

Naaman — Healing And Humility

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Good morning CrossWinds. If you are new, my name is Kurt. We are in a series called Broken Vessels. In this series, we are looking at how God uses ordinary people and broken people in significant ways for His kingdom. I find that encouraging. All of us are ordinary and broken people. That means God to use us to grow His church.

Pew research looked into the top things young people want today. What do you think the top goals are for the younger generation? The top two goals of young adults today are to be rich and famous. While it is natural to seek attention, sociologists tell us the current generation craves it. Today's young adults grew up with the Internet, social media, and selfies. From the moment they were born, someone was taking their picture and posting about their life. Young adults learned that the more videos you can post and the more people you get to watch those videos, the more rich and famous you will become.

An insatiable craving for riches and fame hasn't always been the top goal of young adults. In 1978, becoming rich ranked the eighth most important goal for young adults. Today, becoming rich is the top priority for 80 percent of young people.¹

If you are in your thirties or beyond, you know that becoming rich and famous isn't as important as you once thought. There are things in life far more important than riches and fame. To prove that, today we are turning to 2 Kings 5.

¹ <https://www.consumerismcommentary.com/millennials-want-to-be-rich-more-than-anything/>

There we will read the story of a rich man, a famous man, and a powerful man, but riches, fame, and power didn't matter to him because they couldn't solve the big problem of his life.

The man's name was Naaman. He was a general in the Syrian army. The year was around 800 B.C. Life was not going well for the Israelites. They were unfaithful to God and suffered for their sins. 2 Kings 5 tells us how God was at work making his name famous in Syria while God's own people rejected him.

Let's read 2 Kings 5:1-19, then we will study the verses together.

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." And the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy." And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me." But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. But his servants came near and said to him, "My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. Then he returned to the man of God, he and all

his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, “Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from your servant.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will receive none.” And he urged him to take it, but he refused. Then Naaman said, “If not, please let there be given to your servant two mule loads of earth, for from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the Lord. In this matter may the Lord pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon your servant in this matter.” He said to him, “Go in peace.” But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, 2 Kings 5:1–19 (ESV)

Meet Naaman

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor.... 2 Kings 5:1 (ESV)

The chapter begins by introducing us to Naaman. He was the commander of the army of the king of Syria. In other words, he was a big wig. Naaman was a 5-star general. He was the chairman of their joint chiefs of staff. The Bible tells us he was a great man with his master and in high favor. That means the king loved him. Everybody loved him. He was not famous simply for the position he held, but he was a good leader who was loved and respected by everyone around him. That means the media had nothing bad to say about him. Imagine that.

In addition, it says the Lord gave him victory. This is interesting. Even though he did not know God, the victories in his military career came from God. This is a reminder that God is behind any success or blessing in our lives. God deserves the credit for every good thing we experience. This is not just true for Christians, but this is also true for those who do not know God, people like Naaman. God was the one who gave him military success. The success in his life was not his ingenuity, creativity, and initiative. It was a gift from the God he didn't know.

It also tells us Naaman was a mighty man of valor. That means he was just famous for the position he held, but he was battle-tested and proven faithful. He risked his life for the sake of his country and king. People knew that and loved him because of that. He was the kind of person you want in charge. He was not in his job for money, power, or fame. He genuinely loved his king and country and was willing to risk his life for them.

Naaman has it all going on. He was famous, rich, and powerful. He was a man of character and courage. He had what many young people today want... but there was a problem.

One day, he was getting ready for work. Maybe it was on his chest where he noticed a spot. He scratched it, but it didn't go away. At first, he probably thought it was a rash. He tried lotion, but it didn't get better. It became worse and started to spread. He tried other creams for a cure, but nothing helped. What was it? Where did it come from? His life was busy. He didn't have time for this. It eventually became so bad and spread so much that he had to make time to do something about it. He had to make time in his life to see a doctor.

I am sure the doctor was honored when the great General Naaman came to his office. "How can I help you? We are so delighted to have you visit!" After showing the doctor the spreading sores on his chest, he ran some tests. The doctor had answers, but they weren't answers Naaman wanted to hear. He said, "General Naaman, I have some bad news. I am not sure how to tell you this, but... You have leprosy."

Hearing those words from a doctor was like receiving a sentence of death. Leprosy was incurable. Those with leprosy were considered the walking dead. I picture Naaman going home that day and walking out on his massive balcony, which overlooked the city. Around him were servants to care for his every need. Below him was a city full of people who loved and admired him. He had it all, but with leprosy, all of it would come to an end. He was going to die.

