Dangers of Becoming Accustomed to God

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This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Well, I want you to take your Bible, if you would, and turn with me to 2 Kings 5.

I have been saved for 55 years this past, well, just a couple of weeks ago, May the 6th, 1962. I was an almost 8-year-old boy, 7-year-old boy.

I was in church. The preacher was preaching on the crucifixion. I had been under conviction, according to my parents, for quite some time. I honestly don't remember that part, but I've been in church literally all my life.

This passage of Scripture has a lot to do with people like us and the danger we have of being so accustomed to God. You know, you can get too used to God.

You can lose your all. We go to church. We see God work. I have seen God do amazing things.

[1:05] I have preached and watched dozens of people in one service get saved that are still serving God. I have seen God start. We've seen God start a church here.

And we've seen Him build a church, build a building. It's pretty easy for us to think we've got this genius businessman that knows how to do that. And we've got this great-looking pastor with such great charisma.

People just flock to hear Him preach. I know it's hard for y'all not to believe that. That was a joke. But we can get too used to it.

So in the story we're going to look at, I would read the whole thing. I wanted to read the whole chapter. The plan was to read the whole chapter. I don't think we can. But I would like you to just kind of scan the chapter with me.

I'll give you the Tennessee hillbilly version of 2 Kings 5. If I could, there's a guy named Naaman. He's a captain of the host for the king of Assyria. He's like the five-star general in the country.

[2:01] He's a big man. He's a mighty man of valor. But he has leprosy. And he also has a little slave girl working for him, a captive girl out of Israel. That's in verse 2.

And she, I don't know why she did it. But she wanted her master to know that if he would just go to Israel in verse 3, or down to Samaria, he could talk to the man of God down there, and he could recover.

And she had said that. So the guy hearing that, and probably his wife nagging with him a little bit, who knows what, he went to the king and decided he got permission to go down. And in verse 5, he heads out carrying with him a ton of money, almost literally.

If you'd like to check this out, you're welcome to look this up for yourself. But 10 talents of silver was worth about a million and a half dollars there. And he had 6,000 pieces of gold worth about 700,000.

And he took 10 brand new suits of clothes with him. And he goes down to see the king of Israel. And he gets to the king of Israel. And he says, hey, I heard I can get healed down here, and so I need some help.

[3:10] And the king freaks out in verse 7. And he said, who do you think I am, God, that I can kill and make alive? They just want to start a fight with this. But Elisha is the man of God.

He saw the tweet or something and knew the guy was in town. And so he'd heard that the king had torn his clothes in verse 8. And he said, why don't you tell him to come down here and see me? He'll find out there is a man of God in Israel.

That's a crazy statement. And run to line that verse 8. He said, he shall know there's a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came, and he stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

And when he got down to Elisha's house, Elisha doesn't even come out. This guy comes riding up. I just want you to remember, this is George Custer with his whole group of soldiers riding in behind him.

And he rides up with all those people, and Elisha stays at the house and sells his messenger, run after him, and tell him, I said, go wash in the Jordan River seven times, and his flesh will be clean.

[4:08] Naaman said in verse 11, ha, well, I would have thought that he would have come out and talked to me and called on the name of his God and put his hand over the place and saved me and covered my leprosy.

He said, I believe the rivers in my country are just as good back up in Damascus, and they're better than all the waters of Israel. I like my country. I think I'll go there. May I not wash in them and be clean?

So he turned away and went away in a rage. He heard what he could do. He heard from the man of God. He didn't like what the man of God said, and he got very angry, and he left. Billy Sunday used to say when he preached that he hoped you left mad or glad.

He just hoped you didn't feel the same way you did when you came in. I should make you mad more often. Amen? And his servants came, and they spake to him and said, Now, look, if the prophet had asked you to, verse 13, if he'd asked you to do something big, wouldn't you have done it?

Why don't you just go do what he said? Go wash and be clean. So in verse 14, he went down, he dipped himself seven times into Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God. And in verse 15, and now he's got flesh like a little child, no more leprosy.

[5:21] He's found the fountain of youth. He's healed up real good. And he comes back and stands before the man of God. And he said, Behold now, last time I was here, I came proud and pompous and arrogant, and I left in a rage.

