

Series: Running on a Full Tank
Title: A Tank Full of Possibilities
Text: 2 Kings 5:1-3

Good morning everyone. My name is Chris Farmer. I thank God that I can serve as one of your pastors. We are thrilled that you have chosen to come and worship with us today. God is in this place. He is here to reveal His presence so that we can live the life God created us to live. As we express our love for God and others, we will encounter the Risen Christ who helps us grow to be like Him and to serve the world.

We have been learning to run on a full tank, filled with purpose and perseverance. Today, we hope to learn that through the Holy Spirit, we can run the race of life on a tank full of possibility. Nothing and no one is insignificant in the hands of the Almighty God. In fact, as we read the Bible we see that the Creator of Heaven and Earth, delights in taking what many would think as insignificant, small, limited, or weak to show the breadth and depth of his power. He created human beings out of dirt. He birthed a nation more numerous than the stars from a mature wanderer named Abraham. He saved a Hebrew boy from the Nile River to deliver his people from Egyptian slavery. A shepherd boy defeats an armed Philistine giant with only a slingshot and a rock. Gideon defeats thousands of Midianites with only 300 Hebrew soldiers. God chose a virgin teenage girl to bear his Son. Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed and then as yeast working in a batch of dough. He fed thousands with a few fish and loaves of bread. He uses a servant

girl in the house of Naaman to make a big difference. Friends, God chooses the small, the insignificant to make a huge impact. Her part in the Bible is so small that the writer does not mention her name. Let's turn to 2 Kings 5.

“Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

Now 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.”

This little girl was a mere slave owned by a very powerful and respectful commander of the army. He was an outstanding general, a mighty warrior, and a loyal companion. I suspect one could find his name listed in the “Who's Who of Syria.” However, he had a major problem. He was a leper. We would think that for him to rise to such power and influence, he must have been unmatched in skill and knowledge.

It seems to me that this young Hebrew slave girl must have been anxious about leaving her home in Samaria and forced to live as a slave in a strange land and home. However, I believe that she learned to make the best of a difficult situation. She found that her mistress was not that bad after all because she treated her fairly.

It is hard to imagine though what her master must have been like. Leprosy can have a strange affect upon people. People would not want to be near him. Even

though he was a five-star general, many rejected him. Perhaps, he felt most confident when he went to war, where it didn't matter how you looked or smelled. However, when he was at home, I believe he kept to himself. His disfiguring skin sores must have been vulnerable to infection. The nerve damage in his hands, feet, and limbs made him vulnerable to burns, weakness, and unnecessary cuts, abrasions, and bruises. Many worried about his health and took care of him.

This young Hebrew servant girl also wanted to help him, but somehow she had a difficult time seeing how she could make a difference in his life. She felt helpless. Then, she had this idea. It didn't seem like much, but it was all she had. She knew of a prophet by the name of Elisha, whom she believed could help him. He was a Spirit-filled man of God, who had the gift of healing. So she went to Naaman's wife and told her about this man of God. She could have remained silent. She could have kept her faith and vision of what could be. Instead, her "insignificant thought" became the seed of a "significant" miracle. Why?

She acted on her small faith believing that a mountain would move. Many times, we dismiss what we can do because we think we are too small, too insignificant to make a difference. We think like this girl...

I am only a slave girl...I don't count because of my status in my community. I am an outsider, a Jew living in Samaria...I am a newcomer...No one knows me...I am not a member of the church. I am young, why would anyone in authority listen to me...I am a female in a male dominated society.

By the standards of her day, she had nothing going for her, no power, no prestige, no position, and no possessions. All that she had was an influential, contagious faith and that was more than enough in the eyes of God. God told Paul, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”* (2 Cor. 12:9)

She acted as though what little she could do...could do much. Naaman had access to the best medical care of his day. He tried all the best treatment his money and prestige could buy. But nothing worked. In the midst of all this “expert” medical help, what this servant girl could offer must have seemed small to her. After all, she couldn’t cure Naaman. She could give him hope. All she could do was make a referral immersed in faith. She refused to allow what seemed insignificant to stop her. Instead of being discouraged by what she couldn’t do, she did what she could do.