Let me tell you a bit about leprosy. Leprosy is still around. Today, we call it Hansen's disease. If Naaman were a Hebrew, once he contracted the disease, he would have been isolated from the rest of society. Instead of having everyone fawn over him, he would have covered his face and called out, "Unclean! Unclean!" Everywhere he went, people would have avoided him and his covered face for the rest of his life.

Naaman was a Syrian, not a Jew. That is probably why he was allowed to keep his position in spite of his leprosy. That is a recognition of the kind of status he held and the respect he received in Syrian society.

Today we know leprosy is a unique disease that 90 percent of the population can't contract. For the 10 percent that can contract it, it is highly contagious. You can get the bacteria that causes leprosy, not just from other people but also from animals, especially armadillos. Here is a free public service announcement. If you are in the 10 percent of the population that can contract leprosy, don't have a pet armadillo.

The way leprosy works is it kills the nerve cells in your skin, removing your sensitivity to pain. Lepers burn their hands in hot water or fire, but they do not

know the temperature because they don't feel pain. They can get an infection where they have a rotting foot or finger and have no idea something is seriously wrong. In some countries, rats and mice will eat off the fingers, toes, and ears of lepers while they sleep. They will wake up in the morning with parts of their body missing because animals ate them during the night, and they never felt it happening.

So here was Naaman. He knew he faced a debilitating and hideous death that would take him from popularity and power to becoming a hideous lonely outcast in society. There was nothing he could do to stop it.

I don't think most people were aware of his leprosy. I think he kept quiet about it. I think he kept it hidden under his armor. After all, in his position, he needed to look good in front of people. He didn't want people to see the weakness in his life and the crippling of his body.

When people looked at Naaman, they thought he had it all together. They thought he had no problems. Everyone wished they could live Naaman's life. They wished they could be in Naaman's position. That is only because they didn't know the truth. They didn't know about the leprosy he hid under his armor and the clock that was ticking, bringing him closer to a horrifying death.

There is a little lesson for us in this. **Don't be jealous of someone else's life. Everybody has their share of problems, suffering, and pain.** No matter how rich they are, no matter how powerful they look, be careful about envying their position. Even the most beautiful, the most handsome, the most rich, the most famous have their share of problems, most of which we don't know about

because they keep it hidden in their life. If we did know about their problems, we would never want to trade places.

As a pastor, I get to know families and their struggles. I have known families of meager income that have no trouble conceiving children. Their houses are full of children, but their wallets are empty. We call them the Ramen noodle families. They are always looking for a way to stretch their dollar to feed the children. They drive by the houses in the wealthy part of town, and it is easy for them to be envious. If only I had their income. If only I could afford their house. I wish I had their life.

The problem is that in the same church with the poor couple who are blessed with children is a wealthier young family that can't conceive children. They have a bigger home on the other side of town. They have adequate incomes, but God has not provided children. Each wants what the other family has. It is easy to be jealous of other people, especially when we don't know the pain and suffering in the lives of other people. Be careful about wishing you had someone else's life. If we knew the truth about what people are facing, we probably wouldn't want their life. Everybody wanted Naaman's life, but that is because they didn't know about his leprosy. If they knew about it, nobody would want to trade places with him.

So Naaman was a powerful and successful man, but he was also a leper facing a slow and agonizing death. Who was God going to raise up to reach a powerful and important person like him? Maybe it would be another general who knew the God of Israel. Maybe would be a man or woman of high society.

Naaman was so rich, famous, and powerful that maybe God would speak to him through a burning bush, as he did for Moses. Naaman was such an important person, maybe God would speak to him by an angel like he did for Mary.

Here is where the story gets interesting. God raised up the most unexpected person, the most ordinary person, and the most broken person in the most unexpected position to introduce Naaman to the God who loves him and the God who can cure him.

Meet An Unnamed Junior High Girl

Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." 2 Kings 5:2-3 (ESV)

Who was this young girl? We know almost nothing about her. We don't know her name. There is nothing of significance about her or her background. The Syrians, led by Naaman, were in the habit of raiding the Jews and tearing Jewish children out of the arms of their parents to become slaves in the Syrian empire. This young girl was one of the children ripped from the arms of her parents to become a Syrian slave. She ended up working as a slave in Naaman's house for Mrs. Naaman. She did the lowly work, the dirty work, the dusting, mopping the floor, washing the dishes, cleaning the toilets, and taking out the trash. That would be her life as a slave. She would never get a raise or promotion. She was a nameless nobody for the rest of her life, serving as a slave.