But now I know there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. And he said, I tell you what, I'm going to serve God, and I'm going to worship Him, and I'm going to honor Him.

And then he said, I'd like to pay you. I got all this money with me. Man, you've made my life. Let me give you some money. And he said, No, don't do that. I don't want any money. I don't need your money.

I serve a God. I'm going to have to heal you. He can take care of me. And so the man left, told him, verse 19, go in peace. And he hadn't gotten very far. It says just a little ways when Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, thought to himself, You know what?

I could use some of that money. And I'm telling you what, I'm going to run after him, and I'm going to get some money. So he ran after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running up, he knew who he was.

[6:26] He was a servant of Elisha. And so he stopped and said, Is everything okay, buddy? Do you need me to do anything? And in verse 22, he lied and said, My master sent me, saying, Behold, now there have come to me from Mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets.

Give them, I pray, a talent of several. That's pretty nice of him, just to be honest. You know, there was ten changes of clothes, and so he only took two. He only wanted two.

And then he said, I'll just take a talent. He wasn't greedy. He just took \$150,000 instead of a million and a half. I mean, no, he's a good preacher. He just wanted to tithe. Say amen.

And two changes of garments. And Naaman said, Be content. Take two talents. And he pushed it on him, and he took \$300,000 and two changes of the raiment in verse 23.

And then he went back to the house. He put them back there in his little room, stored the clothes back in there. And he went in to see his master. And he walked in like, I ain't been nowhere. Just been back in the room watching TV.

[7:27] Come back in here to talk to you. And Elisha said, Hey, buddy, where you been? And he said, I ain't been nowhere. Look at it. That's in verse 25. He said, I ain't been nowhere. Elisha said, That ain't true.

My heart went with you when you went. I watched you the whole way. I saw it. You think it's time to receive money and garments and olive yards and vineyards and sheep and oxen? You think you're in a ministry to get money, boy?

And the leprosy thereof of Naaman shall cleave unto you and on your seed from now. And he walked out cursed with leprosy immediately.

You read that story and you have to ask yourself, What's God telling me here? There's a ton of things. And just quickly, I could preach to you about Naaman's leprosy.

And, you know, he came in proud and arrogant and pompous like people come in and they don't want to get saved. They don't want to humble themselves. Reverend lke said when I was a boy, he said, Don't get on your knees.

[8:26] He was a famous charismatic preacher. Don't get on your knees. He said, If you get on your knees, you just open yourself up for the devil to kick you in the rear end. And I think getting on our knees kind of goes against the grain.

And so he comes in very arrogant. He hears what he ought to do. It's too simple. If it had been a hard thing, he'd have done it. But since it was a simple thing like trusting Jesus, turn and trust Jesus.

And he said, In my pride and my arrogance, I won't do it your way. I won't do it your way. And so he had to come to a place where he crashed and burned. He had to come to a place where he knew he couldn't.

He had to come to a place where he had to give up on his own self. That's turning from himself and turning to Jesus. And then he gets healed. I could preach that to you. That would be good.

But I don't think that's the real story here. The real story is this hazy guy that's in the story. And that's us. They're very used to being in church. We sing those songs. We sing songs about God.

[9:26] I'm listening to Baptist Church in America, an audio book I'm listening to as I go back and forth. Sometimes I want the ride to be just a tad longer coming in because I get right in the middle of Habacus and the Free Will Baptist guys.

They just got started and started like 30, 40 churches just coming in this morning. I'm like, maybe if I had gone a little longer, I could have got 60 going. Amen? I mean, I'm just enjoying it.

And they're talking about how they'd sing those old hymns when they got beat and their lands got taken. We've not had one missionary suffer anywhere like what those early Baptists did right here trying to get the gospel preached and get those churches started.

And so we get used to it. But they said they'd sing those hymns and sometimes the guy would be singing and tears flowing down his eyes because he knew, boy, God, God was real.

And the truths were real. And he might have just lost his cows because the Anglican church or the Congregational church came and took them. But he didn't care. He'd stand with Jesus.

[10:28] And it was real to him. But all of a sudden, we're here all the time. We live in America. Good night. It doesn't cost us anything. And honestly, we give God less than we give a waiter.

