

Don't Let Your Expectations Steal Your Blessings

By
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Introduction

When we become Christians we usually come to God with a set of expectations, i.e., things we look forward to, anticipate, things we consider reasonable. When we encounter storms in our lives, we turn to God for help, with our expectations leading the way. To our surprise, sometimes God doesn't meet our expectations. Oftentimes the associated disappointment leads to anger, disillusionment, and a weakening of our faith.

But three of God's attributes which are demonstrated in this lesson are His faithfulness, His omnipotence (all powerful), and that He is immutable, i.e., He doesn't change. Therefore we may need to look at our disappointments from a different perspective before we start questioning God.

This study focuses around the events of Naaman, a Syrian warrior who almost let his expectations steal what he desired most.

Scriptures Used In This Lesson

2 Kings 5:1 – 19

Deuteronomy 6:6 – 7

Proverbs 22:6

Mark 10:27

Ephesians 3:20 – 21

Isaiah 55:8 – 9

Background

Naaman was a Syrian warrior who lived around 900 BC. In spite of an overall truce between the two countries, Israel and Syria had occasional skirmishes along their borders. One of these skirmishes resulted in the capturing of an Israeli girl who was brought to Naaman's household to work as a servant for his wife.

As you read 2 Kings 5, you will notice that different translations of the Bible use different terms to refer to the same land. Syria was referred to as *Aram* in Hebrew. The territory

was also known as Mesopotamia or Aram-naharain (Syria of the two rivers), and Padan-aram. Again, the different names refer to the same land.

The Source Of Our Blessings

The first thing to note in verse 1 is that God was the source of Aram's victories. Naaman's notoriety was due to the victories God had allowed. Even though he was not a Hebrew, his military victories were due to God's divine hand.

Key Point: God's divine hand influences Christians and non-Christians alike.

This is a good point to remember. Nobody, no matter how "good" or "bad", is beyond God's influence. Many times throughout the Bible God used non-Hebrew people to accomplish His purposes for Israel. Sometimes He used other nations to "correct" His people. Sometimes He used other nations to demonstrate His power. Sometimes He used other nations to help get His people to a specific location. God has influence over the *entire* world. This fact alone should affect how you pray in the future; you will know that God can influence *any* situation at *any* time. Also, it should let you know that God can use non-Christians to accomplish His purpose in *your* life.

Have you experienced God using a non-Christian to accomplish things in your life? Did the other person(s) know they were being used by God? How long did it take before you realized this was how God was working? What did you learn about God from the experience?

The second major point to note in verse 1 is that Naaman had leprosy. During that time, leprosy was in effect a "slow death sentence". There was no cure. It was considered contagious, and those who contracted the disease were ostracized from their families and the rest of society. At this time, Naaman must have been in the very early stages of the disease, but his future was bleak. Leprosy would start out as small red spots on the skin and soon turn white and scaly. Over time the body would rot losing hair, nails, teeth, and limbs.

In verses 2 - 3 we learn that a Hebrew girl is the one who suggested that Naaman should "see the prophet who is in Samaria" for healing. Two main points are illustrated in this passage:

Key Point: Always be willing to share your faith.

Be sensitive to opportunities that God may provide to witness to other people. Many times, people are the most receptive to hearing about the Lord at a low point in their lives or at times they are facing major obstacles. If we are "prayed up" and sensitive to

the leading of the Holy Spirit, one word, spoken at the appropriate time, will make a big difference. Remember, it's the Holy Spirit who will draw men to Christ; we are just vessels through whom He works.

The second key point is:

Key Point: It is extremely important that we teach our children about the Lord.

If you read the entire chapter, you'll discover that Namaan was eventually healed of his leprosy. But his healing came through the advice of a little Hebrew girl. If she had not been taught about the Lord, His prophets or His power at an early age, she could not have shared the word that led to Namaan's healing. Did her parents know that she would be taken prisoner in a Syrian raid? No. Did they know Namaan personally? No. Did they know that their daughter would lead Namaan to a man of God who would instruct him on how to be healed of an incurable disease? No.

We cannot out-guess God. His ways are beyond our ways. Read Deuteronomy 6:6 – 7. The Word of God is to be taught to our children *continuously*. We are to talk about the Lord and His ways in *casual settings* as well as formally at church. It is the parent's responsibility to provide this education. Naaman's life was changed forever by the little girl's parents being obedient to Deuteronomy 6:6 – 7. The Godly foundation was established early in the girl's heart and others benefitted from her parent's teaching. Read Proverbs 22:6.