If you were that girl, it would be easy to think God forgot about you. We are about to see that God did not forget about her. God used the tragedy of being

taken captive as a slave to strategically place her in the home of one of the most powerful men in the Syrian empire to introduce him to the God of the universe. I am sure it felt like God forgot about her, but he hadn't. God had a good plan, and he was working out that good plan through the unexpected tragedy she faced in her life.

It is just like Joseph in the book of Genesis. His brothers sold him to be a slave in Egypt. It looked like God had forgotten about Joseph. God hadn't. God used that tragedy to bring Joseph into Egypt so God could elevate him to second in command over all of Egypt to save many lives. The same thing was happening here. God took what looked like a complete tragedy in this young girl's life, and God hijacked the evil done to this girl and used it for his good purposes to lead people to saving knowledge of God in the Syrian empire.

This is a great lesson for all of us. **God never forgets about his people. When we face unexpected tragedies or massive setbacks in life, God is at work with a good plan to bring us places we would never go to do work we never expected to do.**

It is clear God did not forget about this nameless junior high girl. God used the tragedy she faced in her life to place her in a place she would not normally be to do work for God she never expected to do. As we will see, it is pivotal work for the growth of God's kingdom in a foreign land.

Let's talk about this young, nameless junior high girl a little more. I want us to read between the lines a bit and notice what helped this insignificant girl be in a useful position to introduce the great Naaman to the God of the universe.

1. She didn't give in to bitterness. If I were a child stolen from my home and taken to a foreign nation to work as a slave, it would be easy to become bitter. It would be easy to be negative. It would be easy to turn our back on God and fill our mouths with sarcastic nasty words and thoughts toward our captors. We don't see that from her. We see that she is such a positive hard-working young girl that when she tells Naaman and his wife about Elisha and how God can heal lepers through him, these powerful people actually listen to her. She earned their respect with her good attitude, her positive words, and the excellence with which she did her job. Even though she was just a girl in junior high, she was such a positive, hard-working young girl that the great Naaman and his wife were attentive to her words.

Folks, our attitude in difficult circumstances makes a huge difference when it comes to sharing the good news of Jesus. A bad attitude can ruin opportunities to speak about Jesus. A good attitude opens opportunities to speak about Jesus.

Right now, you may not like your family. You may not like the neighborhood you are in or the school you attend. You may not like where God has you. It might feel like God has forgotten about you in your place of work. It might feel like you have been treated poorly, but just like this junior high girl, God has you where you are for a reason. You are not there by mistake, even if it is an uncomfortable place. He has you there as a light for Jesus in a dark world. A positive attitude in difficult circumstances opens doors to speak about Jesus, while a negative attitude closes doors to speak about Jesus.

2. She loved her enemies. As she worked in Naaman's house washing the dishes and scrubbing the floor, she probably had a front-row seat to some of the heartbreaking family conversations between Naaman, his wife, and his children about leprosy and the devastating future in front of them. She probably saw the tears. She saw the anxiety and the stress. She could have derived a morbid pleasure from watching Naaman suffer. She could have thought, "You stole me from my home and family. Any suffering you experience is suffering you deserve for stealing me from my family." That is not the way she acted. She loved her enemies. She served them well and told them about the God of the universe and his prophet named Elisha, who could cure Naaman's leprosy.

Jesus tells us to do this.

"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, Luke 6:27 (ESV)

This young girl loving Naaman and doing good for him and his family is a big part of what opened Naaman's heart for every other good thing that happens in this chapter. Her attitude and love for her enemies opened a wide door to speak about the God of Israel.

3. She courageously spoke the truth in a place that wasn't eager to hear it. After her positivity, her great work ethic, and her genuine love for her enemies, we find she was bold and unafraid to speak the truth. This is also a challenge for us. She was in a foreign land, in a hostile environment, yet she courageously spoke the truth about the God of Israel in a nation that didn't want to hear it. I remind you that her good attitude was pre-evangelism. Loving her neighbors was pre-evangelism. It was only when she courageously opened her

mouth to speak the truth about the God of Israel that evangelism and life-change happened in Naaman's life.