We give God less than we give a waiter. And we're just very used to this opulent lifestyle. And we don't know. There's old Elisha there, the man of God who's really not interested in money.

But I'm more like old Gehazi and I want to see what I can get. And so I'd like to show you this. Don't blow your opportunity. Don't blow your opportunity for God to use you.

Don't blow your opportunity for God to use you. So let me take you through the story this way. Number one thing to look at. Here we find him in the middle of the action. We find him in the middle of the action.

So we got Gehazi. And he's up there. And he's most likely the servant that stepped out and talked. He was the guy that was there with a Shumanite woman, remember? And when they were going down the road with us a few weeks ago when we were there, they're going down the road.

[11:32] And the woman's in her house. And she sees the man of God go by. And she perceives he's a man of God. And they build a prophet's chamber so the man of God can have a place to rest.

And they want to take care of him. And old Gehazi is there with him. And they go in the house and stay in the room. And Elisha gets to thinking about it. We ought to do something for it. And it's old Gehazi that says, you know, she doesn't have a kid.

Well, I asked God to give her a kid. And so he's a nice guy, man. Saw her need, cared about her, and asked for God to give her a kid. And then it was Gehazi that was there when the dad came running up and said, the boy, we need you at the house.

And Elisha said, the Lord hadn't told me what's going on. Oh, that's what's going on. Run and take my staff and lay it on the kid. He watched all that. I don't know if you have any imagination of living and working with the preacher of the generation.

I mean, the man of God. I mean, whoever it is. We don't have that kind of thing today. But there's this great big man of God. He's the one that the Bible, there's a ton of men of God around. But there's this one guy.

[12:35] Elisha and old Gehazi is there. And he saw all that happen. And now the story starts up and Naaman comes walking up. And I don't know about you, but Elisha's back in the back room.

I can imagine Gehazi running back in there and saying, man, the big shot's here. And he has brought a stinking army with him, man. You better get out here. And Elisha said, no, no, no. Just go out there and tell him I said.

I mean, now me, I'd have been like, hey, big shot's come. I'd like to meet the big shot myself. I wouldn't know my name. That's for my autograph. But no, Elisha said, I just go out there and tell him, go wash himself in the Jordan River.

And Gehazi goes out there and he's like, man, he's got the face-to-face with the guys from the other countries. And he's seeing all that happen. And he's going through the story with him. And the guy offers the profit money and he doesn't want it.

I don't know if you can see it, but he is in the big time. He's in the middle of the action. I mean, he is watching the greatest stuff you could have happen. You can imagine if we got those two stories of Elisha, there's a whole lot more stories that we don't even know about.

[13:45] This is the greatest man of his generation. This guy, Gehazi, gets to be there when that guy's praying, when that guy's serving, when that guy's doing all these ministries. He's watching and he's witnessing it.

And he's going to say, by the way, in just another chapter or so, he's going to be standing up when he gets kicked out with a leprosy. You're actually going to find him later on in the story and he'll be talking to a king. You know how he got to be up there with a king because he met some big shots because of the preacher.

And when they're talking, guess what they're talking about? Elisha. That's what they are. He's in the middle of it. I don't mean to be a smarling when I say this, but you know you're kind of in the middle of it here.

Not because I'm a big man of God, but there is something really crazy going on here. God's calling so many missionaries. God's raising up money. God's doing stuff. And he gets to be like old hat.

Oh, ho-hum. Dan, sit down. We don't need to hear about them ocean places. Oh, sit down, Becker. We don't hear about that. Let's just have our church services and go to the house.

[14:46] Why do we need to be so concerned about souls? Because it's easy to get so caught up in all this big stuff. We get more people getting married around here than any church you're going to go to of our size.

I'm not saying a church with 10,000 can't get more folks married. But find me one with 250 that gets this many people married. Find you one with 250 that got this many babies being born. Lord, help me. Find one with 250 that's having so many missionaries coming to give a report.

We're in the middle of the action. Don't blow it. Don't blow it. Let me give you the second thing I see here. Ogie Hazy had a real potential to be the next man of God. Now, that's not mentioned in the story, but if you study your Bible, you know this is true.

If you study your Bible, how did Joshua get to be the man? Well, he was a servant to Moses. And when Joshua was a servant to Moses and he just carried his stuff and did things for him and worked for him, that's how he got started.

