Humans experience the need for healing in so many ways. We may experience serious illness or other types of personal loss. We may experience them alone or corporately as a couple or a family, as a nation, as a community, as a city, or as a church. As many ways to experience loss and the need for healing exist as ways to be human, in both the individual as well as the collective sense. The selections in this chapter address the need for healing and the quest for restoration after trauma. These three listings are but a few of the passages we could explore from the Bible, but they are some of my favorites.

Not Too Proud to Heal

2 Kings 5:1-16

This passage is as fraught with drama and intrigue as any work by William Shakespeare, William Faulkner, or any television drama. Read the passage once to get a sense of the event
depicted, then imagine with me that the events are taking place in the twenty-first century.

Let’s say it’s the year 2005, and Donald Rumsfeld has contracted an unbelievably bad case of eczema that no doctor can cure. His wife tells him that their housekeeper mentioned that he could be healed by the woman who lives beside a chapel in Chimayo, New Mexico, a tiny town in the middle of the desert. In desperation, Rumsfeld goes to New Mexico for this healing.

Inexplicably, instead of going to see the healer the housekeeper told him to see, he asks President Bush to write a letter to New Mexico’s governor (who just happens to be a Democrat), Bill Richardson. The letter tells Richardson to heal Rumsfeld.

When he receives the letter, Richardson goes on a tirade about how the President of the United States is trying to make him look like a fool so he’ll lose his office. Somehow the woman in Chimayo is aware of what is going on and sends word for Rumsfeld to come to her.

Rumsfeld arrives at the healer’s doorstep in the middle of the New Mexican desert in a caravan of shiny black cars carrying bars of gold from the Federal Reserve and bags of clothing from Neiman Marcus. Just as he reaches the door of her house, a barefooted child runs outside and says her mother is busy but Rumsfeld should bathe in the Rio Grande and be healed.

I think Rumsfeld would react to the healer’s nonchalance about the same way Naaman reacted to Elisha’s message. Rumsfeld knows who he is; he knows his station in life. How much more important and successful is Donald Rumsfeld than a poor woman in a desolate town in New Mexico? How much more important is Naaman than Elisha? And Elisha cannot be bothered to not show up and give Naaman an elaborate magic show of healing?

When Naaman reacts badly to Elisha’s messenger, it is his servants who know how to talk to him, stressing Naaman’s ability to perform massively complicated tasks and persuading
him that this simple task Elisha gives him is all the more manageable. The servants know how to draw Naaman’s attention away from his success and stature and help him focus on his desire to be healed. The servants—who are not even named in this story—ensure Naaman’s healing.

Naaman goes to the Jordan—a river that is just a creek in comparison to the magnificent rivers of Naaman’s homeland—and he bathes in the water seven times, just as instructed. And he emerges with skin like a child, made new, healed.

No matter our station in life, we must humble ourselves and open our hearts in order to receive healing. Some of us do not stumble on our pride the way Naaman does. Sometimes we are the ones in need of healing, and sometimes we are the servants called to speak a guiding word. Neither of these roles is easy.

Listening to others when we’ve gotten lost in our own egos—lost in how important we are or even how inferior we may feel—often proves difficult. If we are open to being healed, however, we may hear the encouragement of others to move forward in faith and humility.

If we find ourselves relating to the servant’s position more, we see that speaking up without worldly authority, class status, or name to impart credibility may prove difficult. The servant speaks through faith and care for Naaman. Allowing words to come from the heart of God’s hope and healing can be daunting. Feelings of inferiority often block the flow of wisdom and healing God wants to offer the world through us.

Though the servants act as key agents in this story, I do not want to gloss over the fact that slavery—various forms of indentured servitude and human trafficking—remains a very real problem in the world today. We find no grace in an ideology that allows slavery, supports the belief that some people do not get names, or asserts that some bodies are worth more than others. God offers salvation from oppression for both the
oppressed and the oppressor. Through God’s guidance, we can free ourselves from the darkness that binds us and prevents us from seeing others as equal, loved children of God. This story belongs as much to Naaman’s wife’s servant as to Naaman. When God gives her a word to say, she knows to whom she belongs: to God, not to Naaman.

When I ground myself in my God-given identity—a beloved child of God—and not in my station in life, I too can speak up. I can say the words of the unnamed slave girl. I can take the hand of a friend in distress and say, “Look, there might be another way.” The slave girl did not think of herself as a slave. As God’s servant, she spoke out of conviction not enslavement. We can learn from her bold actions.

At first, Namaan was too proud to see this offer of healing and restoration, but he was able to put his ego aside and receive the help he needed. We can do this as well.

Read the passage again, once or twice more.

**Reflection Questions**

1. When have you needed healing in body or spirit? What was your affliction? How were you similar to Naaman in your hope to be healed? How were you different?

2. Who are the nameless people in your life, and how does your life intersect with theirs? In what aspects of life are you nameless?

3. Where have you seen a story like Naaman’s play out in life, literature, or art? What observations can you make about power, prophesy, class, status, and faith?

4. Why does God heal Naaman, a warrior from a foreign land? What does this act say about God’s view of foreigners?


**Writing Exercises**

1. Rewrite the 1 Kings passage from the perspective of the servant. Give her a name and tell her story.

2. Rewrite the passage from the perspective of Naaman’s wife. What is your investment in seeing him healed? How do you feel when he comes home and tells you he is now worshiping a foreign God?

3. Write about the healing and restoration you have experienced in your own life.

4. Write a letter to the Aramean king from the perspective of the King of Israel. Does the King of Israel really believe in his own prophet’s healing power? What does this mean to the King of Israel’s political power?

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**Restoration Promised**

**Isaiah 66:10-12**

In the scripture reading, Isaiah depicts a glorious future of Israel redeemed, purified, and brought back to glory after devastation. Restoration, though, presupposes destruction. Destruction means living through pain and loss and possibly guilt and shame as well. I try to avoid these feelings and experiences. I learned from an early age to keep the exterior of my life looking good, and I suffered greatly when I was unable to do so. I learned to ignore the pain that I was in and the pain other people experienced—from personal slights to larger societal problems.

Being able to carry on during a hard time with head held high is a good trait. Knowing that many of life’s problems cannot be “fixed” but must be endured is also good. But building