

### 3 - God Can Use Me – and lessons we can learn

Do you know that children can be used by God? I'm sure you do. How many of you have been prayed for by a child? Did God answer that prayer? How many here, maybe a child spoke to you and you thought, "Wow, that was really wise." It's happened to me. How many of you have been encouraged by a child? God can use children in miraculous ways and very calm steady ways.

- David, when he killed Goliath was only about 13 years old (1 Sam 17:48)
- Daniel, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego were children. It doesn't say how old they were when taken into captivity, just children. (Daniel 1:17)
- Boy with the loaves and fish. (John 6)
- Josiah became the king of Judah at 8 years old. He was a good king for 70 years. (2 Kings 22:3)
- Jesus was 12 years old when he spoke in the Temple and people were amazed. (Luke 2)
- Samuel was dedicated to God in the Temple as a baby and as a young boy, God spoke to him in an audible voice. (1 Samuel)

So, I don't think I have to talk you into the fact that God used children and still uses children today.

I do want to tell you story of a little girl who was mightily used by God. Not to prove that children can be used by God, but so that we can learn some lessons from her.

#### **II Kings 5** – Tell the story

- Naaman is the head of the army of Syria under king Aram
- Naaman was a good commander even loved by his own men
- Naaman has leprosy.
- Raiders from Syria went to Israel and stole children
- One child, the main character in our story was sold to Naaman to be his wife's servant
- The girl says to her mistress, there is a man of God in Israel that can heal your husband.
- She tells her husband (Naaman)
- He asks the King if it's OK that he goes to Israel to meet the man of God.
- The King (of Aram) sends Naaman with a letter of introduction, money, gold, silver, and clothing (as gifts)
- Naaman goes to the King of Israel
- The King of Israel is freaking out a little because he's thinking that if Naaman isn't healed this could start a war with Syria.
- Elisha hears about Naaman and the situation and calls for him

- Naaman arrives and Elisha doesn't even meet him but sends someone to say, "dip in the Jordan River 7 times.
- Naaman is outraged. What, Elisha couldn't come out himself? I should dip myself in the stinking Jordan? Aren't the rivers of Syria better than the stinking Jordan?
- But his servant talks him into doing what was asked of him. Naaman was humble enough to listen to his servants
- He does what he's told, dips 7 times in the Jordan and.....HE WAS HEALED.
- The girl was right.
- Naaman goes back to Elisha to "pay"
- Elisha doesn't want any money
- Gehazi (an Israelite) wanted money so he followed Naaman and deceived him into giving him the goods
- Elisha finds out and says, "Naaman's leprosy will now cling to you." And that was the end of Gehazi.

When we think of "influencers" in our world, we don't usually think of people like this little girl.

I hate to say this, but when we think of people being used by God, we often think of smart, good looking, charismatic and clever people. Erase all of that, because this girl was none of those things.

Not our little child today. She was a...

- ♥ Young girl
- ♥ Really a nobody
- ♥ A servant girl or a slave
- ♥ We don't know her name or age (she was young)

She experienced trauma (she was stolen from her home and put in a foreign land)

- ♥ A Jewish girl who believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
- ♥ She trusted God and knew He could do anything
- ♥ But she was captured and taken hostage
- ♥ She was sold to the house of Naaman
- ♥ She rose to a high position even at a young age
- ♥ She was very influential (not high-profile or charismatic but influential)

Please note these three points as we go through the story because I will attempt to parallel them with our own lives.

- 1. It was dark for her on the outside, not the inside.**
- 2. She didn't want her enemies to stay in the dark and be punished but to come into the light.**
- 3. She was not afraid to glow in the dark.**

A little bit about Naaman...

1. He was the Captain of the army of the King of Syria
2. He had led his country in a successful rebellion
3. He was a good soldier, liked by his own men
4. He had leprosy
  - a. A terrible, incurable debilitating disease
  - b. Highly contagious
  - c. If sores became evident the person had to wear a bell
  - d. Leprosy is a fatal disease
5. Naaman had leprosy but apparently the sores had not begun to appear

Back to our little girl...

- ♥ She was a slave to the wife of Naaman
- ♥ She did not think, "Good for you Naaman. I'm glad you have leprosy. You took me captive. You took me from my family and I was just a kid and now I'm in this foreign land having to serve your wife. I'm glad you have leprosy. – you made it dark for me so I want it dark for you."

This does not sound so unreal, to think that way, does it? It's very natural to want something bad to happen to people who hurt us. But something "supernatural" was going on.

