

**Healthy Significance**  
**Third Sermon in Series of Eight: God's Toolbox For Healthy Living**  
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TEXTS: II Kings 5:1-14 and Mark 1:40-45 The Story of Two Leopards

INTRODUCTION:

I have a cartoon drawing showing the Devil, complete with horns on his head and a pointed tail, lying on the psychiatrist couch. The psychiatrist is sitting, pen and pad in hand making notes as he listens to the red-suited Devil. The Devil says: "Everything was going great, and then, suddenly, it happened. I was touched by an angel."

Poor Devil, his whole significance was changed when he was touched by an angel. And so it was for the man in Mark's Gospel who was suffering from leprosy until he was literally touched by Jesus. O how significant is the touch of Christ. Has that touch reached you? Has it changed your life? Is that touch still bringing change and healthy significance to your existence?

The greatest need at the core of human existence is the need to find meaning in life and to perceive and experience personal significance. Health significance comes from a healthy relationship with God that gives your life significant meaning and purpose.

This is our third sermon in eight on God's Toolbox For Life. The first week was the introduction and the second dealt with personal capabilities to face, learn, and grow through the challenges and experience of every day living. Look once again at the chart found in your bulletin and you'll see that we're talking about Seven Essential Significant Tools needed for healthy Living. The first three have to do with having Three Strong Perceptions. That is, the three strong perceptions or beliefs of:

- Strong Belief In Your Personal Capabilities
- Strong Belief In Your Personal Significance
- Strong Belief In Your Personal Influence

Last week, we came to understand that one's perception and one's beliefs go hand in hand. As one perceives, thinks, believes in the heart, so are they. (Expanded words of Christ). We also shared the 3 B's and 1 A of changing our unhealthy behaviors to healthy behaviors. That is accomplished by: **BRINGING THE BELIEFS BEHIND OUR BEHAVIORS INTO AGREEMENT WITH GOD'S TRUTHS**. Write that down on the pages of your mind and heart; memorize it. It is the key tool for good spiritual, emotional, and relational health. Hear it once again and get ready to say that with me. We've actually changed the 3B's to 4B's + 1 A. Changing unhealthy behavior into healthy behavior involves:

**Bring Beliefs Behind Behavior Into Agreement with God's Truth.**

**B1+ B2 + B3 + B4 + A1 = Good Health**

**Bringing + Beliefs + Behind + Behaviors + Agreement with God's Truth = Good Health**

Say it with me - Bringing Beliefs Behind Behaviors into Agreement with God's Truth equals good health. This is the formula for our Transformation Indeed in 2003.

Let me illustrate using some verses from Romans 8. I believe and feel so condemned, so useless, so unsuccessful. Romans 8:1 "There is now therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Does the first I statement agree with the verse from 8:1? Agreement or Disagreement between my statement about myself and God's truth? Now how do I make them agree? I believe what God's truth says and that belief changes my belief about myself and my behavior. I'm in Christ and not condemned or useless but rather of great value.

Here's another: I'm afraid, I just can't change my ways. God's truth: 8:15 "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption." Bringing belief into agreement here means, I'm a child of God, joint-heirs with Christ. I can overcome my fears. I can change my behavior. Why? Because I'm significant in Christ, I've been touched by him, and I can, by God's Spirit, bring my beliefs into agreement with God's truths and become healthier.

**SIGNIFICANCE: A strong perception of personal significance.**

A strong personal belief of your significance. There are two kinds of significance: Unhealthy and Healthy.

The Old Testament reading from II Kings 5 and the New Testament reading from Mark 1, can help us to identify the difference between Unhealthy and Healthy Significance. Both passages are about individuals who have leprosy: Naaman, in the Old Testament Story and an unnamed leopard in the New Testament Story. We can gain insight into healthy significance by looking at the characters in the two stories.

Let's look at and evaluate the kind of significance of the characters, the clues regarding the health basis of their significance, and the source of their significance. Those sources determine much about their health as do ours. What they believed to make them significant determines the health of their significance. Look at this list of characters from the Naaman story and tell me who among them is healthy and who is unhealthy in terms of significance.

Naaman - Commander of the great conquering Aram Army. Great military genius, highly valued by the King of Aram. But physically ill with leprosy. Does he have healthy or unhealthy significance? (We'll talk about it later.)

King of Aram - Wealthy, powerful, writes letter of influence to the King of Israel on Naaman's behalf. Healthy or unhealthy significance?

The unnamed Israelite maidservant to Naaman's wife. A young girl slave brought from war captive when Aram's armies conquered Israel. She told Naaman's wife about the prophet in Samaria that could heal Naaman. Certainly she isn't significant, she doesn't even have a name and is only a slave girl.

King of Israel - The one Naaman went to for healing caring rich gifts and the letter from the King of Aram. This King of Israel tore his clothes when Naaman showed up asking for healing. The King tore his clothes and asked, "Am I God that I have the power of life and death?" In fear, he believed Naaman had come to trick him and do him in. Healthy or Unhealthy Significance? (Hint: FEAR)

The Prophet Elisha, healer, walked and talked in God's strength. Had insights into the greater human needs of humility. Knew where to find meaning for life and how to live life with purpose. Healthy or Unhealthy?