How did Samuel get started? He worked with old Eli from the time he was a boy. He was with old Eli. How did Elisha get started? He was the guy that poured water on the hands of Elijah. And now we find Gehazi serving.

[15:54] We find him serving. And I don't know who he is, but his name gets mentioned. What attitude does he take about what God's doing in his life? When I wanted to leave the convention and become an independent Baptist and come over here and start a church, I knew the big shot preacher probably wouldn't talk to me.

I never even called him. He was a Curtis Hudson, the pastor of Forest Hills Baptist Church. I didn't even call him, but I called his assistant, John Reynolds. I only called John Reynolds. I said, because if you're that close to John, if you're, if, if, Curtis probably won't talk to me, but the assistant probably have time for me.

And if you're working with him, you must be the man or you wouldn't be working with the man. And so I came over to see him. That's who Gehazi is. How's he going to respond to the opportunity?

We know how he responded. God has you serving him somewhere, and he, let's see what the potential is. Do you realize that if you're here, you're at a special place and a special time out?

You're nothing. You are nothing. I am nothing. It's all him. But he does seem to be doing something unusual. And you might not notice it. You know, when you eat steak every day, all you do is complain about it ain't as tender as it was yesterday.

But when you're eating hot dogs, steak tastes good even if it's tough. Say amen. You poor people, you rich people ain't never known that. But I can remember when they said steak, I'd have said, I don't care how you cook it.

Just bring it to me. If I don't have to have another hot dog, I'll be a happy boy. What kind of steak do you want? I'll just take tube steak. That's what I get every day. Amen. We're here.

And Ogehas is there. I just wonder if Ogehas. Now, we know what the truth is. But could you go with me just a second? Could it be possible? Could it have been possible? That like Elisha got trained by Elijah.

Could it have been possible? Gehazi could have had something big if he'd have hung around. But nope. Sin cramp in. So number three. Watch him blow it. Watch him blow it. Did he just forget who he was working for and get used to the ministry so that it seemed just like a job?

Oh, we're going to have another ordination. Yeah, we have a bunch of them at Vision. I was getting ready for the wedding on Saturday. My buddy, Robert Canfield.

[18:16] He said, you need to mix it up a little bit. Your weddings are getting monotonous. Somebody came to me later and said, where'd you get those new vows? I said, well, good night.

Robert told me to go back to the drawings and get some new ones. Amen. Usually, people don't notice you use the same vows every time. But when you do it around here. See, did he just forget and think it was a job?

The first time you do a wedding, boy, Mark Coffey, that was his first wedding. He's back in my office. He's reading them notes and reading them notes and reading them notes. I said, well, Mark, it ain't that big a deal.

It'll all be over in just a few minutes. Don't worry about it. Just calm down. You'll be all right. And so after it was over, he said, you know, it wasn't that big a deal. I said, I know, but that first and sure is different, ain't it? I'm always nervous still, too.

You know, funerals are better. They don't gripe as much. But could it be that you and I, you're teaching some young people that just might be missionaries?

[19:16] Some of you men are discipling the young men that might be going to be a missionary.

And somebody helped old Miguel Sanabria, who became a Spanish pastor and now is a missionary to Colombia.

And somebody taught him and he was a pain in the youth department and didn't do what he ought to do. And today he's serving God. Don't blow it. Don't blow it. Don't blow it.

Don't blow it. Okay. Just take my stick and lay it on his face. I'll be there in a minute. I'm like, if you're going to send me with a stick and I've got to run, at least let me do the CPR and get the kid back.

Say amen. But no. So the guy runs the house. He just said, okay, well, the man will be here in a minute. Oh, sorry about that. All I've got to do is carry the stick. That's all my job is. It could be pretty easy to get.

Just run, do this, son. Come back here, son. Do that, son. You could get pretty easy. You could get bitter if you wanted to. Could it be he got jealous of all the attention Elisha got? Did he feel like he dealt with all the junk, but Elisha got all the credit?

[20:44] Do you think Elisha was a man and all his needs were met? But Gehazi's weren't. I mean, you know, probably people coming by and bringing him a diet, Dr. Pepper. I hope not.

