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2 Kings 5

"Healing Naaman"

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In this study, Pastor Gary teaches on the account of Naaman being healed of leprosy, and correlation between leprosy and sin. We also learn about the deadly disease of sin and the fact that it is incurable and ultimately fatal, save for the cure, which is a gracious provision from God, in the person of Jesus Christ.

Historical Background

1. In Hebrew, Naaman's name means, pleasantness.
2. Naaman was the commander of the army of Aram, which is modern-day Syria.
3. Naaman was a pagan Gentile, was not a follower of God.
4. The Scripture tells us that Naaman was *"highly regarded,"* known as a *"great man,"* as well as a *"valiant soldier."*
5. We read in [2 Kings 5:1](#), that God use Naaman to win a military victory for Aram.
6. Naaman was a self-made man who was apparently unaware of his need for God, which makes him just like many people today, in that they are hard to reach with the Gospel because as long as everything is going well, they don't recognize their greatest need for a Savior.
7. It's also true that just like Naaman, there are countless millions today who won't seek the Lord until they find themselves in crisis.

8. In Naaman's case, it was leprosy that exposed his need for God.
 - a. The account of Naaman's healing happened circa 850BC, and at that time there was no cure.
 - b. Today, leprosy is called Hansen's disease.¹
 - c. Dr. G.A. Hansen discovered the causative bacteria for leprosy in 1873.
 - d. The effective cure for Hansen's disease wasn't discovered until 1981.
 - e. Leprosy is one of the least communicable diseases, and only 4% to 5% of the world's population is susceptible to leprosy.
 - f. There are approximately 180,000 people who have the disease worldwide, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), and most of these people live in Africa.
 - g. Approximately 200 people are diagnosed with leprosy in the United States every year.
 - h. Leprosy is not a flesh-eating bacteria, however, it develops into a very debilitating disease that is both physically and emotionally damaging.
 - i. In ancient times, if you had leprosy you would have been banned from the village/community, and you would have had to announce yourself to others as being unclean.
 - j. Another major aspect of having leprosy was the stigma and stress of being ostracized and isolated.
9. Pastor Gary said he didn't believe Naaman was afraid of dying from leprosy, because he was a successful general, who would have been accustomed to putting his life on the line in battle.
10. It's more likely that he was afraid of losing his dignity, because as a self-made man, who was successful, bright, and decorated, this disease would have been humiliating, debilitating, as well as disfiguring.
11. Naaman's battle with leprosy may have been one of the first battles of his life that he couldn't win on his own; he needed God, big-time!

Leprosy And Sin

12. In ancient times, leprosy was incorrectly thought to be an outward sign of a person's inward sin, so people saw this as God's punishment against sinners.
13. There is a correlation between leprosy and sin, in the sense that leprosy is a picture of what sin is like.

¹ [http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Leprosy+\(Hansen's+disease\)](http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Leprosy+(Hansen's+disease))

14. Whenever leprosy is mentioned in the Bible, it is not referred to as being healed, but being cleansed, because leprosy is an illustration of sin in a number of ways, including:
- a. It is a disease that starts out slowly and only gets worse.
 - b. It isolates us, in that we find ourselves stuck with the same people who have the same sin issues as we do, and it separates us from God.
 - c. It desensitizes us, in that the more it increases, the more the nerve endings, so to speak, are deadened.
 - d. It desensitizes us, in that the more it increases, the more the conscience is seared and we lose feeling concerning right and wrong.
 - e. It eventually kills us, and even though it is a slow death, it will kill us in the end.

A Realization Of A Condition That Is Incurable And Ultimately Fatal

15. Sin is a condition that is incurable and ultimately fatal.
16. **Romans 5:12** - *"... sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."*
17. **Ezekiel 18:20** - *"The soul who sins is the one who will die."*
18. **John 8:24** - *"I [Jesus] told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins."*
19. We are born with a sin nature, thanks to the fall of Adam and the human race, and we all perpetuate that nature by behaving in sinful ways.
- a. **Psalms 51:5** - *"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."*
20. If you can come to the place that you agree that only perfect people can stand in the presence of a perfect God, then and only then can will you be able to recognize that you have a condition that is incurable and ultimately fatal

God Works In Providential Ways

21. It is God who brings the cure, and he does so in providential ways!
22. Miracles are the visible hand of God at work, and providence is his invisible hand at work behind the scenes to accomplish his purposes.

