

Servants Behind The Scenes

3 qualities that make ordinary people extraordinary.

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Hot, tired, and ill with leprosy, Naaman, the world-renowned general, had traveled a long distance to see the prophet Elisha. Now he was furious.

"I thought that he would surely come out to me," he fumed, **"and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy"** ([2 Kings 5:11](#)). Instead, Elisha had told him to bathe in the muddy Jordan River. **"Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel?"** ([2 Kings 5:12](#)).

Naaman turned and stormed off in a rage. Then his servants pleaded with him. **"My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?"** ([2 Kings 5:13](#)).

Reluctantly, skeptically, the great Naaman removed his weapons and medals, laid his elegant robes aside, and waded into the water. He dipped below the muddy surface once, twice, six times, then the miracle occurred. As he rose to the surface the seventh time, he saw his skin restored to be like a young child's. The mighty general, who once worshiped the pagan gods of his native Aram, bowed to humbly confess, **"Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel"** ([2 Kings 5:15](#)).

The story of Naaman's cleansing in [2 Kings 5](#) relates one of the most dramatic conversion stories in the Old Testament. The prophet Elisha usually receives credit as the hero of this perennial Sunday school favorite. But how did Naaman hear about Elisha in the first place? Who convinced him to travel to Israel in search of a cure for his leprosy? Hidden in the background of this and many other great testimonies we find an anonymous servant of God who first planted the seeds of faith, who faithfully watered them, and who patiently waited for them to bear fruit. It's true of my own testimony; it's probably true of yours. And as we seek to serve Him in spreading the gospel, God probably won't ask us to play the role of Elisha, but the role of the anonymous servant.

In Naaman's dramatic story, we almost lose that faithful servant behind the scenes. The Bible doesn't even tell us her name. It only says that **"bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, 'If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy'"** ([2 Kings 5:2-3](#)).

Why did God choose to use an anonymous slave girl? What unseen qualities did she possess?

Spiritual Boldness

The first quality we observe in her is spiritual boldness. She was a slave, a nobody, and her master was **"commander of the army of the king of Aram . . . a great man . . . and highly regarded . . . a valiant soldier"** ([2 Kings 5:1](#)). She occupied the lowest rung on the social ladder and might have feared that important people like Naaman and his wife would laugh at the mumblings of a simple slave girl. But she didn't allow fear to hold her back. Her willingness to testify transcended her social class and circumstances: **"She said to her mistress . . ."**

In her place, I'm not sure I would possess the courage to speak up. And that makes me wonder if I have missed opportunities to be used by God because of a **"nobody"** mentality, because I assumed that someone was too busy or too important to listen to me.

Let me share with you a brief testimony that Evangelist J.B. Bentley once shared with me while we were in South Africa together, that I think would help me to bring some modern day light to this subject of a servant behind the scene. "One of the people who helped lead me to Christ possessed this quality of spiritual boldness. He wasn't a famous preacher or TV evangelist. Frank was my sister's 16-year-old boyfriend. Although my family regularly attended church, we belonged to a denomination that stressed works rather than grace, religious ritual rather than a relationship with Christ. We knew nothing about being born again, but hoped we could somehow perform enough good works to get into heaven when we died.

While most young suitors might try to impress their sweetheart's parents, or perhaps try to avoid them altogether, Frank witnessed to my parents with quiet, spiritual boldness. The fact that he was a gangly teenager and my mother was a respected city official didn't deter him. Nor did the fact that my dad, six-feet-three inches tall and built like a pro-football player, had already frightened away many of his daughter's previous suitors.

"You need Jesus in your life," Frank informed them. "Your good works mean nothing to God." I overheard many debates between my parents and Frank, and they kicked him out of our house a few times, too. But he continued to witness, to answer questions, and to pray."

Perhaps God uses **"nobodies"** like servant girls and 16-year-old boys because they understand the source of their strength. **"Who gave man his mouth? . . . Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say"** ([Exodus 4:11-12](#)). The Lord made that promise to Moses, an anonymous shepherd in Midian. God faithfully provides the words once we determine to open our mouths in spiritual boldness.

No Self-pity

Secondly, God could use this humble slave girl because she refused to become entangled in self-pity. Few of us have suffered what she did: captured by enemy soldiers, possibly raped, exiled to a foreign country, forever separated from her family, consigned

to a lifetime of slavery. She had good reason to indulge in self-pity, even hatred, for she had lost everything because of Naaman.

If forced to endure all of this, I would probably consider it justice if the man responsible died of leprosy. But the slave girl didn't share that attitude. In an astounding demonstration of compassion and forgiveness, she offered her dying enemy a chance to live: **"If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria!"**

I wonder how many opportunities to be used by God I've missed because self-pity and unforgiveness held me in their power? Like a prison cell, self-pity holds us captive, barring the door to forgiveness. We can't indulge in self-pity and forgive those who've hurt us at the same time. And God can't use us unless we forgive.