Make a diet, man, do. But they're coming by and they're giving him some gifts, but maybe Gehazi's not getting anything. They're like, Gehazi, could you get the door open? I'd like to give him a gift. You bring me anything?

Nope. You're just an assistant. You don't count. Could that be that that bothered him? Do you think Elisha was so spiritual that he just didn't need money, but he did?

By the way, this Gehazi is a good guy. He'd seen other people's needs and he'd met them. He had helped Elisha. When Elisha needed something, he was there. But here's the question.

Did he forget to count the blessings and be grateful? I think some people could go to Vision Baptist Church and missionaries could be so touted and lifted up and made to be great.

[21:40] And we could all be sitting here thinking, well, we're serving God too. Why are they always got to act like missionaries or something? Why are they going to act like Elisha or something?

My name's Gehazi and I work too. I'm just in the ministry just as much as he is. And I know it could never happen here, but it seems to have happened in Gehazi's life and we know it happened in Cora's life.

And to be blunt honest, sometimes I think, I have been known to make a comment and have somebody say, well, you used to be a missionary and it ain't like that anymore. I'm like, I'm going to punch you. Look, you little punk. I'm the teacher around here.

It could happen. Come on. Can we be honest? Did he just get hurt in the ministry? And that was his way of getting what he wanted? Because we get hurt, don't we?

We don't get appreciated. We don't get thanked. I don't know what caused this guy to just be stupid. They thought, I mean, when you're working with a guy who can see stuff and knows what's happening and is getting messages straight from God, I just don't think I'd be trying to sneak around none.

[22:50] But he did. Next, number four, sin always has consequence. You know, you never get away with it. Now, he's going to get rich.

I don't see, I don't know if the money got taken away from him. I don't think that's mentioned. I don't know if he lost all that money because if he didn't lose all that money, he turned out to be a pretty well-off dude for that day and time.

But he lost his position. For one day, everywhere Elisha walks, Gehazi's with him. When they get to the Shumanites' house, oh, Gehazi's right there.

When they walk into the prophet's chamber, there's room for two, buddy. Gehazi and the man of God. And when Naaman shows up, it's probably Gehazi's the guy that went out and talked to him.

Gehazi's got his place. But now Elisha says, it's over, son. Not only that, Naaman's leprosy is going to be on you. Not only that, your sin, sir, was going to affect your children.

Your bitterness and your bad attitude is going to go to your descendants. Your greed is going to affect your children. Your willfulness is going to affect your children.

It's a horrible thing. I had hoped I was going to preach this on a Thursday night. But it didn't work that way.

And so I figured it must be the message for tonight. But I'd like to say to all the missionaries, boy, if you don't keep a good attitude, if you ever let the money become a thing for you, if you ever let selfishness become a thing for you, if you ever get bitter because you're serving God and you don't feel appreciated, I wonder if it could affect your children.

And I grew up knowing that preacher's kids didn't love God. If this is where I ever got into ministry. Last thing I'd like to say to you tonight, how can I avoid blowing my opportunity?

I'd just like to give you a few things. I got four minutes. Here they are. I need to never get used to the ministry and never get used to seeing God work. In the history book I'm listening to, there were burning things way to the north up in New England, but no one knew it back then.

[25:13] And the smoke, they think, probably darkened an entire city. And in that city where it got dark, everybody thought maybe God was moving, thought Jesus was coming back, and revival struck out because people really thought it was an act of God.

And they talked about one church baptized 54 people over the next few months because of that one incident. And then they said, the historian says, most likely it was just the smoke burning from up north, and the winds blew it south.

You know what we'd have done here in America? We wouldn't have got upset. We'd have turned on the TV and found out it was smoke and never even thought about God, wouldn't we? That's how you blow it. We don't think of God answering prayer anymore.

We don't ask God like we really mean it anymore. Doctors can take care of it. Insurance can take care of it. Lawyers can take care of it. The only way we're ever going to pay attention to God anymore is after we've spent everything we have on doctors, and then we'll have to go talk to God.

Never let it become routine. He's God, and I get to talk to Him. He's God, and I get to worship Him. His book is real, and I get to read it.

[26:27] Never allow it to make you think poorly of others. Looking down on others because we think our church is better than their church, or we think our ministry is better than their ministry.

