

## Naaman 2 Kings ch 5;1-5a

The Bible has many accounts of healing. This reading from Kings is just a snippet so it is worth reading on further to hear the whole story.

In this part we have a slave girl who sees the suffering of her master from the horrid disease of leprosy. She was from Israel and had a strong faith, believing God's prophet, Elisha could heal her master.

Speaking out was a huge risk. She was a 'belonging' a possession of her master, a slave with no rights. Yet her confidence in her God and Elisha gave her the courage to suggest Naaman seeks out Elisha.

Now lets think about Naaman. This disease , as it progressed would probably mean he would be relieved of his command of the army and sent away , isolated from his community and family possibly with other lepers. Perhaps this knowledge made him listen to the slave girl. He may have been desperate for a cure, desperate enough to try anything. God was with the slave girl and through her and Elisha God healed Naaman. What's more, Naaman now knew the power of this Israelite God and acknowledged him and worshipped him.

This account made me think of 'belonging' not in the sense of possession but in the way Naaman needed to be clean of his disease so he could continue to belong

in his job ,in his family and in his community.

What makes us feel we 'belong' in our community, in our neighbourhood, at work or school?

Familiarity, relationships, safety, friends, people with the same values, a reason to be there, a purpose?  
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Our young people have started a new school year, college or university. How do you get to 'belong'? Change is difficult.

I wonder if belonging is about 'who' rather than 'what'.

Who we know, who we meet, who we like, who shares our interests. ?

Many of you will know I like walking, line dancing, zumba, seaside and swimming. I feel I belong when I do these activities with people who also enjoy them. So does this apply to church?

What happens if we feel we do not belong? Perhaps we are on the fringes, side lines and not sure we fit in? How do people who come to our church feel they belong. ?

When we read the New Testament accounts of Jesus it is very often about him being with and touching people on the fringes of society. Jesus called to Matthew saying he was

coming to Matthew's house to share his meal.  
Unheard of to eat with the hated tax collectors!

I need to worship God with a church family. Being a Christian is a 7 day a week, 24 hour a day commitment so I need the support and encouragement of other Christians. I need to belong to and be part of God's family.

I have come to see 'belonging' is to do with relationships, being with people who care about each other. Relationships have to be nurtured. My Christian faith means I am in a relationship with God. This has to be nurtured. He cares about me and you. My faith journey and my relationship with God is nurtured through Bible study, prayer and discipleship and knowing I belong to a Christian community – our church family.

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