

SERMON BASED QUESTIONS

THE CHAPEL

Sermon Questions

PRIDE

2 KINGS 5:1-14

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MAIN POINT

Our pride produces disappointment in our relationships with both God and other people. We need God to humble us so that we might find satisfaction in Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the best experience you have ever had in a restaurant? What made it such a great experience? The food? The service? The environment?

Share about the worst service you have ever received at a restaurant. How did you respond to receiving poor service?

Because we are paying for it, when eating out, it is easy to assume that we deserve a certain level of service. While this might be justified on some level in the context of dining out, we must be wary of cultivating unrealistic expectations in our relationships with people in other contexts. When we look to others to satisfy us, we have lost sight of the gospel. The good news of Jesus Christ frees us from seeking joy in other people and opens our eyes to the satisfaction that is ours in Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 KINGS 5:1-7.

Put yourself in Naaman's place. How would you feel knowing that you held a position of power and authority and yet suffered from a skin disease you could do nothing about?

Have you ever felt like that? Frustrated that there was something in your life you could not control or fix? How can those times be beneficial in our relationship with God?

Control is really an illusion. We can pursue our wildest dreams, and maybe even see them come to pass, and yet we are reminded time and time again that we are not in true control of our lives. In those times, we can either choose to be frustrated, or we can choose to press further into faith in the God who is in control.

How did the king of Israel respond to Naaman's letter and gift (v. 7)? How might Naaman have been disappointed with this response?

Why are we sometimes disappointed with the way other people respond to our requests? What might our disappointment reveal about our hearts (see Romans 12:3)?

Naaman was an important person. He was a successful commander of the army of the king of Syria who posed a great threat to Israel if the king did not comply with his request. Like Naaman, we all struggle with thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. We are often tempted to place unrealistic expectations on others because we have an unrealistic view of ourselves. Paul challenged the church at Rome to “think with sober judgement . . . according to the measure of faith God has assigned” because he knew that our pride keeps us from seeing how desperately we need God’s grace.

Compare and contrast Naaman and the servant girl.

What must this girl have believed to be true about God in order to tell Naaman how he could be helped? How do her actions remind you of what Jesus did for us in the gospel?

Let’s not forget the fact that this girl was a slave, taken from her homeland forcibly. She could have been bitter about her circumstances, but instead she chose the path of love. In contrast to Naaman who was focused on his own self importance, her faith in God enabled her to seek the good of those who had not sought good for her. She reminds us of Jesus who, though He was crucified at the hands of men, willingly allowed it to happen to Himself because He loved them despite their sin.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 KINGS 5:8-14.

What does Naaman’s response to Elisha (vv. 11-12) reveal about his opinion of himself? How might such an opinion produce disappointment in our relationships with others? In our relationship with God?

Why does an opinion like that keep us from God’s healing and intimacy in our own lives?

Naaman was still under the spell of his own self-importance. Rather than having an attitude of humility and need, he was filled up with his own pride. When we come to God, there is only one way for us to do so—acknowledging our need. When we do, we will find a God ready to listen and come to our aid.

Why do you think God required Naaman to receive healing by dipping in the Jordan River? What might God have been seeking to teach Naaman?

What are some ways you can remind yourself of your own need before God?

When we are full of ourselves, the temptation is to constantly be looking for some task from the Lord that fits with our sense of self-importance. However, when we seek satisfaction in anything other than the Lord, we will always be disappointed because God made us for a relationship with Himself. By requiring Naaman to dip in the Jordan, God helped Naaman see that his own pride had kept him from finding true satisfaction in the Lord.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How might acknowledging your need for Christ and what He has done for you on the cross help you overcome your greatest disappointments?

What are some practical ways you could remind yourself of the power of the cross this week?

What could we as a group do to encourage one another to let go of our sense of self importance and look to Christ for satisfaction?