We marvel at the stories of people like Corrie ten Boom, who forgave her former Nazi jailers, or Elisabeth Elliott, who served as a missionary to the Indians who murdered her husband. But Jesus told us to **"love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven"** ([Matthew 5:44](#)). God could use the little slave girl—and Corrie, as well as Elisabeth,—because that's exactly what they did.

Unwavering Faith

Finally, God could use this anonymous servant because of her unwavering faith. When the enemy took her captive, her circumstances must have severely tested her faith. "Why did God allow this to happen to me?" she might have asked. "Why doesn't He honor my faith and rescue me from slavery?"

But in spite of her circumstances, in spite of the fact that God didn't answer her own prayers, the servant girl continued to believe in the power of God. Notice she didn't say "maybe" or the prophet "might" heal Naaman. She never doubted that Elisha could do it: **"He would cure him of his leprosy."**

She obviously convinced Naaman, too, because he enlisted the help of two kings and traveled many miles to find Elisha, simply on the word of her testimony. Granted, Naaman desperately wanted to live. But my neighbors, co-workers, and unsaved family members are desperate for life, too. When I share my faith in Christ with them, do I sound as convincing as this young girl?

Naaman not only received healing, he became a believer. **"[I] will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the LORD,"** he confessed ([2 Kings 5:17](#)).

I doubt if the slave girl's faith developed from years of theological study or even from faithful Sunday school attendance. Most likely it grew from experience, from hearing and seeing what God had done through His prophet Elisha.

Jesus' disciples never attended seminary or studied textbooks on witnessing. They simply told about their experience. **"The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us,"** John testified. **"We have seen his glory"** ([John 1:14](#)).

Despite his rustic origins, Peter preached before huge crowds in Jerusalem. He boldly testified of the Christ he knew **"and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved"** ([Acts 2:47](#)). When the religious leaders warned him to stop, Peter replied, **"We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard"** ([Acts 4:20](#)). The disciples had faith that withstood testing and persecution.

I love the story that Evangelist Reane Touroeuoso shared with me when he and I were in Romania. He once lived in Chicago, Illinois. "While home from college one summer, I went to church with a friend to hear a young guest speaker named Mikhail. He had immigrated to America from communist Eastern Europe and lived in Chicago in a world of drugs and violence. A hardened heroin addict, he'd spent time in jail until he met Jesus through the ministry of Teen Challenge. Mikhail knew no theology—he barely knew English. He couldn't distinguish the Old Testament from the New, but Mikhail knew Jesus. He'd experienced Christ's power in his life delivering him from heroin addiction, and he preached the most eloquent testimony of faith I'd ever heard. He admitted that he faced temptation and persecution whenever he returned to his old neighborhood and his former friends, but he believed that such testing would strengthen and purify his faith. When Mikhail finished telling his powerful story, I went forward to give my life to Christ."

Like the servant girl and Mikhail, I don't need any special training in order to testify to my neighbor. But I do need to have a vital faith in Christ and in His power to change lives. **"I tell you the truth,"** Jesus said, **"if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you"** ([Matthew 17:20–21](#)).

God's Anonymous Servants

This simple, unknown slave girl, alone and far from home, served her master day after day, performing ordinary, menial tasks. But when God asked her to play a small part in His unfolding drama, He found her prepared. We don't know if her life changed or not. The Bible doesn't tell us whether Naaman showed his gratitude by granting her freedom. But we do know that her simple testimony changed Naaman's life forever.

Sometimes God uses powerful ministers or prophets like Elisha to preach to millions. But for every sinner who comes to Christ, God also uses anonymous servants who quietly work behind the scenes. If I'm not one of them, maybe it's because I lack spiritual boldness when I'm outside my comfort zone. Do I really believe God can speak through me to a boss or to someone famous or powerful?

Perhaps God can't use me because I wallow in self-pity when I should let forgiveness flow. Would I willingly witness to someone who has hurt me or cheated me or slandered me?

Maybe I'm not effective because my faith wavers whenever God tests it. When I'm disappointed in the way God answers my prayers do I lose faith in His power to transform someone else's life?

If so, I need to learn some lessons from a humble slave girl. Then as I serve my Master each day, unnoticed and anonymous, I won't rage against the circumstances that hold me captive. Instead, I will use those circumstances as opportunities to exercise spiritual boldness, to offer forgiveness, and to increase my faith. Armed with these, even a humble slave girl can lead the lost to Christ. Even a nobody like me can move mountains of unbelief.