The servant of Elisha who came out to Naaman with the instructions from the Prophet for Naaman's healing - Go dip seven times in the Jordan. Healthy? Unhealthy?

The servants of Naaman, who reminded him of what was really significant and how truly Simple, not difficult, it is to do the significant. Healthy? or Unhealthy?

So these are the cast of characters but it's amazing, only the servants display the strong perception of personal significance that gave their lives meaning and purpose and enabled them to make positive contributions from their personal belief systems. To help us evaluate the health of these characters and their belief systems, let me share from the work of pioneering psychologist Alfred Adler. Adler found that when human beings feel no sense of belonging or importance, (no healthy significance), they behave in ways that provide them with a false sense of significance.

For example, they might seek to compensate by demanding undue attention, using power unproductively or going after revenge for perceived wrong. They may also give up or engage in self-destructive behavior.

With this in mind, let's briefly recount the story emphasizing the health of the characters significance:

Naaman, has leprosy, goes to Israel's King seeking healing. He goes to the wrong person but to the one with the perceived (false belief) power. He brings with him rich gifts and his military strength. None of that can buy his healing or health. It only evokes fear. He goes to the wrong person for his healing, seeking to impress that one with his significance, unhealthy significance.

What about the two kings? The King of Aram, with power, authority and wealth, sends a letter to the wrong person. He thought King to King - that real significance, that will get the healing accomplished. Didn't happen. Power-over significance is unhealthy significance. And the King of Israel, panics in fear when asked by Naaman's King for healing. Fear, a clear indication that the individual struggles with issues related to unhealthiness.

Enter then the Prophet Elisha who hears that the King has torn his clothes and sends a message to let to the King to have Naaman come to him. Elisha has a healthy belief in what is healthy.  $B1+B2+B3+B4+A1 = \text{Good Health}$ . Elisha knows the healing God effects.

Focus again with me on Naaman. He comes to Elisha's house expecting to be seen by the prophet, but the prophet sends a servant out to tell him to go dip seven times in the Jordan. Naaman is incensed. He thought that the prophet would at least come out and call upon God and do some Abippity, boppity, Boo!'s over the sores and bring healing to his body. And beside said Naaman, if I have to dip in water, we have two rivers back home much cleaner than the Jordan. Naaman is angered and her returns home in a rage. He was more significant than to be treated like this. So did you catch the clues regarding the sources and health of Naaman's significance?

1. It's all about him.
2. In anger and rage - refusing the means of healing - With Self-Destructive Behavior - he returns home.
3. His belief system (perceptions) deny him the ability to find his healing.

And who is it back home that gives Naaman a means of believing and finding healthy significance so that he can be healed? That's right: The Servants. Have you found the pattern yet? It's the servants who are living life with significant meaning and purpose, who live with a healthy belief in their significance. First the servant maid of Naaman's wife knows the right person with the ability to bring healing. It is the prophet's servant of Elisha who knows what is to be done to accomplish the healing. It is that servant that delivers the healing message. And it is the servants of Naaman that tell him, he's been asked to do a simple thing to be healed. They remind him that if it had been difficult, he would have done it. But it's simple. Go and be healed.

Finding the means of healthy significance is a simple thing ( $B+B+B+B+A = \text{good health}$ ). Knowing God and serving God's purposes in life involves bringing beliefs behind behaviors into agreement with God's truths.

Quickly shift gears and move from ancient Israel to the time of Christ. Here the story of another person with leprosy is told. This one possesses healthy significance. Even though he is an outcast because of his disease. Even though he goes through the streets shouting unclean, unclean, stay away. Even though he is not allowed to gather in worship or participate in society or family, and even though he is unnamed, he has healthy significance. How? He knows that he can be healed and he knows the Healer is Christ. He comes to Christ and says, if you choose to, you can heal me. This one believed and did the things that demonstrate his strong perception (belief) of personal significance.

Note the three things he did:

1. He begged for healing health. He gave expression to his emotional desire for health.
2. He knelt - expressing his spiritual understanding and the significant of submitting himself to the higher power of the Healer.
3. He believed in Christ and asked for his healing. He believed and acted on it.

Now note, the two significant things which Christ does:

1. Christ touches the leper. The touch was significant for he showed that he possessed the power to heal and at the same time, gave healthy significance to the one seeking healing. To touch a leper without the power was to endanger the self to getting the disease. The power of touch was both greater than the disease and brought healing. But more than that, it restored the person to humanity, society, and the faith community.
2. Christ told the healed leper to go and show himself to the priest and be restored to society and to go practice his worship.

Christ's touch brings healing and gives us healthy understandings that gives our lives meaning and purpose. Who is the source of your significance? What gives you meaning for living? Who gives you purpose?

You and I are significant because we are children of God, joint heirs with Christ. In that source we find meaning and out of that source we find purposes for living.

Healthy significance comes from a Healthy Relationship with God, believing in the touch of God, and receiving by believing in these truths.

Prayer