We can't get used to it. We must never hope that the ministry will make us rich or be a means of getting rich. And I know what you're thinking. Well, that's crazy. But in America, the fastest growing group of Christians, quote, unquote, are prosperity gospel Christians.

It's all about how much money you can get. We seek the money. We seek the people with the money. It would be easy for our church not to want poor people.

But D.O. Moody, the way the whole every ministry he had got started, he went and found the poorest people and brought them to church. The Salvation Army today is a joke as far as spiritual things, probably, but it was started by William Booth going to the worst part of town and winning the dregs of society to Christ.

We see money. We see people with money. We think they should see our needs, and people should care for us, and God ought to make us rich. Gehazi had been a good man.

[27:38] He had met other people's needs, and now he wanted his met. He had taken care of the man of God. I think he probably thought he deserved to have his needs met. I must keep working on my relationship with God.

I can never be satisfied with where I am with God. I must never become mechanical. I've been married for 44 years in August.

It is so easy. You know Timmy and Destiny? In Discovery Zone. Man, everything's new, and everything's sweet, and everything's passion.

They don't even know each other. Boy, it's wild times, isn't it? And the guys, in 10 years of marriage, you're having kids, and your life is getting started, and everything's a lot of fun, but 20 starts getting old, maybe.

You're not careful. You say, how do you know that? Because about 18, 20 years, when people start getting divorced, start looking for somebody else. You get up in big numbers, it's like you don't work, but it's because we don't work on it.

[28:53] But you know what happens with Christians? You ever been around all them dead old Christians? You know I'm telling the truth. They know their Bibles, and they've got a head knowledge, but their heart's been asleep for years.

It's like God's not real anymore. I've got to work at it. I've got to keep learning and keep growing. I've got to keep being grateful. I've got to keep praying. I've got to keep serving.

And I need to remember that every sin leads to another sin. Yehazi says, I'm a little upset with Elisha today.

Sends me running to the door. Bosses me around. I don't know if that's how it happened. And then all that money's there, and maybe Jehazi thought to himself, he could have just took a little piece.

He could have got me one of them new suits, and I could have had a new suit. No skin off his nose to let the guy give me a suit. I don't know. Maybe it started with a desire for something.

[29:58] I don't know. The Bible doesn't tell us. Maybe some bitterness crept in his heart. But we do know what he did. We know he wanted the money and went running for the money. Then we know he lied to get the money.

Then we know he brought the money back and hid the money. Then we know he lied to the man of God. When I was a kid, they used to say, Oh, what a tangled web we weave when we practice to deceive.

The next thing you know, he's caught and gone. How do you go from being next to the greatest man of God of your generation? Well, Judas did it, didn't he?

So easy. I don't want that to happen. It's a personal story, and I know it's a little late, but I'm going to tell you anyway. When I was a boy, I used to listen to my old granddaddy.

There wasn't anything to do, and it would be dark, and they wouldn't let us go outside sometimes. Maybe it's cold. It had to be seen and not heard.

[30:59] It had to sit in the room. My cousins weren't there. We would have gone and played somewhere else. I'd hear my granddaddy talking about how he'd seen God move. I'd hear my granddaddy talking about how they'd preach, and the church building would be so full, and all the windows would be up, and people would be standing at the windows, and people would be getting saved.

And I'd say, God, I want to see that. I have seen that, actually. But I can remember thinking, I've been in so many churches where everybody in the church was all old, and they were all dead, and nobody cared if God moved or not.

There were no more tears. Nobody coming to the altar anymore. Nobody praying anymore. It's just like we're going through a ritual, like we're going through a form, like we're just, we're here. We're at the club meeting.

Rotary club, call the roll. Optimist club, let's go over our creed. Let's do what we're supposed to do. But nobody came hungry to meet with God. Nobody came hungry to see God do anything.

How can you blow it when you've got all that going? But I think we're this close to blowing it. I think we live that close to blowing it. I think I live that close to blowing it in my marriage.

[32:11] I feel I live that close to blowing it to God. I don't want to blow it. I want to die married to the same woman with a good marriage and enjoying it. And I want to die loving Jesus and believing Him and trying to get a hold of Him.

And I don't want to be like a hazy and walk away for what the world offers. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia.

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