

## Getting into the miracle Zone

### 2 Kings 5:1-27 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. <sup>2</sup> Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. <sup>3</sup> She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." <sup>4</sup> Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. <sup>5</sup> "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. <sup>6</sup> The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy." <sup>7</sup> As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!" <sup>8</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. <sup>10</sup> 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." <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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!'" <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> "If you will not," said Naaman, "please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the LORD. <sup>18</sup> But may the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I bow there also--when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this." <sup>19</sup> "Go in peace," Elisha said. After Naaman had traveled some distance, <sup>20</sup> Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, "My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him." <sup>21</sup> So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. "Is everything all right?" he asked. <sup>22</sup> "Everything is all right," Gehazi answered. "My master sent me to say, 'Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing.'" <sup>23</sup> "By all means, take two talents," said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi. <sup>24</sup> When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left. <sup>25</sup> Then he went in and stood before his master Elisha. "Where have you been, Gehazi?" Elisha asked. "Your servant didn't go anywhere," Gehazi answered. <sup>26</sup> But Elisha said to him, "Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money, or to accept clothes, olive groves, vineyards, flocks, herds,

or menservants and maidservants? <sup>27</sup> Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever." Then Gehazi went from Elisha's presence and he was leprous, as white as snow.

### **Questions**

1. In what way can a serious illness make a person more or less inclined to trust God?
  - A. Give ways of ministering to someone who is losing faith/trust in God because of the severity of their illness or even the illness of a loved one(parent/child/sibling)
2. How can our unwillingness to humble ourselves actually deprive us of good gifts from God?
  - A. Share with the group the most humbling experience God took you through and how that experience strengthened your faith.
3. Naaman's action in bringing about a million dollars in gives for his healing continues to perpetuate the somewhat accepted narrative that money solves all things. How do you minister to someone who has this thought process that everything can be solved with a given dollar amount?
  - A. Money is amoral meaning not good or bad but it is a tool/resource to be used in living. 1 Timothy 6:10 - For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. Please explain this truth to someone who has a skewed view of the importance of money. In your explanation give what you feel is a proper place/view of money our lives.
4. Why do you think Naaman's cleansing was a conversion experience for him? What is it about a bodily healing that brings about a difference view of God than other deliverances?
5. The sermon used the phrase "The Miracle of the Storm."
  - A. What does this mean?
  - B. Have you had a Miracle of the storm testimony that you would like to share with the group?
6. We have faith in God but God also has faith in us.
  - A. What does it mean to you for God to have faith in you?
  - B. What does it promote in you insofar as attitude and service?
7. What does it look like for you to be in the miracle zone?
8. Share your main takeaways from the Lesson/Sermon for this week.

## **The Syrian Army Commander Naaman Miraculously Healed: God's Power to Convert and Heal a Person, 5:1-27**

**(5:1-27) Introduction— Power of God, Described, Examples:** think of this fact: God's power is so forceful, so energizing that it can heal a person of any disease or any affliction. But that is not all: God has the power to convert a person, to change a life totally. No matter how depraved or sad a life has become, God can turn that life around and give the person a new beginning, a new start, a brand new life. God's power is omnipotent and unlimited. No matter how high a person is exalted in this life or how low a person has been debased, if he or she senses emptiness or loneliness or purposelessness, or faces one of the many crises, trials, or temptations of this life—if the person craves a new beginning, a fresh start—God's power can meet the need of that person's heart. This is the practical message of the present story.

Actually, this Scripture is one of the most well-known stories in the Old Testament. It is the story of Naaman, the chief commander of the Syrian army who was stricken with the dreaded disease of leprosy. In a story that reaches the height of drama, Naaman confronts the prophet Elisha and is both healed of his leprosy and converted to the LORD. This is the compelling story of a military commander who reached the summit of power in one of the greatest nations of his day and time, the story of a man who was second only to his king. This is: *The Syrian Army Commander Naaman Miraculously Healed: God's Power to Convert and Heal a Person, 5:1-27*

1. The hope aroused in the brilliant but sick army commander: he listened to a strong witness for the LORD (v.1-7).
2. The healing and conversion of Naaman: he laid aside his pride and obeyed God's Word (v.8-19).
3. The greed of Elisha's servant Gehazi: he exposed a heart filled with worldly lusts and covetousness (v.20-27).

**1. (5:1-7) Hope, for Healing— Witnessing, Duty— Witnessing, Example of, a Young Slave Girl— Testimony, Example of— Naaman, Syrian Commander, Character— Naaman, Hope Aroused for Healing:** hope was aroused in the brilliant but sick commander of the Syrian army, Naaman. Somehow Naaman had caught leprosy, a very serious skin disease that would eventually disable him. But great hope was aroused within Naaman. And note why: because he listened to a strong witness for the LORD. The story is compelling and dramatic.

