

Set Apart 4: Practicing Humility (Study) for Mar. 13, 15, & 17

(Notes For Leaders)

*Leprosy is a skin disease that redefined Naaman's life. No longer is he the great and esteemed commander. Now, he is redefined by his illness.

*As for the servant girl, her redefining detail is her faith. Though no one in Naaman's kingdom knows how to cure him, she remembers a prophet back home named Elisha. She has faith that the God of Elisha – the God of her homeland – could heal anyone of anything, even her braggadocio boss of leprosy.

*The good news is that God is not impressed by our cultural status. God sees beyond the cultural definitions set by the world. God can see a great commander and a lowly servant girl and see His beloved children.

*Let's turn our attention to the subjects of PRIDE & HUMILITY. Pride is not the same as having a low self-image or self-esteem. Instead of considering ourselves the best, pride is simply considering ourselves before others.

*Like Naaman, most of us live with the illusion that we're in control until something in our world reminds us that this is not the case. The humbling method by which God offers his healing to Naaman is exactly what Naaman needs. However, it isn't what Naaman expects nor wants.

*Naaman's physical weakness and resulting desperation are the only things that can make him seek God. It is only out of desperation that Naaman chooses to obey the prophet's instructions.

*One of the toughest things about the ultimate virtue of humility is that often we receive it through means we have no control over. As we've seen with Naaman, an illness or injury can remind us that we need other people to care for us. Other times, it's a mistake or blunder that deflates our egos when we might have been puffed up with pride. Perhaps it's fitting that the path to humility is usually out of our control.

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OPENING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION- *How would you define ‘humility’? in your own words?*

VIDEO & GROUP DISCUSSION

Naaman has every privilege and advantage in Aram. Politically, socially, economically, he has it all. On the other end of the spectrum is the servant girl described in 2 Kings 5. While he is the commander of the Aramean army, a 5-star general, she is a nobody. He has people bowing down to him. She is the servant bowing to everyone else. She was the victim of human trafficking. Raiders kidnapped her from her home in Israel. Now, she is a servant in Naaman’s household. She has faith that the God of Elisha – the God of her homeland – could heal anyone of anything, even her boss of leprosy. And yet, there is a little detail about each of them that keeps them from being totally defined by their social status.

Q1 – Naaman’s redefining detail is the last word of the last sentence used to describe him in 2 Kings 5:1. Ask one volunteer to read this verse. What is that redefining word?

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. – 2 Kings 5:1

Q2 – What would the world say about your cultural status? Write down 3 words that “the world” would use to describe your accomplishments, your status, your worth.

Q3 – What would you say is your redefining detail – the thing that keeps you from being totally defined by your outward cultural status?

Q4 – What does it mean to you – that God looks at our hearts, not our social status? (“We cannot impress God with what we are. God simply loves us for who we are.”)

Q5 – What is it so easy to confuse humility with self-deprecation? On the other hand, why is it so difficult to confused pride with confidence?

Read: When Naaman pulls up at Elisha’s house, he jumps down from his chariot and knocks boldly on the door. He’s not greeted by the prophet, but the prophet’s servant. To add injury to insult, he’s presented with an unwelcome prescription: **“Go, wash yourself 7 times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed”** (2 Kings 5:10). And just like that, the door is shut in Naaman’s face. **Read: 2 Kings 5:11-12.**

¹¹ But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, “I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?” He turned and went away in a rage.

**Q6 – What kind of healing does Naaman expect?
How is it different from the treatment he receives?
How would you describe Naaman’s response to this treatment?**

**Q7 – Recall a time when you realized you were not in control and needed help. Were you offered any kind of help that was different from what you expected? How did you respond?
Read 2 Kings 5:15-19.**

¹⁵ Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant.” ¹⁶ But he said, “As the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing!” He urged him to accept, but he refused. ¹⁷ Then Naaman said, “If not, please let two mule-loads of earth be given to your servant; for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god except the LORD. ¹⁸ But may the LORD pardon your servant on one count: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon, when I do bow down in the house of Rimmon, may the LORD pardon your servant on this one count.” ¹⁹ He said to him, “Go in peace.”

Q8 – What does Naaman say he has learned and what does he want to do in response?

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. ⁸ Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, ⁹ but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Q9 – What does Paul learn about God through his weakness, and what is his response?

Q10 – How have you discovered God’s strength in your own weakness?

Of course, humility doesn’t always have to be accidental. This is a virtue that Bible teaches us to pursue. With God’s help, we can face our own flaws and find the transformation only God can bring.

Q11 – What are some ways we can practice intentional humility?

Q12 – Recall a time when you denied yourself something – through solitude, silence, fasting, or something else. How did this remind you of your human limitation and needs?

Q13 – How has an experience of humility in your own life helped you identify more closely with Jesus?

Application

Q14 – What did you discover about humility this week from the story of Elisha & Naaman?

Q15 – What did you learn about God? About yourself?

Q16 – How can you respond to what you’ve learned about humility in your own life this week?

CLOSING PRAYER

Share prayer requests – celebrations and concerns.