the current climate emergency. This is not the context in which they were written. Don't let this worry you too much, but do reflect, from time to time, on how your specific answers to the questions align (or otherwise) with your wider understanding of the gospel.

The studies are designed for use by groups who have a general interest in this area and are willing to share their knowledge. In such groups that shared knowledge should be a sufficient basis for discussion and there will be no need for an “expert” facilitator. If the material is being used with a group who are new to the issues, then it will be useful to have someone who is more informed to help guide discussion.

Each study is designed to last for 60-90 minutes – just how long will depend on how engrossed you get in the discussion.