

FASCINATING STORIES OF FORGOTTEN LIVES

STUDY THIRTEEN

Gehazi: The Servant Who Got Greedy

2 Kings 5:15–27

Among the unruly and untamable monsters of our minds is secret greed. It's bad enough to battle with overt demonstrations of greed, but it is almost unbearable to squelch the smoldering embers of secret greed.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll



To deepen your study, scan to listen.

GREED is an ever-present, consuming monster. It is covetousness—the inordinate, unquenchable desire for more. If we're not vigilant, it will snatch us in its grip.

Greed's insatiable appetite craves an object. Maybe it's money—cold, hard greenbacks. Maybe things—“he who dies with the most toys wins,” as the saying goes. Maybe fame—to be seen, to be known, to be influential. Maybe pleasure—satisfying one's sensual delights.

Greed is easy to spot in other people. We see the bitter and lonely Scrooges of the world hunched over their piles of money, counting their coins by candlelight, and we have no desire to be like them.

It's much harder, however, to spot greed in ourselves. The greed monster is subtle. It slips into the recesses of our thoughts and emotions where our deepest and most personal longings reside. *Secret greed* is the most dangerous form of greed because it's so cunning. We can't always see it lurking in the shadows.

An Old Testament character named Gehazi allowed secret greed to consume his life. He faithfully served his master, the prophet Elisha, who was God's instrument for healing leprous Naaman. As the right-hand man to Elisha, Gehazi probably never imagined that he would fall prey to greed . . . but he did. In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll track the greed monster and see how it took Gehazi as its victim.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin your study by reading two verses from Proverbs which warn of greed's consequences. Then, in quiet prayer, seek the Holy Spirit's wisdom and protection from this formidable foe.

*Such is the fate of all who are greedy for money;
it robs them of life. (Proverbs 1:19)*

*Greed brings grief to the whole family,
but those who hate bribes will live. (15:27)*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As we saw in our previous *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, Naaman, the top commander of Aram's army, had come to Elisha's house seeking healing from leprosy. But the prophet of God left Naaman standing at the doorstep, telling him through a servant (probably Gehazi) to dip seven times in the Jordan River. Insulted, Naaman stomped away in anger, but his own officers urged him to do as Elisha said, and his heart softened. He trekked down to the river, and, on the seventh dip, he emerged cleansed. "His skin became as healthy as the skin of a young child, and he was healed!" (2 Kings 5:14).

Not only was Naaman's skin healed, so was his soul. Upon returning to Elisha's house to display his new skin, Naaman joyfully declared,

*"Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift
from your servant." (5:15)*

Pre-Jordan Naaman was arrogant and smug. But the cleansed Naaman was humble, grateful, and generous—a walking miracle inside and out. The gift he offered valued in the millions in today's dollars—750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and 10 fine suits he had brought from Syria.

According to [2 Kings 5:16–18](#), what was Elisha's response? What vow and request did Naaman make? What was Elisha's final word to Naaman?

Gehazi, eavesdropping on the conversation, watched in shock as Naaman's caravan, loaded with the treasure he coveted, turned and headed north. We pick up the account at this point.

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Observation: An Account of Secret Greed

As you observe, use your imagination to enter the biblical scene. Follow Gehazi's footsteps, picturing his expression and sensing his consuming desire. See greed take over his mind and soul as you read and answer the questions below.¹

Gehazi's Mind—2 Kings 5:20

The phrase, "But Gehazi" represents a crucial turn in the story. Gehazi's actions stood in direct opposition to his master's actions. Contrast the perspectives and decisions of Elisha and Gehazi in 2 Kings 5:16, 20 by completing the second column below to match the phrases of the first column.

Elisha 2 Kings 5:16	Gehazi 2 Kings 5:20
"But Elisha replied . . ."	"But Gehazi . . . said to himself . . ."
"As surely as the LORD lives . . ."	
". . . whom I serve . . ."	
". . . I will not accept any gifts."	

What do you observe in Elisha's perspective that is missing in Gehazi's? What consumes Gehazi's mind?

"But Gehazi thought" (2 Kings 5:20 NASB). That's how it works. That's how greed reveals itself. It's a smoldering secret only to surface as a result of rationalization. "So Gehazi pursued Naaman" (5:21 NASB).

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Gehazi's Actions—2 Kings 5:21–25

Gehazi could have shared his thoughts with Elisha, but he didn't . . . because he knew what Elisha would say. That's the nature of greed—it shuts your ears to wisdom. Instead, Gehazi's greed led him to act in four foolish ways.

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First, *Gehazi pursued*. Gehazi slipped out the back door and ran to catch Naaman. According to [2 Kings 5:21](#), what was the response of unsuspecting Naaman? What might Naaman have assumed, seeing Gehazi running toward him?