- ♥ It was dark for her on the outside, not the inside.
- ♥ She didn't want her enemies to stay in the dark and be punished but to come into the light.

- 1. In order to be a light in our dark world, the light must come from inside.**

Our strength cannot come from the outside, from circumstances because circumstances always change. Our strength cannot come from another person because they always change or go away. Our strength must come from the inside; a resolve that only God can give us because everything changes.....except God.

The book by Harriet Beecher Stowe will give us a good example. "Uncle Tom's Cabin." The story goes that when Tom was taken captive by a terrible slave owner he was badly mistreated. Tom was a Christian man. His little niece Eva would read the Bible to him everyday because Tom couldn't read. So he had memorized much of the Scriptures that Eva had read to him. But he was alone now, as a slave to Simon Legree. And his new master would beat him mercilessly. Every day, Tom would speak the Scriptures out to give him strength. Then one day when the evil Simon Legree was beating Tom, he realized that the blows from the whip were no longer falling upon Tom's heart but merely falling upon his skin. That's the day that Simon Legree knew that he had no more real power over Tom. He had become stronger on the inside – his circumstances no long dictated who he was.

This is how God wants us to be – that in our lives, the blows of life would fall merely upon our skin and not upon our hearts.

**2. The Little Girl Did Not Want Revenge or Justice But Only Mercy – she did not want her enemies to stay in the dark and be punished, but rather to come into the light.**

How do you get that way? How do you replace hate with love?

Working at the Corrie ten Boom house has taught me many lessons through this woman's life. After all her hardships in the concentration camp – being in the deepest of pits, Corrie was still able to forgive those who had persecuted her and made her life a living nightmare. She was able to replace hate with love. She was glowing in the darkest of places, a horrible concentration camp. So here are some things I recognize now.

- ♥ You must know God's love, light and God's forgiveness before you can love and forgive your enemies – and glow.
- ♥ You must experience it yourself. Not just head knowledge but heart knowledge.
- ♥ You must realize that you are just a sinner yourself – saved by grace.
- ♥ You must realize that you deserve punishment and justice but instead, because of Christ dying on the cross, you got mercy and freedom and peace and joy.
- ♥ When we come to a real understanding of that; then and only then can we say to our enemies or to those who have done us wrong – God loves you, I love you and He can heal and help you and turn your darkness into light.

The little girl told Naaman's wife, "there is a prophet in my country, his name is Elisha. I know that God will use him to heal Naaman of leprosy.

### 3. She Was Not Afraid What Would Happen to Her if She Glowed in the Dark.

She was just a girl but she knew her God. She knew what He could do. She had most likely had her own experience with God because you can't really "sell" something if you haven't tried it yourself.

How could a sell you a nice refreshing drink and believe in my product if I hadn't tried it first?

She had probably seen what God had done through Elisha.

So what could have happened to her by speaking out – by glowing in the dark?

- ♥ At best – she could have been ignored.
- ♥ At worst – she could have been killed (remember, they worshiped idols and she was just a little servant girl).

But she spoke out anyway, with no regard to what might happen to her. She was thinking of Naaman.

Maybe Naaman thought;

- ♥ Hey, this girl has been traumatized, captured and sold into slavery
- ♥ She does not want to take revenge on me but she wants me to be healed
- ♥ Wow, she's not afraid to speak up!
- ♥ Why not do what she says

So the king sends Naaman to Elisha. The king!! So it went all the way from this little girl to the king.

Imagine our little girl now when her master returns home. He's healed. He's a believer in the God of Israel and now he is an ally. He now glows in the dark.

And who knows how many people became "believers" because of Naaman and his miracle.

She changed her world because

1. It was dark for her on the outside, not the inside.
2. She didn't want her enemies to stay in the dark and be punished but to come into the light.
3. She was not afraid to glow in the dark.

So.....

**1. Shine on the Inside**

- a. Don't let your circumstances guide you
- b. Let the truth of God be your guide
- c. Read the Word of God, that's where you find your guidance
- d. Talk to God, keep developing your relationship with Him – that's what will make you strong.

**2. Forgive and love others. Don't seek revenge but mercy – want the light for them, not darkness and punishment.**

- a. You do that by knowing God's love and forgiveness for you.
- b. Jesus loves you, you should love others
- c. Jesus forgives you, you should forgive others

**3. Don't be afraid to speak the truth and glow in the dark**

- a. What's the worst that could happen?
  - i. Someone doesn't listen
  - ii. Someone thinks less of you
  
- b. What's the best that could happen?
  - i. A person might be healed
  - ii. A person might be saved
  - iii. You might plant a seed

You may just change your world and make it a little brighter.