This is also true for us. We are in a world that is increasingly hostile to the good news of Jesus, the healing from sin he offers, and the new life he brings. We also need to have the courage to speak about the forgiveness of sin Jesus offers and the new life he brings to people in our culture who are hostile to Jesus. Before we do that, we set the table by loving our enemies and doing our best while having a positive attitude in spite of tough circumstances, just like this girl. After we have softened hearts with our character, we need to speak the truth about Jesus with our words.

This young girl remains unnamed. She will disappear into the pages of history. Let's not miss that she is the key to everything that happens in Naaman's life from this point forward. She is just an ordinary, broken, and nameless person, but that is the kind of person God loves to use. Maybe you are the same way. You are just a broken ordinary man or woman in this world whose name will pass into oblivion. Rest assured, God has a good plan to use you in a significant way to grow his kingdom. Let's find out what happens next.

In Search Of A Cure

So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." And the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. 2 Kings 5:4–5 (ESV)

This shows how desperate Naaman was for a cure and how much respect this nameless junior high girl held in his eyes. He went right to the king of Syria and told him about the prophet Elisha whom a nameless girl said could heal him.

The king of Syria didn't hesitate to send Naaman to the king of Israel to look for this Elisha and the cure he offered.

In addition, he sent Naaman with a lot of spending money for his travels. It works out to over a million dollars. It was 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and 10 kingly garments. The gold alone was more than a year's wages for 500 people.

And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy." And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me." 2 Kings 5:6–7 (ESV)

Joram was the king at this time. He read this letter and freaked out. How was he supposed to heal someone of leprosy? That was an incurable disease. He thought this was another way for the King of Syria to pick a fight and raid his country and people again.

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel." 2 Kings 5:8 (ESV)

King Joram saw the request to heal Naaman as a source of anxiety. Elisha saw it as an opportunity. This is an opportunity for Naaman and the Syrians to learn about the true God of the universe. Elisha realized the leprosy in Naaman's life and Naaman's coming to Israel for healing was part of God's plan unfolding in Naaman's life.

Here is what Elisha realized, but we often forget. **Every crisis is an opportunity for God to mature his people and grow his church.** We all know people just like Naaman, who live with no thought of God because they have the

world by the tail. They are rich, successful, and powerful. It seems there is nothing they can't handle. A crisis comes into their life that is bigger than they are. It breaks them. It forces them to slow down and seek God. God uses those kinds of crises to break people down and draw them to Himself.

For Christians, God uses crises in their life to draw them back to him when they have drifted away. We all know times in our lives as Christians when we have become so busy that prayer is infrequent. The Bible is rarely opened. Then a crisis comes into our lives, and we are on our knees in prayer like we haven't been in years. We are opening the Bible we have ignored.

God uses crises to grow his church by drawing people who are far from him close to him, and he uses crises to mature his church. A crisis takes those who already know Jesus and draws them back to Jesus when they have wandered away. Elisha realizes this is what God was doing in the life of Naaman. God was slowing Naaman down with leprosy and opening his heart to learn about the true God of the universe who loves him and can heal him. God works the same way in our lives today.

So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. 2 Kings 5:9 (ESV)

We have to picture this scene. Naaman was a man of amazing power and wealth. He was crazy rich and carried with him a fortune in gold, silver, and clothing. Naaman's chariot was probably a pimped-out ride. It was bigger than everyone else's. It had a custom paint job and looked better. It was the Ferrari chariot of his day. He pulls up in front of Elisha's house with his motorcade of

soldiers. I picture Elisha's house as a modest dwelling. People of Naaman's opulence never drive through Elisha's neighborhood.

When Naaman's motorcade pulls up in front of Elisha's modest house, we would expect Elisha to come running out to make a big deal about Naaman's arrival. We would expect Elisha to tell a story about how he and his wife cleaned for the last week. We expect Elisha would welcome the great Naaman into his house and offer fresh tea and crumpets from the kitchen. We expect huge hospitality from Elisha for this rich and powerful man. That is not what happens.

And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." 2 Kings 5:10 (ESV)

I picture Elisha sitting in his lazy boy. He doesn't even get out of his chair. He just sends out his servant, a man named Gehazi. I picture the conversation at the door going something like this. "Hey, are you that Naaman fella? Nice to meet ya'. Elisha says to go down to the Jordan River and dunk seven times, and you will be healed. Have a nice day." Then he walks back into the house and shuts the door in Naaman's face, end of the story.

