

Sermon-Based Small Group Preparation

For the week of October 30, 2011

“Make It All About Success”

Sermon Series: *How to Wreck Your Life* (week 3 of 5)

Mark 8:34-36

» Please look over these questions *before* your Small Group meeting «

Getting Started

For the past few weeks, we’ve been looking at the sin of idolatry. If you remember, an idol is anything that is more important to you than God. Last week, we looked at the idolatry of money. Today, we want to look at the idolatry of success through the story of Naaman. It has been said that more than other idols, success makes us think that we are our own god, our own savior. In other words, we think that we’re successful, blessed by God, saved by God, etc., because of what we have done, not because of what God has done.

- 1) Who are some people we would all agree are successful?
- 2) What is so attractive or alluring about success?
- 3) How does personal success and achievement lead to a sense that we ourselves are equal to God?

Into the Bible

If you worship the idol of success because of an obsession with personal achievement, your job title is your identity. This idol will tell you that if you are not moving up, you are in decline. The addiction to achievement takes more from you than it gives to you. Jesus gives us a serious warning from the sermon text about this:

Read Mark 8:34-36

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?” (NIV)

Read 2 Kings 5:1-5

¹ 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. ² Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman’s wife. ³ She said to her mistress, “If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.” ⁴ Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. ⁵ “By all means, go,” the king of Aram replied. “I will send a letter to the king of Israel.” So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. (NIV)

- 4) What do you notice about how the author describes Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1?
- 5) No matter how successful someone may be, there are certain things that are outside our control. How does that make you feel?
- 6) Naaman expected to get his cure through letters of high recommendation from one king to another king and through offering money. What can we learn from this in regards to Naaman’s trust in his success?

Read 2 Kings 5:14-16

¹⁴ So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy. ¹⁵ Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.” ¹⁶ The prophet answered, “As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.” And even though Naaman urged him, he refused. (NIV)

- 7) What is significant about the prophet Elisha’s refusal to take a gift from Naaman after his healing?

8) How is the God of Israel different from the god Naaman sought?

Digging Deeper

Jesus has several things to say to those of us struggling with the idol of success:

- Remember that your worth is in no way based on your achievements.
- Be faithful with what you've been given.
- Seek first the Kingdom of God. Don't try to build your own kingdom.

The key to success is Jesus! Receive God's love for you just as you are. Claim your identity in Christ, and be faithful to Him with what He has given you. Then you can be confident that God will use your life to make the world more like He wants it to be.

9) What specific steps can be taken to break the heart's fixation on doing "some great things"?

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

Sermon Notes

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