

# Essentially Free

## Addressing Attitude Bible Study

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favour, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper. Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little maid from the land of Israel, and she waited on Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the maiden from the land of Israel." And the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel."

So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten festal garments. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy." And when the king of Israel read the letter, he rent his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me."

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you rent your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel."

So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the door of Elisha's house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." But Naaman was angry, and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage.

But his servants came near and said to him, "My father, if the prophet had commanded you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather, then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

## 2 Kings 5 vs 1-14 NRSV

This is a story about changed attitude. Naaman was a nice guy - the little slave girl liked him the king liked him. Naaman's attitudes disabled him, not his leprosy.

We all carry disabling attitudes whether we have a physical disability or not. No amount of alterations to our buildings or worship will change our attitudes. We have to address our attitudes individually and as church communities so we can welcome and treasure the gift every person brings in themselves to worship.

This study is designed for you to discuss disabling attitudes with others in an honest and open way. The study ends with a time of prayer and a reminder that we need to constantly check out our attitudes. We won't change over night, like Naaman we need to keep washing.

### **Addressing our attitude of body**

Although Naaman had leprosy his body language was very confident. We all like to think we are accepted and to a degree important. We need to be reminded that in God's eyes we are all equal.

Honesty time

- How do you react when you see someone with a disability?
- Turn away or stare?
- Rush to help or keep your arms folded and your head down?

What would it take to change your body attitude?

### **Addressing our attitude of mind**

Naaman couldn't understand why he was asked to do something so simple. He was too important to wash in a dirty river. His anger was an expression of his frustrated attitude. It is easy to welcome people with disabilities but unless we address our attitude of mind our approach can become patronising and offensive

Honesty time

What really goes through your mind when you see someone with a disability?

- I wonder why?
- They can't possibly take part in leading
- I don't know what to do or say

What would it take to change your attitude of mind?

## Addressing our attitude of spirit

When Naaman eventually washed in the river he was cleansed and he recognised God as Lord. His attitude of spirit changed and as a result his attitude of body and mind were transformed.

We need to come before God to ask for a cleansing of our spirit, so that the attitudes we all carry can be transformed. To do that we first have to confess them to God and each other.

Jean Vanier wrote: 'Love makes us weak and vulnerable because it breaks down the barriers and protective armour we have built around ourselves.' This includes our attitudes.

### Honesty time

- Consider what you will confess to God in order to be cleansed of attitudes that disable your relationship with others
- What could you do to check out your attitude regularly?

No one is pretending that changing attitudes is easy, but it is essential for us if we are to be cleansed to be the people of God. Our physical disabilities are not a barrier to sharing God's love. When God cleanses attitude we can reveal his love through our spirits, minds and bodies.

Spend a few moments in silence preparing to bring your confession to God, and then together pray:

In the community of Christ's Church and in the presence of all God's people we confess that:

we have marred your image in others through our attitude of body

we have marred your image in others through our attitude of mind

we have marred your image in others through our attitude of spirit.

Cleanse us and restore us that we may own our responsibility to serve each other, and acknowledge our need of your presence to transform our limited attitudes so that we and all your children may live in the freedom of your Holy Spirit.

Amen

Turn to your neighbour and pray for each other:

*Name*.....May God forgive you,

Christ befriend you and the

spirit renew and change your life

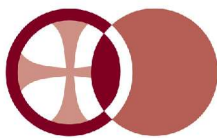
Amen

And conclude your bible study with the following statement.

If you want to you could then end by sharing the peace together as a sign of your commitment to each other and to God of your desire to continue to address attitude.

We believe that God forgives and sets us free, and from this moment we commit ourselves to following where Christ calls, recognising Christ in others and loving sacramentally as Jesus taught without barriers and limits.

Thank you for sharing in this study. If you have comments to offer or want to discuss issues about disability please contact:



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