in Naaman’s day it was not: this was death sentence for him. The Bible says, “*Though a mighty warrior, [Naaman] suffered from leprosy*.” This disease is no respecter of persons. He was a big man, a powerful man, a wealthy man; but he had leprosy and he bore the social stigma that went with it.

Contrast his situation with the Hebrew servant girl, one of the heroes in this story. She was small and weak, with no status in the Assyrian culture. She was the spoils of war (v. 2), a captive, a servant, a youth, and a girl. But she did not have leprosy. Naaman was rich and powerful but had an incurable disease; she was weak and powerless but had her health.

**2. This nameless servant-girl dared to suggest a cure.** Her status as a nobody notwithstanding, she had the courage to speak truth to power. She saw a need and filled it. She lifted her voice to offer encouragement to her oppressor: “There is a fix for his condition,” she said to Naaman’s wife. “*If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.*” Mrs. Naaman had a chat with her husband, who conferred with the Assyrian king, who arranged for Naaman to make a quick trip to Israel. As Assyria and Israel were sworn enemies, the arrival of Naaman was a political nightmare for Israel’s king. Yet, here is the godless, Assyrian general freshly arrived “*at the entrance of Elisha’s house*” (v. 9).

**3. Fix-it jobs require faith.** This is certainly true whether you are taking the car to the mechanic or your child to the doctor. The object of your faith is the training and skill of the mechanic or the doctor. *You must trust them*. You must have faith that the mechanic knows the difference between a carburetor and a cup holder. You must have faith that the surgeon operating on your child did not squeak through med school on a pass/fail basis.

This business of seeking a cure for a disease is tricky. We will all expire one day, but who can blame us for seeking a cure and thereby extending our lives for as long as possible? In the end, however, no amount of praying, fasting, pleading, crying, or hoping will change the outcome. This is where faith comes in: When the praying is done, we live by faith. Our lives are not our own. Our lives are in God’s hands. Whatever befalls us, God is good. God thinks we’re good. To God be the glory. But at some point, the body is no longer fixable. Fortunately, for Naaman, the news was positive. He could expect a good outcome.

**4. Pride often gets in the way of repairs and healing.** This is true in matters of the spirit as well as the body. How many arguments have you had with someone that escalated out of control because you *just couldn’t let it go?*You would rather be right and lose a friend than pick your battles and save a relationship. You would rather be right than happy.

When Naaman, things go south in a hurry. Elisha will not even meet with Naaman! Barely acknowledging Naaman and the effort he made to travel such a great distance to see him, Elisha sends a message: “*Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean*.” This is totally unbelievable. It’s unacceptable! “*Naaman became angry and went away, saying, ‘I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, 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?’ He turned and went away in a rage*” (vv. 11-12).

Suddenly, Naaman is a nobody. He feels disrespected and dismissed. He feels he is being treated no better than any other leper waiting for a word or a touch from the prophet. Naaman, in his pride, forgets that he is no different than anyone else in their hour of need. He is the beggar, the sinner, the leper, the human, the needy one. In the sight of the prophet and of God, there is nothing about Naaman that distinguishes him from other lepers. Naaman is forced to bow in humility, and in that humiliation, he realizes a truth that is so hard to accept: *he needs help*. He cannot go it alone. He must accept Elisha’s help or go home untreated. He can be humbled and healed, or he can be proud and leprous. He can go big and go home diseased, or he could go small and go home healed and whole.

Naaman’s problem was pride. God does things in God’s way, but Naaman wanted God to do things in *his* way. When God had other plans, Naaman had a royal fit. “*I thought that for me [Elisha] would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy!*” Notice the telling words, *for me*. Naaman wanted special attention. Don’t we all?! We know there are many sheep in God’s pasture, but we believe that somehow, we are special. We must be one of God’s favorites. God will surely “wave his hand” and change our life for the better. Surely, God knows we need a promotion, or a new job, or a better home. God will surely do something to save my marriage, heal my disease, or patch the holes of my broken life.

The good news is that help is available. For Naaman, help came from unnamed servants (the other heroes of this story), who pose an intervention with their master, saying: “*if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, ‘Wash, and be clean’?*” (v. 13). Hearing this, the mighty Naaman humbles himself before the God of Israel, endures Elisha’s snub, walks down to the muddy Jordan, removes his clothes revealing his scabrous and broken body, and submerges himself in the water. Then, he shoots up out of the river, gasps for air, and takes a second plunge repeating this until the seven-fold baptism is complete. When he emerges from the final rinse, he is whole and healed. His faith has made him whole.