1. Naaman was a man of noble character, an honorable commander who had won victory after victory on the battlefield for the Syrians. He was a courageous and heroic soldier. Furthermore, in the eyes of the king and the Syrian citizens, he was a great man held in the highest esteem.

2. But Naaman had leprosy. The Hebrew word "leprosy" (*tsara* or *sara*) refers to some form of skin disease that was incurable and that eventually incapacitated the victim. Because of his wealth and his royal position as commander, Naaman had access to the best medical help and technology of that day; but he could find no cure. Apparently the disease would ultimately be fatal. Sadly, this man of noble character was caught in a helpless and hopeless situation due to his incurable disease.

3. Yet suddenly, from the most unexpected source, Naaman's hope was aroused (2 Kings 5:2). Several small groups of Syrian soldiers had raided some of the border towns of Israel and taken captive a young girl. When the combat troops returned to Syria, they gave the young girl to Naaman, who assigned her the task of serving his wife. On one occasion when Naaman was home from fighting, the young slave girl strongly urged her mistress to encourage Naaman to visit the prophet Elisha who lived in Samaria (2 Kings 5:3). She believed the LORD would heal Naaman through Elisha.

4. Naaman believed the young girl's testimony, at least enough to seek out Elisha (2 Kings 5:4-7). Appealing to the Syrian king, he secured permission to go to Samaria. The king, who was probably Ben-Hadad II, gave Naaman a letter of introduction to the king of Israel and a large gift to pay for the services of the prophet. Note

that the Syrian king assumed that the prophet served in the royal court of Israel's king Joram and that the gift he sent was huge: 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and 10 sets of royal clothing which no doubt were very expensive (2 Kings 5:5).

With a heart full of great hope and expectation, Naaman traveled to Samaria and presented the letter of introduction to King Joram (2 Kings 5:6-7). The letter requested Joram to heal Naaman of his leprosy, no doubt by assigning the task to Elisha, whom he thought served as one of the royal prophets. But as soon as Joram read the letter, he was gripped by a dreadful fear, for he knew that neither he nor any of the royal prophets had the power to heal the Syrian commander. And he feared when the commander returned unhealed from Samaria, Syria would have an excuse to invade Israel. In fact, Joram thought this was the very purpose of the letter: to give Syria an excuse to attack. So much fear and anxiety gripped Joram's heart that he never even thought of seeking the help of the prophet Elisha.

**Thought 1.** Hope was aroused within Naaman, the hope of being healed of an incurable, disabling disease. But Naaman's hope was aroused for one reason and one reason only: he listened to the testimony, the witness of a young slave girl, and he accepted what she said. He believed that the LORD, the God of the prophet Elisha, could heal him. Believing the message of the LORD's power was what aroused hope within Naaman. The same hope can be ours if we will simply believe in the LORD, trusting His power to take effect in our lives. No matter what circumstances or crises we may face, we too can have hope. If we will just believe the witness, the testimony about the LORD, then we will be saved and delivered from the bondages and enslavements of this world. No matter what may attack us or grip our lives, God will infuse His power within us to conquer and to deliver us. But the condition is faith: we must believe, trust the message, the witness about the LORD.

**"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).**

**"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:15-16).**

**"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).**

**2. (5:8-19) Pride, Example of— Conversion, Example of— Healing, Example of— Obedience, Example of— Naaman, Conversion of— Confession, Example of— Self-centeredness, Example of:** Naaman's hope was fully realized and completely fulfilled: he was healed and converted. The event is drama at its best and most exciting.

1. Elisha heard about Naaman's visit and the king's fearful reaction, so he sent an offer to help the king in his distress (2 Kings 5:8). Somewhat rebuking the king, Elisha encouraged him to send Naaman to him; and he would prove there was a true prophet in Israel, a prophet who could call upon the LORD to heal this Syrian commander. In referring to himself as a real prophet, Elisha was claiming that the LORD whom he serves is the only living and true God. Elisha saw a unique opportunity to bear strong witness to this commander of the

Syrian forces. If he could lead Naaman to a saving knowledge of the LORD, the commander would become a strong witness to many throughout Syria.

2. Naaman's arrival at Elisha's house was an impressive entourage of power and wealth (2 Kings 5:9). He obviously rode up in a caravan of chariots with all the pomp and ceremony of a commander, stopping at the very door of Elisha's house.

3. But Elisha's response was that of a man unimpressed with worldly glory and display (2 Kings 5:10). In fact, he did not personally go out to meet the commander. Instead, he sent a messenger out instructing Naaman to go and wash seven times in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:10). If Naaman would follow these instructions, he would be healed and cleansed of his leprosy.

