

# Carry Your Dirt With You!

Explore the life of Naaman: how humility, obedience and a commitment to walk daily with the Lord can bring healing to our lives.

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## Main Characters:

- Naaman - A powerful general from Aram (modern-day Syria) who has leprosy
- Elisha - Hebrew prophet used by God to heal Naaman

## A Sign of Hope in Aram: II Kings 5:1-5

Naaman was a powerful man, favored by God but with a tragic disability. Initially, Naaman's humility is revealed by his willingness to listen to his wife's slave's news about the healing prophet (Elisha) in Israel.

*Are you open to hearing from different sources about healing?*

*Are you willing to listen to new voices about finding help?*

## Encounter in Israel with God's Prophet, Elisha: II Kings 5:8-14

Note the King of Israel's name is not even given. This is the Biblical writer's way to show where the true power lies: with the Lord's representative, Elisha.

Two internal factors that could have prevented Naaman from receiving help:

### • Pride

Naaman is incensed that Elisha does not come out to meet him but simply tells Naaman to bathe in the muddy Jordan River. Here we see Naaman's pride reasserting itself. Pride can prevent us from finding and receiving the help we need. (*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall - Proverbs 16:18*). Pride can cause us to want to get help only on our terms. We fall back to our familiar rivers (Abana and Pharpar - verse 12) or patterns, instead of stepping out to something new.

### • Shame

Shame can be the flip side of pride. To bathe in the Jordan River would expose his diseased flesh for all the world to see. It would not be covered up by robes and armor. In order to begin the



path of healing, we often must overcome our pride and shame and admit we have a problem.

*"I am an alcoholic..."*

*"I have an addiction to pain pills..."*

*"My anger has become a problem..."*

## The Simple Steps to Peace: II Kings 5:15-19

The servants, in a psychologically astute way, have pointed out to Naaman if Elisha had said to do something extremely difficult, Naaman would likely have willingly accepted (verse 13). Many times, our path to healing and wholeness involves simple daily steps, little fanfare, and no spiritual epiphanies.

**Examples-** Put exercise shoes and socks by the bed in the morning to develop the exercise habit. I once knew a man whose first step on the road to sobriety was taking a different route home to avoid the bar that was his favorite hangout.

Simple everyday habits, or a change in habits, can break long-running destructive patterns or create new healthy ones.



When a habit emerges, the brain stops fully participating in decision-making. It stops working so hard or diverts focus to other tasks. So, unless you deliberately fight a habit – unless you find new routines – the pattern will unfold automatically. (Duhigg, Charles, *The Power of Habit*, page 20)

The simple step of bathing in the Jordan seven times was effective. Naaman bathed all seven times; he did not stop at four or five. If he had given up and stopped early, it is most likely he would not have been healed. The number seven is often seen in scripture as the time it takes for God to fulfill His purposes. Those times vary, of course, but when we quit early and don't do our part, we don't give ourselves a chance to succeed.

Naaman responds to his healing with gratitude and praise to God. He then makes an unusual request; he asks if he could be given two pack mules of dirt from Israel to carry back with him to Aram. It seems clear he wants them in order to bow down and worship the living God in his home with the soil of Israel. He realizes that he cannot remain in Israel, but he can carry Israel back with him by expressing his internal commitment

in an outward manner. He will not offer sacrifices and offerings to the pagan gods anymore, but to the Lord God. Naaman is astute enough to know that to grow in his new faith, it will require a daily commitment and spiritual discipline.

We carry our dirt back with us by developing spiritual disciplines that allow us to be reminded of our relationship to God. These disciplines such as giving of time and money, daily study of God's Word through devotional books, frequent Bible study, and worship help us to be sensitive to God's presence and guidance for us in our lives.

If we are struggling with an addiction, "carrying our dirt back" is a reminder that we need to work the program of our recovery path. It is not enough to simply have a time of sobriety and expect that good feeling to carry us through difficult times. When old acquaintances appear; when fear, anger, and shame reappear, and our old patterns of self-medicating seem the answer... we need to carry the dirt with us and work our program!

Habits of holiness are common in scripture: Instead of military strategy or tactics, Moses directs the people as

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they go into the Promised Land to fight the Pagan influences by impressing God's commandments on God's people.

*"Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." - Deuteronomy 6:7*

Jesus went to the synagogue as was his custom (Luke 4:16). Ten times in the New Testament we find Jesus in synagogue. Over and over, we find Jesus setting aside time to pray (Mark 1:36. Matt.14:23, Luke 6:12).

Let us set aside our pride to see how God is working to heal and help us! Let us "Carry our dirt with us" by committing to take the daily steps of spiritual devotion to grow and nurture our spiritual growth! Let us take these steps so we, like Naaman, too can go in peace (Shalom) (v.19).

# Carry Your Dirt With You!

II Kings 5

## Bible Study Outline

### **I - A Sign of Hope in Aram: II Kings 5:1-5**

Are you willing to listen?

### **II - Encounter in Israel with God's Prophet, Elisha: II Kings 5:8-14**

Two attitudes can prevent healing:

- Pride
- Shame

### **III - The Simple Steps to Peace: II Kings 5:15-19**

Our path to healing and peace often involves simple, daily steps. Naaman, per God's instructions bathed seven times in the Jordan.

Naaman expresses gratitude and praise to God.

Are you willing to "carry your dirt back" (verse 17) and adopt spiritual disciplines and habits for spiritual growth? Some examples of spiritual disciplines: devotions, bible study, prayer and worship and giving.

Are you willing to adopt habits that heal and help recovery of whatever you are struggling with?

Biblical examples of spiritual habits:

- Daily devotions and study - Deut. 6: 4-9
- Jesus, regular worship - Luke 4:16
- Regular prayer - Mark 1:36, Matt.14:23, Luke 6:12

These "simple" steps allow us to go in peace, Shalom (verse 19).