23. The fact is that God arranged things for Naaman – a Syrian Gentile who had no connection with God – so he could find God.
24. In this account we read that Naaman’s army went out on periodic raids, and it just so happened that on one of these raids they captured an Israeli girl who would end up being Naaman’s wife’s servant!
25. There were other “just so happened” events that God arranged, including:
 - a. It just so happened that this girl knew the True and Living God.
 - b. It just so happened that this girl knew about Elisha.
 - c. It just so happened that she mentioned Elisha to Naaman’s wife.
 - d. It just so happened that she believed Naaman would be cured if he saw Elisha.
26. It just so happens that God loves to put people in our path that will be a part of his bigger plan to bring us to him, even if they don’t know they are part of what God is doing!
27. Naaman received permission from the king of Aram to go to Israel to find the man who could possibly cure him, and the king even sent a letter to King Joram of Israel on Naaman’s behalf.
28. The king of Aram wasn’t aware of the relationship between Elisha and the king of Israel.
29. The king of Israel was an idolater, just like Naaman and the king of Aram, and he too had no relationship with God.
30. Elisha heard about the king of Israel’s reaction to the letter he received, and how furious he was (it highlighted his own inadequacies).
31. **2 Kings 5:8-10** – *“When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: ‘Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.’ So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, ‘Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.’ ”*

God Makes Gracious Provision For A Cure

32. Naaman’s response was less than positive!

33. **2 Kings 5:11-12** - *“But Naaman went away angry and said, ‘I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus [in Naaman’s country], better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn’t I wash in them and be cleansed?’ So he turned and went off in a rage.”*
34. The instructions Elisha gave and the fact that Elisha didn’t come out to meet Naaman, but sent a messenger, confronted Naaman’s pride and over-inflated self-importance.
35. It was as though he was saying: “Don’t you know who I am? I’m the commander of the Syrian Army! Don’t you know that I’ve traveled 150 miles to see you? Don’t you even have the common decency to come out and meet me? I thought you would wave your hand or something and I would be cured! Instead, you want me to dip myself in the Jordan River seven times! Don’t you know I’ve got better rivers in Syria? This is your idea of a cure?!”
36. Pastor Gary said that when the message of the Bible confronts us about our sin, we can become angry just like Naaman, because the Scriptures provoke our pride and self-reliance, and when we are told that all we have to do is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and we will be saved, we wrongly conclude that that’s just too simple!
37. **1 Corinthians 1:18** - *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*
38. The only way Naaman could be cured was through humility and simple obedience.

The Cure Only Comes Through Humility And Simple Obedience

39. **2 Kings 5:13-14** - *“Naaman’s servants went to him and said, ‘My father [a term of respect], if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed!’ So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.”*
- a. The KJV (King James Version) says, *“his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”*

40. When God forgives our sin, he makes us clean and brand new, which is why becoming a Christian is referred to as being *“born again.”*
- a. **John 3:3-3** - *“... Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.’ ”*
41. **1 Peter 1:3b-4** - *“In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you.”*
42. **2 Corinthians 5:17** - *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*
43. **2 Kings 5:15-16** - *“Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, ‘Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant.’ The prophet answered, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.’ And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.”*
- a. The approximate value of Naaman’s gifts in today’s currency would be about \$3 million dollars!
44. The point needs to be made that Elisha didn’t want Naaman to think that he had purchased his healing.

God Is A Loving, Merciful God And “The Cure” Is A Free Gift

45. Salvation can't be bought, earned, deserved, or achieved; it can only be received as a free gift!
46. Each of us is like Naaman, in that we are all dying of the same incurable disease (sin), but God, in his gracious provision, sent his son, Jesus Christ, into the world as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.
47. It was by Jesus’ death on the cross that we can have forgiveness of sin and be cured from what kills us, if we will humble ourselves and simply believe.
48. **Romans 10:9-10** - *“... if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [2 Kings 5:1-16](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they've had with self-made men and women they've known.
4. How do you start a spiritual conversation with someone who has no real sense of his or her need for God?
5. Spend time talking about times of crisis you've experienced and how those times brought you into a closer relationship and dependence on the Lord?
6. Why do people seem to always associate the troubles and difficulties of life as being a judgment from God?
7. Provide an overview of the outline Pastor Gary shared concerning the correlation between leprosy and sin. (See #15 above).
8. Read and discuss [Romans 5:12](#), [Ezekiel 18:20](#), [John 8:24](#), and [Psalm 51:5](#).
9. Allow the people in your group to share their experience about the moment they realized they had a need for God.
10. When the Bible, a pastor, or a Christian friend, confronted you about your sin, were you angry like Naaman? (See #36 above)
11. Share some of the "just so happened" moments or specifics about the "Israeli girl" the Lord placed in your life.
12. Read and discuss [2 Kings 5:8-14](#), and focus on the fact that the cure comes from a spirit of humility and simple obedience.
13. Read and discuss [1 Corinthians 1:18](#).
14. Read and discuss [Romans 10:9-10](#), [1 Peter 1:3-4](#), and [2 Corinthians 5:17](#).
15. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).