

God's Way Versus My Way

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Introduction

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 my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, 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.

Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, 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.

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" (1 Kings 5:11-14).

God's ways are most times not man's ways. God's ways are different from man's ways. Our human feelings will surely fail us; our human thinking will surely not be perfect. Man's ideas will never be the best of ideas in life. In this biblical story, Naaman learned "that there is no God in all the world except in Israel" (1 Kings 5:15). He learned that God's way is the way of faith and trust—trust in Him and in the close relationships we have with the people who are in our households.

God never created humans to be lonely and separate from one another. Created as we are, we cannot be complete nor have joy without association. There is an Ibo adage that says, "The sweetness of the world lies in human existence and relationships." It is also worthy of note that relationships can either make or mar a man. That is why the Bible says, "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character'" (1 Cor. 15:33).

The relationships of Naaman with his wife, with their servant girl and the other servants were positive. These relationships would lead to health, healing, faith and happiness and in the household.

Leprosy!

What a challenge Naaman had to deal with! What a high mountain he had to scale! What an eternal decision he had to make to determine his future! Have you ever been in a situation in life when you could not help yourself? Or experienced a time when you felt utterly disappointed? Have all human connections ever failed you? Or have bitterness and shame almost taken over your life?

Has anger ever replaced happiness, so that you became identified with what you could not stop? It may be that only then will you know and understand that man has little in his control. God, though, is omnipotent. Perhaps only then will you realize that man's world remains dim until there is a direct connection to the Creator. Connecting with Christ is the ultimate goal in life. Other things can fail; God never fails.

Naaman was a man who had everything. He was the commander of the army of the king of Aram (2 Kings 5:1). He was highly-regarded, a valiant soldier, wealthy, influential, and numbered amongst the “movers” and “shakers” of his society. He was locked, however, in a fierce personal battle and he was losing. An enemy raged within his body. Scripture says plainly, “He had leprosy” (2 Kings 5:1).

Fortunately for Naaman, his wife stood by him in this horrible affliction. She had what apparently was a very close relationship too with their Israelite maid servant, so close that the humble, dedicated and God-fearing young girl approached her with a suggestion: “If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy” (2 Kings 5:2). Quickly Naaman's wife relayed this possibility to her husband—that there was a man of God in Israel who could, through the power bestowed on him by God, heal the commander of his disease. Naaman and his wife must have had a relationship of open communication, love and trust. Without suspicion, he accepted her advice and the suggestion of the Israelite maid.

Importance of Supportive Relationships

No good relationship can be created without love, trust and open communication. Where there is suspicion, anger, hatred and rancor a good relationship cannot flourish, cannot create or promote health and healing. Maintaining a strong, positive relationship requires effort and is especially hard work in the middle of health problems. Whatever the relationship—between husband and wife, between parents and children, between parents in-law and daughters- and sons-in-law, brothers and sisters, employers and employees, pastors and members—the creation of a healthy, supportive bond involves two-way traffic. It requires the input of all the parties and their dedication, love, faithfulness and steadfastness.

If you put yourself in Naaman's wife's place, would you be supportive as she was? One who was faced with a similar situation was Job's wife. She, however, was not supportive. In the midst of Job's dire medical condition she advised him, “Curse God and die” (Job 2:9). Job, however, did not take her counsel. “Though he [God] slay me, yet will I hope in him,” he would later declare (Job 13:15). Such times are very hard. Think about how hard it must have been for Naaman and his wife to deal with his illness. He was a public figure and undoubtedly many would have known of his leprosy.

What might be the equivalent today? For example, what if through blood transfusion your spouse contracted HIV/AIDS? Would you be as supportive as Naaman's wife? Or as unsupportive as Job's wife? Would you consider severing the relationship and opting for a divorce despite the vow “in sickness and in health, until death do us part”? How does a spouse respond to what can be the overwhelming care required by a terminally ill partner?

The concern of this faithful, patient, down-to-earth, soft-spoken, humble and supportive wife of Naaman—together with the faithfulness of a God-fearing servant girl—created the hope of his

healing. This biblical account stirs in us the need for caring in all our relationships—with spouses, children, relatives, domestic helpers and strangers so that all may reap the benefits of emotional and physical health and healing.

Searching for a cure, Naaman visited Elisha, the great man of God in Israel. The cure Elisha prescribed—to immerse himself in the Jordan River seven times was something he never expected. Not for a moment had he envisioned that such would be his cure. It was much too easy and not nearly extravagant enough. Naaman was a man considerable position and with him was sufficient wealth to gain him great respect and honor. He was in desperate need of healing for sure, but a more expensive cure would have been to his liking.

The ways of the Naamans of the world are always different from God's ways. Naaman's ideas and feelings contrast with God thoughts. Except we humble ourselves and open ourselves to the dictates of God, except we endeavor to empty ourselves of self, pride, pomposity, fame, power, wealth, and self-exaltation, neither may we be in position to be healed by God. The little Israelite helper girl, however, made a difference in His life. Amidst his pride, arrogance and pomposity came her sweet quiet voice of peace: "If the prophet had told you to do something bigger than this wouldn't you do it?" Our change does not depend on gigantic things; our change does not depend on extravagant things. It is often heeding the little things in life that make the whole difference.

Leprous relationships. Many relationships have a kind of "emotional leprosy," either in the marriage between husband and wife, or between mothers and daughters, or fathers and sons. Or perhaps, like leprous tissue, relationships between brothers or between sisters is rotting life from the inside out. Many things might constitute leprosy in our relationships—lack of love, lack of trust, suspicion, hatred, unfaithfulness etc. Far too often, we come to God or His representatives with our problems and difficulties. When His voice or His spokespersons call us to a greater personal faith and trust rather than reliance upon our own ideas and feelings, we tend to become disenchanted and feel dishonoured. Submitting ourselves to God's way is not what we are looking for, yet trusting God and following Him is the only way out, the only sure road to cure the leprosy that afflicts our relationships. In most cases, there will be hard work to do and details to be attended to. Ultimately, though, the healing for hurt will come from the One who created us for relationship.

Conclusion

The story of Naaman is the story of our God who can bring blessings out of difficult situations. If you are facing health problems or other some other crises, follow the example of Naaman's wife. Have the optimism of the little servant girl. Be future focused, be positive and talk together about it. Let the faith of others strengthen your faith. Get connected to the One who created us for relationships. Let go of your personal philosophy about how things should be done and let God introduce a new way—the way of trusting in God. Forget about who you are—your rank, your status, your external façades that you may have created to prop yourself up. Think only of what God can make you become.

Let love replace bitterness
Let joy replace sadness , . . .
Let peace replace heartache
Let patience replace arrogance . . .

Let humility replace pride. . . .

You can trust God to meet your needs as you support each other. Turn the question: “Shall I do it my way or God’s way?” into a commitment: “I will put self aside and do it His way.”