What a letdown. You can imagine what Naaman was thinking. This is the great Elisha who can heal lepers? He didn't even come out and shake my hand. Doesn't this guy know who I am? I am the great Naaman of Syria. Doesn't he realize how powerful I am? Doesn't he realize how important I am? Doesn't he realize I am willing to pay him over a million dollars if he can heal me?

Naaman was furious. He was accustomed to being treated like someone special. Elisha treated Naaman like he was a nobody, and it really got under his skin.

But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, “Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage. 2 Kings 5:11–12 (ESV)

Naaman wanted a healing magic show with himself as the main attraction. He wanted something spectacular. He wanted Elisha to wave his hand over his leprosy. He wanted a big poof of smoke and lightning show as part of his healing so once again, Naaman would be the center of attention, and his pride would be magnified.

If all Elisha wanted him to do was take a bath seven times instead of once, he could have done that at home. They have better water in the Syrian rivers than the Jordan River.

It seems God gave this remedy for Naaman’s healing to humble him. Elisha didn’t choose how Naaman would be healed. Prophets were spokesmen for God. Elisha just told Naaman what God wanted him to do to be healed. God was wounding Naaman’s pride, which is why he went away in a huff.

I may be wrong, but I don’t think Naaman wanted the humility of stripping down in front of his men and dunking himself seven times in a dirty river. That would be humiliating. If Elisha waved his hand over the leprosy and made a big scene about it, Elisha would get the credit, and Naaman would still be a proud man who sought and found a spectacular cure.

Stripping down to be almost naked in front of his men and dunking seven times in a dirt river was a way of saying, I am not a proud guy with all the answers. I am a desperate guy who can’t save myself. Now everyone can see

the ugliness of my leprosy, but I am willing to humble myself and obey the prophet's word because there is nothing I can do to save myself.

If Elisha waved his hand over the leprosy and made it go away, it would have preserved Naaman's pride, when in truth, the only way for anyone to be forgiven by God and have healing from God is to swallow our pride and desperately ask God to save us because we can not save ourselves. That was the only way Naaman could be healed of his leprosy. It is also the only way we can be healed of our sins.

So Naaman was mad. He was so mad he was not interested in healing because the healing Elisha proposed bruised his ego. He was ready to go home and forget the whole thing. That is when the servants who loved him spoke to him.

But his servants came near and said to him, "My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" 2 Kings 5:13 (ESV)

At this point, Naaman's servants spoke to him. This strip and dip in the Jordan River may be humiliating, but it was easy. They pointed out to him that if Elisha asked him to do something hard, he would have done it because it would built up his ego. Naaman was that kind of guy. He loved to do hard things, especially things that made him look better than other people.

Isn't this the way most religions work? They give people a list of hard things to do. If you can do those hard things, you win. They are like scouting programs. If you can get enough merit badges and complete enough scouting books, you win. You become an Eagle Scout. By the way, I am not knocking scouting. It is a great program. I am just pointing out that many religions are like

scouting programs. It is about people doing hard things to earn God's favor. That is what Naaman wanted. If he had to do something to be healed, he wanted a hard thing, not a humiliating thing.

Let's see what happens.

So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. 2 Kings 5:14 (ESV)

Naaman wisely swallowed his pride. He went down to the banks of the Jordan River. He got out of his beautiful Ferrari chariot. He took off his big helmet. He puts aside his belt and sword. He took off his armor, one piece at a time. He removed the chest armor that covered his leprosy from the eyes of others. He removed the metal plating on his legs and feet until he was down to his skivvies. This was probably the first time his men saw the full extent of the damage the leprosy had done to his body. I imagine his men gasping at the disfigured look of his chest, arms, and waist.

Naaman walked into the river up to his waist and started to dunk. Down he went, and up he came. He looked at himself, but there was no difference. Down he went, and up he came a second time. There was still no difference. The leprosy wasn't washing off. I think he wondered if this whole healing by washing in the Jordan River was a Jewish joke to humiliate him in front of his men after all the damage his armies had done to Israel. Down he went down, and up he came a third, fourth, fifth, and sixth time. Each time there was no change in his leprosy except now more dirt from the muddy river covered his body. I imagine him looking at his body one last time before he closed his eyes and went under for the seventh time. I imagine him in desperation calling to God while he was

underwater. God, "Please save me. Please heal me. Please forgive me. I am humbling myself in front of you and desperately calling to you for help." Up he came the seventh time. He opened his eyes and looked at his skin..... all the leprosy was gone. Notice what it says about his healing. It wasn't just that the leprosy was gone, but his skin was instantly and completely restored to be like that of a newborn babies. No moles, no sun damage, no age spots, and no dry skin. His skin was absolutely perfect.