PRAY

Thank God for demonstrating His love for us through the sacrifice of His Son. Ask Him to help us see ourselves as we really are: sinners in desperate need of His grace daily. Pray that God would humble us so that we would both seek Him and help those around us seek Him.

COMMENTARY

2 KINGS 5:1-14

5:1. Naaman, the story's main character, is introduced as a great man who struggles to overcome a physical affliction. He is successful in his military career, for he commands Syria's army, a unit that allows Damascus to dominate the region. His king duly praises him for his work. He exhibits courage. Only one issue mars his life: he is a leper. This leprosy may not have been an extremely advanced type, since he could continue his work; but it was serious enough to him, as the text indicates later.

The author states that the Lord gave Naaman his victories. At first this claim may seem startling because Naaman is not an Israelite. However, 1, 2 Kings emphasize repeatedly God's sovereignty over all nations and all people. The Lord has already laid claim to ownership of Syria's political future (1 Kgs 19:15). Surely he can work on behalf of a Syrian, if only to discipline Israel for idolatry (cf. 2 Kgs 13:3). The Lord also has sent the prophets earlier to non-Israelites (1 Kgs 17:7-24), so it is not surprising for him to deal with Naaman here.

5:2-3. A rather obscure source becomes the key to Naaman's healing. Raiding parties into Israel have provided a servant girl for Naaman's wife. This girl tells her mistress that Naaman could be cured if he would see "the prophet who is in Samaria." She is an Israelite, he is an Aramean; she is a "little maiden", he a "great man"; she is a captive servant, he a commander; he has fame in the king's estimation, she has none, for she simply "waited upon" Naaman's wife (cf. Deut 1:38; 1 Sam 19:7). Still, she shares the knowledge that her master needs most. Power and glory cannot save Naaman, but this information can.

Perhaps the book's first readers would have noted that the girl in the text is an exile too. Despite her captivity, she is not bitter or unhelpful. Rather, she shares what she knows about the Lord and the prophet out of concern for Naaman and her mistress and desire to see God's glory magnified. In this way she acts like Daniel, Mordecai, Ezra, Nehemiah, and other exiles who care for the spiritual and physical well-being of their conquerors.

5:4-7. Anxious for any possible avenue of healing, Naaman tells his king what the girl has said. Elisha's fame has spread from the lowest rung of society clear to the palace. Syria's king acts the only way he knows—like a king. He writes a letter of introduction and demand, loads Naaman down with gifts, and sends his commander off to be healed. He does not know that true prophets do not work for money, nor are they paid by the king, nor does the king have authority over them. Thus, sending Naaman to Israel's king does Naaman no good.

Israel's king certainly understands the futility of the letter, for he knows he is no healer. He too thinks like a king and suspects that Syria is looking for an excuse to renew old hostilities. He has no idea that deep personal pain and a child's pure motives have caused this trip.

5:8-14. Elisha views Naaman's presence as an opportunity to prove there is a real prophet in Israel, which is the same as saying there is a real God in Israel. Like the servant girl in 5:2-3, he decides to use this difficult situation to help Naaman. His attitude also helps the king of Israel, since Elisha intends to show Naaman that while the monarch does not heal, someone in Israel can cure him.

When the Syrian arrives with his impressive entourage, the prophet does not come to meet him. Instead, he sends a messenger to instruct him to wash seven times in the Jordan if he wants to be healed. Why this aloof approach to the Syrian's problem? Jones suggests Elisha "may have been demonstrating that he was not a wonderworker who expected payment, or else indicating he wished no political involvement with Syria, or again be [sic] deliberately testing Naaman's faith." Certainly it is a great test of humble faith and one that Naaman understandably misinterprets as an insult. National pride and personal expectations of a spectacular, magical display lead the commander to stomp away in rage.

Once again it is Naaman's servants who come to his rescue. They attack their master's pride with common sense. He would do something difficult, they reason, so why not try this rather small possible cure? What can it hurt? Naaman follows their advice and is healed. His quest for healing has been fulfilled.