

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-33 Healing: Praying for the Sick

Sickness is something we all will encounter. You may have friends or loved ones with serious illnesses. Some doctors believe that 85% of all illnesses, if left alone, will cure themselves. God has created our amazing bodies to repair themselves. In situations when healing is slow in coming, we have God's promises and believers for help.

The Book of James gives us directions for praying for the sick. Listen to these steps: "Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well: the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (James 5:14-16).

Sometimes a person who is sick may have something standing in the way of God's healing. They may not know or refuse to admit there is something between them and God. God may be trying to show them things that need to be put back in order in their walk with him. Since God is concerned about the way we live our lives, he may allow sickness as a "wake-up call." It may alert us that there is a problem.

Have you ever met a person seeking God's will, and yet refusing godly counsel? Have you ever prayed for such a person and had God direct you towards a prayer of repentance? It is often wise to ask a person before you pray, "Is there anything standing between you and God or between you and your family? Is there something that might prevent God from answering this prayer?" If they say "yes" or "I'm not sure," give them a moment to seek God. He will show them and often will reveal it to you. After they have prayed, then have the elders of the church anoint them with oil and pray.

Listen to the story of Naaman the leper. Notice what it teaches about healing:

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. ... He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. "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. 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."

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!"

When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king 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." So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house.

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."

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 ... 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.

Then Naaman's servants went to him and acted as wise counselors. They reminded him how he had come prepared to spend his wealth for his healing. They 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!'" The thing Naaman had to give up was his own pride about who he was. So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, as Elisha had told him. His flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy. Then Naaman and all his servants went back to Elisha. Naaman said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel" (2Kings 5:1-15).

Naaman was the commander of a large army and a valiant soldier, but he could not defeat leprosy on his own. Neither Naaman's wealth nor influence could free him this deadly disease. He needed the help that only God could provide. He had gone to Elisha's house, expecting to be received with honor and respect. He perhaps hoped to see a demonstration of Elisha's power. Instead he was sent to the river Jordan—not the cleanest of rivers—to wash seven times.

After Naaman's first outburst of rage, he encountered wise counselors. His servants suggested that he let God have control over his illness. Naaman had to follow the directions from God and surrender his pride to receive his healing. Is it possible that the things Naaman valued in his life stood in the way of his healing? Naaman had to recognize that God was more important than his pride, his reputation, what he possessed, or anything he could ever hope for. Naaman had to let go of himself and let God restore his failing body.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches us about God and healing. It encourages us to seek out other believers for prayer when we are sick. Naaman's story tells us that pride, sin, or misplaced priorities can keep us from receiving the healing God wants to give us.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that while God does not cause sickness, he may allow it for our greater good. It is always God's will to heal both our bodies and our souls. He wants for us to acknowledge his lordship in our lives, whether we are sick or well. Sometimes he gives the sick person their ultimate healing, by taking them to be with him in heaven.

To **review** this lesson, answer the following questions.

1. With all that Naaman had, why did he need God's help? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, "He had the disease of leprosy, that only God could heal," you are correct.

2. Why do we suggest Naaman's illness might have been a wake-up call allowed by God?

[Pause]

A. If you said that God may sometimes allow sickness to show someone that changes are needed in their life, you are right.

3. How many times did the prophet of God tell Naaman to wash himself in the river Jordan?

[Pause]

A. If you said he was told to wash seven times, you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this story several times until you can tell the story of Naaman to some friends. Then consider the prayer found in the third letter of John verse 2, "I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." Ask and discuss with your friends, "What is the relation between physical and spiritual health? Can a person be sick and still spiritually healthy? Can a person be well physically and still sick and sinful on the inside?" The answer to the last two questions is 'yes.' There is not a direct tie between physical and spiritual health. We do know that even godly Christians suffer illness and wicked sinners may enjoy health. We also see that God uses healing to draw people to himself. We must leave the answers with our sovereign God and trust him to do all things well.