**Beyond Repair.** Still, most of us know that sometimes things are beyond repair. The car is totaled and does not run. The laptop soaked with spilled coffee cannot be resurrected. In Naaman’s story, we see a foreshadowing of the New Testament idea of the old nature vs. new nature. In what looks like a rite of baptism, Naaman goes under the water, not once, but seven times and emerges a new man. His nature is changed, for he says, “*Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel*” (v. 15a). Naaman is a new, fresh, healed, wholly different man, body and soul. The “old man” is dead; the “new man” lives. As the apostle Paul puts it: “*So if anyone be in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!*” (2 Cor. 5:17).

This is good news for anyone who feels that their relationship with God is broken or beyond repair. Rather than attempting to repair what is broken and cannot be mended, God issues us a completely new nature, we become a new creation, we are given a fresh start with an entirely new outlook and perspective. This new nature, the apostle Paul explains, is nothing short of the nature of Christ himself.

We live in aworld in which broken dreams, shattered relationships, and unfulfilled expectations exist. Naaman’s story reminds us that in such a world we, too, can be repaired, mended, and healed. Just remember that a little humility goes a long way*.*Better to be obedient without understanding than to be disobedient and trust in our own wisdom. The arms of God’s love can comfort a soul back into wholeness! The balm of Christ’s forgiveness can heal broken hearts! The Spirit of justice, restoration, and restitution can reset the human condition! On those days when you feel wounded, scarred, broken, and falling apart, remember that your repairability index is high. Healing is what Jesus is all about, and with him, repairs are guaranteed. As the gospel song puts it: *He’s the healer of broken hearts, he’ll mend your shattered dreams. He’ll pick up all the threads of your broken life and weave them together again. To your soul, He’ll bring peace and joy. A friend in need He’ll be. The healer of broken hearts is Jesus of Galilee.*

Prayer: O Great Physician, I come before you today in need of your healing hand. In you all things are possible. Hold my heart within yours, and renew my mind, body, and soul. I am lost, but I come to you for grace. Holy Spirit, drive away from me all forms of sickness and disease. Restore strength to my body and joy to my spirit, so that in my renewed health, I may bless and serve you, now and forevermore. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Sources:**

* Stone, Maddie. “Why France’s new tech ‘Repairability Index’ is a big deal.” *Wired*, wired.com, February 20, 2021. Retrieved December 1, 2021.
* To see examples of actual repairability scores, see: “Indice de réparabilité Smartphone.” <https://www.indicereparabilite.fr/appareils/smartphone>.

**The Repairability Index**

Sunday, July 3, 2022  2 Kings 5:1-1[5a](https://biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+5%3a1-14&language=en&version=NIV)

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

We all know the proverb: If it’s not broken, don’t fix it. We say that, because we know that if something really is broken, it can be difficult to get it fixed. Usually when something goes on the fritz, we know what to do. If the car breaks down, we take it to our favorite mechanic. A bicycle goes to the bicycle shop. When the dryer stops drying, we call the repairman. A malfunctioning smartphone or computer gets handed to the nearest teenager to fix.

Unfortunately, things break; more often than they used to, it seems. Nothing is built to last anymore. Which is intentional. Manufacturers design products with a limited lifespan, so when they break, you will buy a new one. It’s a strategy called “planned obsolescence.” It’s all about the bottom line: the manufacturer will make more money if we buy a new item instead of repairing an old one.

To break this expensive cycle, the nation of France now requires makers of certain electronic devices (i.e., smartphones, laptops) to tell consumers how repairable their products are. Manufacturers must give their products a score on the ‘repairability index’ based on a range of criteria, including the ease of taking the product apart and the availability of spare parts and technical documents. The repairability index represents an effort to combat planned obsolescence and transition to a more circular economy where waste is minimized. Well, hallelujah! France can now boast, *Liberté, Egalité, Reparabilité*!

But what about human beings? What is our repairability index?The medical profession clearly believes that the human body can be repaired and restored to normal function. We have medications and treatment which return the body to health. There are artificial limbs which restore the body to full function. The human body has a strong repairability index.

The case of the Assyrian commander Naaman is an interesting one, because here is a guy who gets a twofer: both his body and his soul are healed! As we review Naaman’s case, we should note four important facts. **1. Naaman was sick.** “*He suffered from leprosy*” (v. 1). This affliction (known today as Hansen’s disease) was as feared and dreaded then as perhaps cancer is today. It was a diagnosis no one wanted. We can imagine Naaman seeing his doctor, and praying to himself, “Don’t let it be leprosy! Don’t let it be leprosy.”

Naaman was right to be worried. Leprosy is a chronic, infectious bacterial disease which causes skin lesions and nerve damage. Over time the victim wastes away: hair falls out, joints decay, and body parts rot and fall off. Leprosy is curable with today’s medicine, but