4. Note, in contrast, Naaman's disrespectful and arrogant reaction. He was filled with rage, feeling that Elisha had slighted him. He had expected Elisha to personally come out, wave his hand over his leprosy, pray, and heal him (2 Kings 5:11). In his mind he considered the suggestions of Elisha to be those of a quack. He was more likely to be healed by washing in the cleaner rivers of Damascus than in the dirtier waters of the Jordan. Filled with fury, the commander turned and rode off.

5. However, God was at work in the hearts of both Naaman and his servants, and the commander was still to be healed and converted (2 Kings 5:13-14). As soon as Naaman's servants felt it was safe to approach the commander, they began encouraging him to calm down and to get control of his emotions. Then they began to suggest that he would have paid any price and undertaken any difficult task demanded by the prophet. Why, then, would he not do the simple thing suggested?

Finally being convinced by his servants, the prideful and self-centered commander reluctantly obeyed the instructions of Elisha, the man of God (2 Kings 5:14). He went down to the Jordan River and dipped himself seven times, exactly as Elisha had instructed. Immediately after the seventh dip, he was healed. Surprisingly, his flesh became as healthy and as youthful looking as that of a child.

6. Excited and filled with a heart of thanksgiving, Naaman quickly returned to Elisha and made a strong confession of faith in the LORD (2 Kings 5:15-18). He now knew there is only one true and living God, that there is no God other than the LORD God worshipped in Israel. He and He alone is the true and living LORD.

In appreciation for the help Elisha had been, Naaman attempted to pay the prophet (2 Kings 5:15-16). But Elisha informed the commander that payment could not be accepted. Salvation—both deliverance and healing—was free, by God's grace alone. Salvation could not be purchased. After some urging, Naaman finally accepted Elisha's refusal for payment.

Before he left, though, Naaman asked two favors of Elisha. First, he requested enough dirt from Elisha's property to take back home so he could build an altar (2 Kings 5:17). He needed the altar to offer sacrifices to the LORD, for he would never again sacrifice to a false god. Second, Naaman wanted Elisha to pray and ask the LORD to continually forgive him for this one thing: in his official duties as commander of the Syrian army, he was required to join his king in religious services in the temple of the false god Rimmon (2 Kings 5:18). At such times, he would ask for forgiveness, but he also wanted Elisha to pray for the LORD to forgive him. Naaman was confessing that he would be present with the king only in an official capacity, not in heart. He would not personally be worshipping, not at all, for he knew that the LORD is the only living and true God. And it was the LORD alone whom he would personally worship. Note that his dilemma was somewhat the same as that faced by Obadiah during the days of Ahab (see outline—' 1 Kings 18:2-16 and note—' 1 Kings 18:2-16 for more discussion).

7. Assuring Naaman of his prayers, Elisha announced his blessing upon Naaman. He told the commander to go in peace of conscience and mind.

No doubt, Elisha charged Naaman to make every opportunity he could to be a strong witness for the LORD. Keep in mind that Naaman's conversion and witness for the LORD were already far stronger than the vast majority of professing believers in Israel itself. The day of the kings was a period when people lived sinful and wicked lives. Contrary to the false profession of most people, Naaman experienced a true conversion and would be a far stronger witness for the LORD.

**Thought 1.** Before this commander of the Syrian army could be converted, he had to lay aside his pride, arrogance, and self-exaltation. No doubt, this was difficult to do, for Naaman was second only to the king of Syria. He was not only the chief commander of the armed forces, but he was also the second leader over the entire nation, one of the most powerful nations of the earth during that time. Power, authority, honor, praise, recognition, esteem, adoration—all that lifts a person up in the minds of people and causes a person to feel prideful and exalted—all this had become the daily experience of Naaman. As a result, he had become prideful, self-centered, and self-exalting. But when he confronted the LORD, he had to empty himself of pride and humble himself before the LORD. So it is with us. Before God can save us or meet our needs, we must lay aside our pride, selfishness, and self-exaltation. Pride is excessive, uncontrolled self-esteem. It is exalting oneself over others, exalting our...

- appearance
- position
- achievement
- health
- authority
- ability or skill
- knowledge or intellect
- friends or social circle

We can take anything that concerns us and exalt it above others. We should take pride in how God has made, blessed, and gifted us. We should esteem ourselves highly, but we should never exalt ourselves over other people. Pride becomes sin when we become arrogant and exalt ourselves over others. Listen to what the Word of God says about pride, arrogance, and self-exaltation.