If you have trouble imagining how soft and perfect is the skin of a baby, we could use you in the church nursery. We had recently had 16 kids in the nursery during the second service. We need help. Sign up to help in the nursery, look at the baby's skin, and think of Naaman's healing.

Can you imagine what happened in the moments after Naaman realized he was healed? I imagine him standing in the river with his eyes looking over his body in disbelief with his mouth hanging open. I picture the soldiers seeing Naaman's healed skin and then cheering at the top of their lungs. Remember, they loved him. He was a good guy. Nobody and no god in Syria could heal Naaman, but these Israelites and their God must be the real deal because their five-star general was instantly and completely healed of his leprosy, not by waving a magic wand but by humbling himself, obeying God's Word, and desperately calling out to the God of Israel to save him because he admitted he could not save himself.

For a moment, I also want you to imagine how the unnamed slave girl in his house felt when news of Naaman's healing reached home. In those

moments, she suddenly realized that God used her to make Naaman's healing possible. She realized that everything that happened to her when she was taken as a captive or war and made a slave was part of God's good plan to reach a man far from him and bring him near. If it hadn't been for her, none of Naaman's healing would have happened.

I bet you she was thankful she had a good attitude. I bet you she was thankful she loved her enemies. I bet you she was thankful she courageously spoke the truth.

Now the story gets better. Naaman wasn't just healed of his leprosy, but he became an Old Testament version of a Christian. He renounced the false Gods of his country and gave his life to follow the true God of Israel. The second most powerful man in the Syrian kingdom and his soldiers will return to Syria as an Old Testament Christian telling everyone about the one true God in the universe. This is big!

Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from your servant." But he said, "As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive none." And he urged him to take it, but he refused. 2 Kings 5:15–16 (ESV)

Earlier, we learned Naaman was carrying over a million dollars in gold and silver to pay for a cure. He was healed without paying a penny. Now he was overwhelmed with gratitude, so Naaman wanted to give Elisha a big tip. Elisha refused the tip. Why wouldn't he take a penny?

It must be clear that God's grace and healing could not be bought with money. They are found by those who seek it in humility and who rely on God's grace alone.

Then Naaman said, “If not, please let there be given to your servant two mule loads of earth, for from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD. In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon your servant in this matter.” He said to him, “Go in peace.”... 2 Kings 5:17–19a (ESV)

This is final confirmation that it wasn't just Naaman's skin that was healed that day but his heart was changed. From this point forward, he would only worship the true God of Israel.

As I was thinking about the leprosy on Naaman's body that was completely taken away when he called out to God, I was thinking about how the same thing happens to us when we call out to God to take away the leprosy of sin in our life.

“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. Isaiah 1:18 (ESV)

No matter what we have done. No matter how disfigured sin has made us, just like God completely healed Naaman's disfigurement body when we call out to Jesus to save us from the leprosy of our sin, he can completely heal us from the sin that disfigured our life.

Conclusion

So as we close, there are two thoughts I want us to leave with this morning.

1. **Just as Naaman's leprosy was taken away and his body was restored after calling out in desperation to God, in the same way, the disfigurement of our sin can taken away, and our heart made new when we obey God's Word and call out to Jesus to save us.** When God healed

Naaman of his leprosy, he didn't just take away the leprosy from his skin, but he made his skin completely fresh and new, like a newborn baby. He made his skin into a new creation. In the same way, when we confess our sins and turn to Jesus, asking him to forgive our sins, Jesus does. He doesn't just forgive our sins, but he makes us into a completely new creation, just like Naaman's skin. No matter what you have done, no matter what damage and disfigurement the leprosy of sin has done to your life, Jesus offers to make you into a completely new person if you will but confess your sin, trust in Jesus to forgive your sin, and desperately turn to him.

...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9 (ESV)

2. God loves to use ordinary and broken people in significant ways for his kingdom. The real hero at the center of this story is not Naaman, it is an unnamed junior high girl living as a slave stolen away from her family. God took that girl and used the tragedy in her life to bring her places she never expected to go to do work she never expected to do. Because of her kindness and courage in a foreign land, the good news the true God of Israel was brought to the Syrian empire. If God can use her as the key to bringing the truth about God's love to the Syrian empire, that is a great reminder that God will use ordinary and broken people, just like you and me, to grow the kingdom of God in important and unexpected ways.



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