If you have older children, did you teach them about the Lord when they were young? If not, why? Looking back, do you think teaching (or not teaching) your children about the Lord would have made a difference in their lives? How so?

If your children are young, what are some of the obstacles to teaching your children about the Lord? How can you overcome these obstacle?

A mighty warrior of the Syrian army had his life changed by a little girl who was taught about the Lord at an early age. Who will your children influence?

The Value of A Miracle

Read 2 Kings 5:4 – 7. In this passage we get a sense of how serious was Namaan's situation. In verse 4 we learn that Namaan took with him "ten talents of silver" and "six hundred shekels of gold". He was going to use this money as payment in exchange for his healing. We don't use *talents* and *shekels* today, but during that time, that was

equivalent to about 750 pounds of silver and 150 pounds of gold. At today's prices, that much silver and gold is worth approximately \$4.3 million. That's the value Namaan placed on his miracle...a seemingly impossible task. And with that amount of money, Namaan had expectations.

Verse 7 illustrates just how impossible this miracle seemed. The king of Israel tore his clothes and in a sense said that this was such an impossibility that the King of Syria must have sent Namaan just to start a controversy between them. *Nobody* was cured of leprosy at that time...it was in effect a death sentence in many ways.

Our Savior taught us a broader principle about God and His ways even though He was speaking of the rich achieving salvation. Read Mark 10:27. There is nothing impossible for God. This principle was understood by a little girl and the prophet Elisha.

Another observation to make is to compare the response of the little girl in verse 3 to the response of the king of Israel in verse 7 to the same news: Namaan had leprosy. One responded in faith, the other in fear.

Expectations Challenged

Read 2 Kings 5:8 – 12. In this passage we see how Namaan's expectations are challenged.

1. Elisha sent his servant to meet Namaan; he did not meet him personally. Namaan expected to meet Elisha personally, especially since his need was so great and he had \$4.3 million with him to *pay* for his healing.
2. Namaan already had a "healing plan" in mind. He spells it out in verse 11, step by step.
3. The Jordan River was not the cleanest of rivers. There were other rivers in his own land that would have been considered better for bathing.
4. Namaan had bathed before and bathing did not produce miracles, for him or anyone else.
5. The instructions were too simple and "unspectacular".

Namaan became so angry that he walked away in a rage.

There are several things we can learn from this passage:

The greater the need, the more focused we become on that need. It becomes easy to lose perspective and become "consumed" with the need and all of the ramifications of that need *not* being met. We can get caught up in the "what if..." game.

The last time you faced a challenge, did you become so consumed with the need that it became the main focus of your day? If so, why? In your mind, what was bigger, your need or your God? The “what if’s” of your need or your God? Why?

Whether the need is big or small, we mentally produce ways to meet the need. This mental picture gives form to our expectations. The classic example is found in verse 11. Namaan detailed how he had envisioned his healing would occur. He used his own wisdom and knowledge to devise a way to meet his needs. This mental picture becomes the framework for our emotions. The more we imagine how the need will be met, the more emotionally attached we become to the mental picture. The danger is that the solution can “walk right in front of us” and we’ll miss it, because it doesn’t match our mental picture...our *expectations*.

Have you ever missed a solution, blessing or a way to satisfy your need because it didn’t fit what you had previously envisioned? What could have helped you to “see more clearly”? What were the factors (emotions, other people, selfishness, etc.) that blinded you in the first place?

Sometimes God challenges our expectations through obedience and something simple. Read Isaiah 55:8 – 9. God’s thoughts and ways are so far above ours that we can never “out guess” Him. Remember, He is the creator of all things; all the laws of physics, science and math, all the stars, all living things, even time itself. So there is no way to have God “all figured out”. That’s why the best thing to do is to *trust Him*.

A Voice of Reason

Read 2 Kings 5:13 – 14. Fortunately for Namaan, his servant was a voice of reason. He convinced Namaan to follow the instructions of Elisha. His reasoning was as follows:

“If you were willing to do something difficult for your healing, why not do something simple?”

God honors faith and obedience. Why? Because these are indicative of a heart that is focused on God. They are indicative of a personal relationship with God. These are things which pleases Him.

So Namaan was healed from leprosy and his skin “became clean like that of a young boy” (NIV). But he almost lost what he desired most.

Summary

I think Isaiah 55:8 – 9 presents a truth that is key to this entire lesson. We cannot out guess God and anticipate what, how and why He will do something. That's why it is important to trust Him. Trust comes through relationships and relationships come through a decision. Make a decision today to build your personal relationship with the Lord and ensure that your expectations don't steal your blessing.