**"And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matthew 23:12).**

**"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).**

**"Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:15-16).**

**Thought 2.** J. Vernon McGee has an excellent application dealing with pride that is worth quoting in its entirety.

*God declares that He hates the pride in man's heart. Proverbs 6:16-19 lists seven things that God hates. First on His list are these: "A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood." Do you see what is number one on God's hate parade? It is a proud look. God says he hates that. He hates that as much as He hates murder.*

- ⇒ *James 4:6 says, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."*
- ⇒ *Pride is the undoing of man. It is a great sin. In Proverbs 16:18 we read, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."*
- ⇒ *Proverbs 11:2 says, "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom."*
- ⇒ *Finally, Proverbs 29:23 says, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."*

*Why does God hate pride? The definition of pride is "excessive self-esteem." It is inordinate self-esteem. It is more than reasonable delight in one's position and achievement. Paul put it like*

*this, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom. 12:4). Pride is placing an excessive price on self. It is demanding more than you are worth. Have you ever heard it said, "I wish I could buy that man for what he is worth?" Pride is the difference between what you are and what you think you are. It was the pride of Satan that brought him down. That was his sin. Pride was also the sin of Edom. Of Edom God said, "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD" (Obadiah 4).*

*Man's pride runs counter to God's plan; and, whenever they meet, there is friction. There is no compromise. It is always a head-on collision. You see, God's plan of salvation is the supreme answer to man's pride. God lays man low. God takes nothing from man. Paul could say of himself when he met Jesus Christ, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Phil. 3:7). Paul gave up religion. Paul gave up everything he had been; he rated it as dung—he said, "I just flushed it down." Christ and pride do not go together. You cannot be proud and at the same time trust Christ as your Savior. If you trust Him, my friend, you will lay all of your pride in the dust.*

**3. (5:20-27) Greed, Example of— Materialism, Example of— Worldliness, Example of— Gehazi, Greed of:** although Elisha had turned down Naaman's offer of payment, Elisha's servant Gehazi was filled with greed. And his greed exposed a heart flooded with worldly lusts and covetousness.

1. Standing nearby during the conversation between Naaman and Elisha, Gehazi's mind was racing. He wanted some of the wealth that Naaman had offered Elisha (2 Kings 5:20). So while the two men were still talking, he was already working out a deceitful plan by which he could secure some of the money for himself.

2. As soon as Naaman had ridden off in the distance, Gehazi put into motion his greedy scheme and rushed to catch Naaman (2 Kings 5:21-24). Soon thereafter, Naaman spotted the servant rushing after him. Stopping the caravan, Naaman got out of his chariot to meet him. Once face-to-face, the commander asked the servant if everything was all right.

Gehazi quickly and convincingly lied to Naaman by saying that Elisha had sent him (2 Kings 5:22). He declared that Elisha had remembered two young student prophets who did need some financial aid, and he would appreciate the commander making a contribution of 75 pounds of silver and two sets of clothing to the students. Grateful for the help Elisha had been to him, Naaman doubled the requested money and gave the clothing to the servant Gehazi. Moreover, since Gehazi was traveling alone, Naaman assigned two soldiers to accompany him back in the event he was attacked by thieves. But Gehazi took the gifts from the soldiers before they reached Elisha's house and sent the guards back to Naaman. He then hid the money and the clothing (2 Kings 5:24).

3. But soon thereafter, when the servant again faced his master Elisha, his greed was uncovered and judgment was pronounced upon him (2 Kings 5:25-27). Elisha asked him where he had been, and Gehazi lied, stating that he had not gone anywhere. But Elisha revealed to the servant that he knew the truth, that Gehazi had taken the money and clothing from Naaman (2 Kings 5:26). Rebuking his servant, Elisha stated that this was not the time to receive payment for having ministered to a person, for salvation and healing were to be free. Salvation and healing were not to be offered for profit.

Elisha then pronounced the judgment of God upon Gehazi: the deceitful servant and all his descendants (through their genes) would be stricken with severe cases of leprosy, the very leprosy from which Naaman had just been delivered. Apparently quicker than the eye can blink, Gehazi was afflicted with leprosy. For when he departed from Elisha's presence, his skin was already diseased and as white as snow (2 Kings 5:27).

**Thought 1.** Greed and covetousness are terrible evils. A grudging and self-indulgent person becomes so consumed with money and wealth that he hoards what he has. Regardless of the needs around him, he piles up more and more, giving little if any to help meet the needs of this world.

In addition, a covetous person will, at times, steal, scheme, or manipulate to get more and more, sometimes even twisting the rules or law to get more of what he wants. Even if it means bankrupting other persons, taking all they have and causing them to become destitute and unemployed, a greedy person will do whatever it takes to secure every dime or piece of property he can. God warns the covetous and greedy. Listen to what God says:

**"And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:15-21).**