


Naaman: A Case Study on Faith

Part 1

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- Tell about a time when you desperately searched for something important that you'd lost or misplaced.
- Read Mark 10:17–27. What level of interest did this man appear to have for finding eternal life (v. 17 & 20)?
Review Pastor Doug's four main points (see [Sermon Summary](#)). Why didn't he end up finding eternal life? Support your conclusion with verse references from this account in Mark.
Given his initial enthusiasm, are you surprised that his search was unsuccessful? **Why or why not?**
What emotion was Jesus feeling (v. 21)? What emotion did this man end up feeling (v. 22)?
- Read Acts 10:1-8, 21-24 & 44-48. Reviewing the [Sermon Summary](#), why did Cornelius find eternal life? Support your conclusion with verse references from this account in Acts.

Creating "God Space": "God Space" is where cynics, skeptics, and spiritually curious people can **safely** raise their questions, reservations, and doubts because we have listened well and demonstrated love in **practical, authentic** ways.

- Think of a friend or family member who does not yet trust in Christ as his personal Savior.
- With what difficulties is she grappling? (physical? financial? relational? psychological?)
- What questions could you ask in order to discover any possible attitudes of self-sufficiency?
- What questions could you ask in order to help shift his focus from temporal needs to eternal ones?
- As a group, brainstorm questions and comments you could use to discuss this with them. Roleplay how to initiate and have a highly relational, redemptive conversation on these issues.

- In light of Mark 10 and Acts 10, reflect on Matthew 7:7-8. Are there any conditions on this promise? If so, how would you state them?

Application-Challenge

- Make the shift from wanting help for your suffering, to wanting forgiveness for your sin.
- Make the shift from trying to earn God's favor to trusting and resting in his free grace.

Sermon Summary (Key Text: 2 Kings 5:1-14)

What causes people to seek God? Especially educated, successful people—like folks from the Triangle—what causes people to seek God? From time to time we all need to do a little life reassessment: What are my goals? What kind of a person do I want to become? Am I on the right track? We see a great example of life change in a Syrian general, a man named Naaman, who came to the God of Israel to get the help that he so desperately needed. At that time (as now!), Syria and Israel were enemies. At the time our story takes place, Syria had the upper hand, making it even less likely that a Syrian official would go to Israel seeking help. But that's exactly what happened here. Naaman was self-sufficient—what need did he have of God? What brought an accomplished person like Naaman to seek God? **What helps a person begin to seek God?** Let's see...

I. Realizing that self-sufficiency is a lie helps turn a person into a seeker (5:1). Naaman was the captain of the army; he was valiant, courageous, powerful, respected—and wealthy. But, he had leprosy. Despite his efforts at creating a successful, wrinkle free life, something always ruins it! Loved ones die, friends betray, financial disaster strikes, sickness comes—and no amount of wealth, success, or power can protect us. Not only can bad things happen to you, they will happen to you. And when they do, even the most self-sufficient person finds himself out of his depth. As much as we might pretend otherwise, we are not in control of our lives. We've always been vulnerable. When you realize that you are in over your head, and that your resources are inadequate to deal with life's ups and downs, where will you turn? How will you cope? C. S. Lewis famously wrote: "Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." But for some people, this realization alone isn't sufficient to push them towards God.

II. Realizing that the world can't help helps turn a person into a seeker. Naaman's prestige, power and connections to all the right people (the king, and all the best doctors), plus all the money that he needed (v. 5b—more than \$60 million in today's money!), made no difference. He was desperate; at the end of his rope. But a little Jewish girl, a slave in his household, told him that Israel's God could cure him. Naaman had to learn that spiritual progress can't be made as long as he relied upon the world's resources. Naaman went right to the top—with a letter to Israel's king—but he had to learn that he could not manipulate Israel's God. God doesn't need anything, and he can't be bought off. How do we typically deal with problems? We seek the top doctors, the top managers, the top technologists. I wish that we'd have the humility to say: "We can do a lot, but we can't solve humanity's deepest problems. Only God can do that. We don't have all of the answers. We're just limited, fragile human beings." That's how Israel's king responded (v. 7a). So, **how do people actually find God?**

I. God is found when we shift from wanting relief from our suffering, to wanting forgiveness for our sin.

Many of us first come to God for relief from suffering, but at some point, if we are going to find the God of the Bible, we must begin to see that our real problem is our need to be forgiven by God. The Prophet Elisha helps Naaman begin to make this shift when he makes it clear that he is not a miracle-worker but a spokesman for God (v. 8). (Next week we'll see that Naaman recognized Israel's God as the **only** God, not just a **better** god; v. 15. This may be the most revolutionary insight of any non-Israelite in the entire Old Testament; this is some serious spiritual insight!) Naaman went to Elisha for a physical cure and he got one—but as we will see next week, the nature and power of this cure divested him of his false religious beliefs. This was Elisha's primary goal. God used leprosy to get Naaman's attention. Suffering has a way of dismantling illusions of self-sufficiency and driving us towards God. Yes, we have financial problems, health problems and relational problems, but those things would not destroy us if we have something more transcendent to rely upon.

II. God is found when we shift from trying to earn God's favor, to trusting and resting in his free grace.

Verses 10-11 are the heart of this passage. Elisha seeks to humble Naaman into a true seeker by showing that God's blessing is for the humble (not for the rich and powerful). Elisha neither comes out to meet Naaman personally nor offers any sort of incantation to cure him—and Naaman is furious. But Elisha wants Naaman to know that he will not be cured due to his social status nor as the result of some magical conjuring. Naaman expected Elisha to ask him to do some great thing. But had it happened that way, once he got his healing Naaman would have thought: "Sure God helped me, but I did it! I'm self-sufficient!" Instead, Naaman proposed a strategy that any weakling, any beggar could do. Naaman is learning that the God of the Bible has impossibly high standards. The gap between the holiness that God demands and what Naaman (or any man) brings can **never** be bridged. There is no distinction between the rich and powerful and the poor and weak; all stand guilty before God. The salvation we need has to be by grace. It cannot be achieved by us. This is an insult to our pride and self-sufficiency. That's why most people don't receive it. It's too humbling.

Have **you** been cleansed from your sin by God's grace through faith?

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) *is a simple way to study any passage. We can use it to learn more about the human predicament...*

Monday—Read Romans 5:6. What two words are used to describe fallen human beings?

Tuesday—Read Romans 5:10a. Before humans are reconciled, how are they described?

Wednesday—Read Ephesians 2:3b. What does it mean to be a "child of wrath"? Whose wrath?

Thursday—Read Ephesians 2:12. What five descriptors are applied to fallen human beings?

Friday—Read Romans 6:23a. How many sins must one commit to "earn" death in hell?

Saturday—*In preparation for worshipping the risen Lord with your church family,*
read **2 Kings 5:2-3 & 15-27.**

SUNDAY EVENING

September 26

DEAD TO SIN - ALIVE TO CHRIST

BAPTISM

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