Edward Everett Hale, former Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, while speaking of Americans eloquently captured the essence of every believer’s duty: “I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. What I can do, that I ought to do. And what I ought to do, by the grace of God, I shall do.”

She acted because she knew that the worthwhile no matter how small requires risk. This slave girl took a huge risk when she expressed her faith that God would heal Naaman through Elisha. If this general had gone to this Hebrew prophet and returned with the same affliction, he would have certainly punished her. In fact,

when he received permission from his king to leave Syria for Samaria, the stakes went up not only for this slave girl, but also for all of Israel. When Israel's king found out that Naaman was in town to be healed through the prophet, he became worried and tore his clothes in fear. He believed that the Syrian king and his general were setting Israel up for failure by expecting too much. They would then have a reason for war. But the prophet heard about Naaman's request, gave him a prescription for his complete healing. Even though it sounded strange, even weird, he went ahead and accepted his recommendations to bath in the Jordan River seven times. He obeyed. When he came out of the Jordan River, he looked like he had just received the world's finest spa treatment. He was so grateful for God's healing, that he converted on the spot. He reached into his suitcase to give Elisha a hand full of new hundred dollar bills. Elisha refused saying that He was God's prophet not a dermatologist. He refused to take a cent. God's healing power is not for sale. One small Hebrew slave girl's risky idea made an eternal difference.

If she were among us today, she would encourage us to embrace possibility thinking, where with God all things are possible. She would say that if you sense **God calling you to make a big difference be confident.** Naaman's wife believed the young Hebrew slave because she had confidence in her idea. We have a great, almighty God; there is nothing he can't do, so live as if you really believe it.

If God is calling you to make a big difference, be credible. This Hebrew slave would not have had the confidence to speak, unless her service to Naaman and

his wife was pleasing to them. People pay more attention to how we live than what we say. Remember that the quality of our walk determines the credibility of our talk.

If God is calling you to make a big difference make connections with people's needs. She learned that no matter how powerful, how rich, how influential the person, they have real needs just like anyone else. Everyone needs help and hope. If anyone you know is running low on faith, then give him or her some of yours.

If God is calling you to make a big difference remember that little is much when God is in it. Only God knows how great of an impact one small, seemingly insignificant act can do to change a person's life.

Truly one small act can make a big difference. The other day I stood at the cashier desk purchasing a few boxes of cereal. The cashier said that the total was \$ 7.99. I gave her \$ 8.00. After the cash register opened, she gave me one penny and said, "I guess you know how much you get back. It's not much." I said, "Those pennies though add up." She said, "Yes, they do. I save my pennies and the last time I counted, I had over \$ 40.00 worth."

Pennies are a dime a dozen (to coin a phrase). Without much effort, one could find a penny on the floor or in a parking lot. We may even pass one without picking it up. An article in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, however, relates the power of pennies when they join forces: A one cent per case increase of Coca-Cola would bring the company \$45 million a year. A one cent-per-gallon increase in the price of jet fuel increases Delta Airline's company costs by \$25 million a year. A one-cent

increase in the hourly wage for all the employees of Home Depot amounts to \$6.5 million a year. Truly, something small can make a big difference. If Krispy Kreme increased the cost of each donut by one penny, the company would increase profits by \$27 million.

Who knows what God will do with our faith if we are only willing to share unselfishly it with others? There are so many Naamans living in our world today. They are our neighbors, our colleagues, our classmates, our teachers, our friends. Some hurt, some pain, a memory from their past, or a lingering illness, cripple them...and they too need someone who will reach out and touch them, who will love them, who will see their pain and tell them where they can find help. In addition, like the slave girl in our Lesson, we as the church of Jesus Christ are called to be the ones who touch others, love others, see their pain, and tell them about Jesus Christ.

Almighty God, give us a deeper understanding that no one is too small or too young or too old or too inexperienced to make a big difference for You. Give us courage to say and do the small things that can influence people lives and favor us with all kinds of people whose lives can be changed by your big love through us.

Amen. 1609