Second, *Gehazi lied*. What story did Gehazi concoct in [5:22](#)? What were the specific components of his lie?

Third, *Gehazi acted deceitfully*. Capitalizing on Naaman's gratitude and generosity, what two-fold deception did Gehazi carry out, according to [5:23–24](#)? Why do you think Gehazi acted as he did?

Fourth, *Gehazi denied the truth to the one who trusted him*. When Elisha questioned Gehazi in [5:25](#), what did Gehazi say? Why was this lie particularly reprehensible? Why was it foolish?

Listen to me, once a person lies to him or herself, he or she can lie to anybody. Lying to a superior is not difficult if you have learned to lie to yourself. It's all part of the process of greed. Our mouths can say things that our minds know are lies. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Gehazi's Greed Comes Home to Roost—2 Kings 5:26–27

Elisha saw through Gehazi's lies. How did he confront Gehazi, according to [2 Kings 5:26–27](#)? What consequences did Gehazi face?

The whole story is reprehensible because Gehazi used his office, his spiritual role, to play on the heart of Naaman. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Rationalizations Gone Awry

Naaman curiously requested to return home with a load of earth in [2 Kings 5:17](#). For help with the meaning of this verse, consult [Constable's Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#). Of what importance was the load of earth for Naaman?

Gehazi rationalized his actions. “As surely as the LORD lives,” he said, convincing himself he was doing what God wanted (2 Kings 5:20). What other possible rationalizations might Gehazi have entertained to justify going behind Elisha's back?

Why do you believe Elisha refused Naaman's gift? What was at stake? What lesson about God might he have been *teaching* Naaman, a new believer? What lesson might he have been *modeling* for Gehazi?

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In life, and frequently in ministry, many are called to come alongside strong leaders in a role of assistant, supporter, or servant. Servants must never undermine the love, the trust, and the loyalty cultivated over time with their senior colleagues. What lessons can servants, whether in ministry or otherwise, glean from Gehazi's story?

This is how it works. Rationalization makes wrong conduct plausible. It removes guilt, it undermines integrity, and it gives you permission to move inappropriately. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Greed's Consequences

When searching the Scriptures, we find plenty of references to greed's varied and devastating consequences. Let's consider some of the ways the greed monster can grab us with its tentacles. For each of the Scriptures listed below, identify its specific impact on believers.

Matthew 6:24: _____

Acts 5:1–11: _____

1 Timothy 6:9–10: _____

James 4:1–3: _____

Reflecting on these passages, how would you summarize Scripture's warnings about greed?

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Nothing is wrong with having things. Greed occurs when things have us. And things have us when what we have never satisfies. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Facing the Same Temptations

Gehazi's downfall reminds us that we all must be on guard against greed's subtle attacks. Through Gehazi's account, several lessons call out warnings to heed:

1. *Imagination allows greed to grow.* The same creativity that helps us dream wonderful dreams can also assist us in forming destructive nightmares.
2. *Rationalization encourages greed to surface.* Rationalization talks us into intensifying our action. It takes discernment and discipline to confront and stop rationalizing thoughts in their tracks.
3. *Deception gives greed courage to persist.* Keeping one secret emboldens us to keep many secrets. Lying to ourselves and to others eventually becomes a lifestyle.
4. *Confession brings greed to a necessary and abrupt halt.* That's the good news. Greed is ugly, inappropriate, and outright avarice. It is discontentment with life. The best way to deal with it is to face it, to admit it, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, to stop it.

Where might you find greed taking hold in your life? Of whom or what are you covetous, and are you secretly feeding that discontentment?

To whom are you accountable? In what ways does this person challenge you with your thoughts, imagination, and rationalization in areas which are landmines for you?

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Ironically, Gehazi, the Israelite serving God at Elisha's side, displayed the least godly characteristics, while Naaman, the pagan idolater, displayed the most godly. Jesus held up Naaman as a model of faith, saying, "Many in Israel had leprosy in the time of the prophet Elisha, but the only one healed was Naaman, a Syrian" (Luke 4:27).

How does Naaman's humility, faith, and obedience inspire you? How can his example guard you from greed?

Remembering your role, remembering what is appropriate, remembering what is godly, remembering what is best and what is wise will check tempting thoughts.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for words of such warning. In a day of ever-present rationalization and wholesale deception, it is easy to fall into that lifestyle. Help me rein in my imagination. Check my rationalizations. Use this message to deal with deception. Lord, bring about confession, cleansing, and relief. Thank You for truth that comes from such accounts as this one. May the truth be evident in my changed life. For I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1990, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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