

1. Once when I was ill, I tried someone's suggested home remedy that is so wild, you'd probably not believe me if I told you what it was.
2. If I were kidnapped, and my captors became physically incapacitated, I would see that as an answer to my prayers.
3. God heals the righteous and brings disease to the wicked.
4. God does not want us to have immediate healing. He'd rather give you some tasks to do first to see how committed you are.
5. God will forgive you, if you worship both pagan gods and Him.

yes & no

dig deeper

> **READ 2 Kings 5:1-19a (NIV)**

*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.*

*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 of silver, six thousand shekels 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.*

*15 Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant."*

*16 The prophet answered, "As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing." And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.*

*17 "If you will not," said Naaman, "please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord. 18 But may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I have to bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive your servant for this."*

*19 "Go in peace," Elisha said.*

>> **1 Naaman** - This name, which means "fair" or "gracious," is used in Gen 46:21; Num 26:40 and 1 Chr 8:4, 7 for a member of the tribe of Benjamin. But the person in this story is not an Israelite. He was a Syrian. Israel and Syria were at peace with each other at this time (see verse 7). Commander of the army of the king of Syria: Naaman was the commander in chief in charge of the entire army of Syria.

## dig deeper. . . continued

» **1 a great man...highly regarded** - A great man: This is comparable to the Hebrew expression translated “a wealthy woman” in 2 Kgs 4:8. Naaman was a man of great influence. The text adds with his master or “before his master.” Apparently this is intended to emphasize the fact that his greatness was recognized by the king of Syria himself.

In high favor is literally “lifted of face.” This kind of expression is often used to speak of a person’s “having honor,” “being favored,” or “having a good reputation” with other people (see Job 22:8 and Isa 9:15, for example). It repeats the same basic idea as a great man, but it is probably intended to be a broader statement about how Naaman was regarded by people in general.

» **1 through him the Lord had given victory to Aram** - It is somewhat surprising that the LORD, the God of Israel, is said to have given victory to the army of Syria. But there are other cases in the Old Testament where the LORD is said to be in control of the destinies of other nations (Isa 10:13; Amos 9:7).

- What do you think it means that “the Lord had given victory” to an enemy of God’s chosen people?

» **2 had taken captive a young girl from Israel** - Syria and Israel were often at war. They were apparently at peace during the time that the Naaman incident occurred. The girl who is the key to this story had been captured by the Syrians on one of their previous attacks against Israel.

- What do you think this young girl’s perspective of God was? Why would she remain faithful despite being a kidnapped slave?

» **5 ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing.** - The silver and gold here represents an enormous amount of money. In modern terms the weight of the silver would have been about 340 kilograms (750 pounds) and the gold approximately 68 kilograms (150 pounds). At today’s prices this would approach a million U.S. dollars! While this is a very large amount today, it would have been excessively large in Old Testament times. Naaman brought this money and the clothes as a gift. It shows the lengths to which he was willing to go in order to be rid of his affliction.

» **7 Pick a quarrel with me?** - The basic meaning of the Hebrew verb here is “to meet” or “to encounter.” The form of the verb is causative, which would yield the meaning “he is causing himself to meet me.” The meaning in modern, idiomatic English is probably “he is setting me up.” The king was convinced that his enemy was trying to arrange a situation in which it would be inevitable not to avoid a military confrontation.

- What does this response reveal about the king of Israel’s understanding of God and His character?

» **11 I thought that he would surely come out to me** - This type of expression normally indicates an emphatic statement. By using this form, Naaman shows that he had felt certain that the prophet would come out of his house and perform the healing immediately.

- Do we want God to heal us immediately when we pray, or do we desire a more difficult series of steps first?

» **11 be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry** - In order that he might worship Yahweh more effectively, he asked for some Israelite earth to take home with him—a superstition more understandable in his time than the apparent feeling of some Christians today that God can scarcely be worshiped effectively outside their particular chapel, or his gospel preached by somebody who is not a member of their own denomination.

- How do we share this similar superstition today? Is this helping or hurting our communication with God?

» **18 But may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing... - The house of Rimmon:** This refers to the building in Damascus where the Syrians worshiped the storm god named Hadad, who also bore the name Rimmon. Compare Zech 12:11, which refers to “Hadadrimmon.” **Leaning on my arm:** Here Naaman refers to being forced to bend down because his arm is being held by the king of Syria, who willingly bows down to his god.

» **19 Go in peace** - Go in peace was a common way of saying goodbye in biblical times. Jethro said the same thing to Moses (Exo 4:18), Eli said goodbye to Hannah in this way (1 Sam 1:17), as did Jonathan to David (1 Sam 20:42). By sending him off with this friendly farewell wish, Elisha seems to imply his belief that the LORD would forgive the future actions of Naaman in the temple of Rimmon.

- Naaman admits that he will be involved in pagan worship services in the future. Does God forgive us when we preemptively ask forgiveness for things we already know are wrong and we do them anyway?

## my prayer

1. What am I willing to do in order to be spiritually pure and clean?
2. How am I being superstitious in the places that I pray?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?