

Naaman and Advice from the Little Maiden

2 Kings 5:1-14

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In his younger years, Christian author Max Lucado once took part in the Half Ironman Triathlon which is made up of a 1.2 mile swim, a 56 mile bike ride and the 13.1 mile run. But when it came time for run, Max was exhausted and wanted to quit.

But as he ran, he noticed other runners were just as miserable as he was and they often complained to each other. When Max caught up with a sixty-six year old grandmother, she was like a breath of fresh air.

She said, "You'll finish this. It is hot, but at least it is not raining. One step at a time. And don't forget to hydrate and stay in there." That was enough advice to motivate Max to finish the Ironman triathlon.

My scripture lesson is about a young slave girl who had given some timely advice that resulted in her master's physical healing. This is the story of the Naaman the Syrian's healing of leprosy. My text is **2 Kings 5:1-14**.

May God use our witness and our words as we become faithful witnesses of our Lord and also point people in the right direction. Neil will read our Bible passage.

5 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.^{[a]2} Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."⁴ Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. ⁵ "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^[b] of silver, six thousand shekels^[c] of gold and ten sets of clothing. ⁶ 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."

⁷ 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!”⁸ 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.”⁹ So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house. ¹⁰ 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.”¹¹ 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. ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn’t I wash in them and be cleansed?” So he turned and went off in a rage.

¹³ 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’!” ¹⁴ 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.

To me the unsung hero of this entire story is the little maiden. We don’t know her name, and even though she spoke less than twenty words, she played a pivotal role in her master’s healing. Now this is what we know. This little girl had been taken captive by the Syrian army in what was a border raid in Northern Israel. Through no choice of her own, she was tragically taken away from her family as the part of the spoils of war. It was by far the worst day of her life.

But it was through divine providence this young girl had gone to live with General Naaman who was the second most powerful person in Syria and his family. His stature was that of a General U.S. Grant or a Dwight D. Eisenhower. And like any family, there were ups and downs, joys and sorrows. Here, now, was one major concern.

Naaman was a leper where there was no cure. In Biblical days, leprosy was a greatly feared skin disease that would slowly take away a person’s life. While Naaman and his family was greatly saddened and devastated that he was doomed to a future life of very bad health, social isolation and the worst type of humiliation. The little girl who had her own sorrows to deal with wanted her master healed.

What made this nameless young girl able to work through her sadness and loss was due in part that she had been raised by the influence of God's commandments, his covenants and promises. Though she was far away from home, she remembered the stories of how God did outstanding things through prophet Elisha. For example:

1. How he parted the waters of the Jordan River.
2. How he purified the water source for Jericho.
3. He was instrumental in the miracle of oil for the poor widow.
4. With God's help, Elisha helped bring a young boy back from the dead.
5. He purified poison soup and was able to bring about a multiplication of loaves of bread.
6. He performed the miracle of finding the axe head in the water.
7. Finally he prophesied events that came true.

These were the faith stories that she was taught. Though it was tragic for her to be separated from her parents, she was greatly used by the Lord. It makes me think. God may use us when we are in pain to share our faith, give godly advice or point the way. We may see suffering as negative but God can bring good out of our suffering if we continue to honor God, "through it all" as the song with that title states.

This little maiden's story reminds me of a Dutch Christian woman named Corrie Ten Boom who was arrested by Nazi soldiers for helping Jews escape from Germany.

Separated from her father & mother, she and her sister were imprisoned in the Auschwitz concentration camp during WW II. Though she would never would be reunited with her father & mother, she could have died a bitter, angry woman, filled with hatred for her captors.

But instead, she became God's apostle of forgiveness. When she was released, she went around the world telling her story of forgiveness & God's message of love.

In 1947, she preached on forgiveness. After the sermon, a man walked out to her and she recognized him as the guard who was partly responsible for her sister's death. It was difficult to forgive. She told God she would raise her hand but God would have to change her heart. He did and she forgave him.

There was something about the little maiden in her story that made her words so convincing. Perhaps it was her sincerity, her pureness, innocence that radiated faith and belief and Naaman's family witnessed it.

Let me give you a quick synopsis of what happened next. Naaman went to King Benhadad. The king trusted that the maiden's story was true that that he sent a diplomatic letter, along with a military entourage along with \$1.2 million dollars of gold, silver and clothing to help Naaman get the help he needed.

Protocol states that if you want something from another country, you go to the king of the land, which was King Jehoram of Israel. It was just like the Wise Men who went to King Herod looking for the child who was born king of the Jews. Word traveled fast and Naaman was off to see the prophet.

Naaman received the healing he so craved and later went back to Elisha a transformed individual to thank him.

When I think back upon the progression in my military career, I had to follow the orders of drill sergeants all the way to general officers. In the ministry, I have had to follow the directions of the District Superintendents, Bishops and many members of my congregations. In my family, there were times that I had to take the advice of my young son, my elderly grandparents, other relatives, my parents, my wife and others. Because of all these people, I am I am better off for listening to their advice.

Here are a couple of quotes that fits in with the spirit of our scripture text:

- The Christian is a person who makes it easy for others to believe in God. Robert McCheyne.

From cover to cover, the Bible is filled with stories of those whose lives served as a witness for the things of God and provided advice. For example: Job received advice from the young man Elihu. Young Samuel was able to share the Word of God with Eli the elderly priest. King Rehoboam would not accept the counsel of the elders which had disastrous results.

Giving and receiving advice and spiritual counsel is part of our faith and it is who we are. We need others in our spiritual journey who will point us in the right direction or show us the way.

Don't be surprised when God speaks to us through little children or certain individuals who are relatively unknown. May we be used to point people in the right direction. The genuine Christian is the best evidence of the genuineness of Christianity.

We are the Bibles the world is reading.
We are the creeds the world is needing.
We are the sermons the world is heeding.

Let me close with 10 Commandments of Giving Godly Advice.

- I. You shall listen to God.
- II. You shall not be a hypocrite.
- III. You shall speak the truth in love.
- IV. You shall not speak quickly.
- V. You shall use the scriptures as your guide.
- VI. You shall not be offended when your advice is rejected.

VII. You shall keep an open mind.

VIII. You shall not share personal information.

IX. You shall commit to praying for those who seek your advice.

X. You shall not seek personal gain in giving advice.

So whether we are giving advice or receiving it, we need to be humble enough to hear it and share it in the spirit of meekness.