

Aim of lesson

To show that God is concerned with the everyday problems of ordinary people.

Bible background

2 Kings 4.

Outline of lesson

The four miracles

The four miracles in this lesson show Elisha's concern for the ordinary people around him. This in turn shows us God's concern. You may like to divide the class into two or four groups, and give to each one of the miracles to look at. The workbook can be used here. The grid of pictures includes four pictures related to each miracle. The different groups or members of the class could read together 'their miracle' and decide which pictures tell the story. They can then retell this to the class using the pictures. Alternatively, the whole class can read together each miracle in turn and decide which pictures tell the story.

The miracles and the pictures are as follows:

2 Kings 4:1:7	The oil for the widow in debt.	Pictures 3A, 3C, 2B, 1C.
2 Kings 4:8-37	The Shunammite's son restored to life.	Pictures 4A, 2C, 2D, 4B
2 Kings 4:38-41	The poisoned stew.	Pictures 4D, 1A, 3B, 3D.
2 Kings 4:42-44	The feeding of a hundred people.	Pictures 1D, 2A, 1B, 4C.

The widow's oil

The lessons that could come out in discussing this event include an appreciation of poverty in the time of Elisha. The widow's two sons could be sold to pay a debt which a number of jars of oil could not only pay off, but allow sufficient money over for her and her sons to survive. Human life must have been cheap indeed. However, it was not of little value to God, as his miracle shows. The method of the miracle, using so many borrowed jars, would mean that many people would hear of what had happened. Many people would learn of God's power and of God's concern for those whom others considered to be of no value.

The Shunammite's son

This is the longest section of the lesson, and if you feels that looking at four miracles in one lesson is too much for the class, this is probably the best one to concentrate on. It begins with an act of kindness. The woman was rich and used some of her wealth to provide comfort for Elisha. This was rewarded by God. Within a year the woman had a son. God's lesson to us is that no act of kindness on our part goes unnoticed by him. When the boy died, the woman did not tell her husband or accept help from Gehazi, Elisha's servant. She stayed with Elisha. Her words to her husband in v23 imply faith that Elisha would raise her son to life. Perhaps she had heard of Elijah doing just that, and knew that Elisha had taken on his work and had the same power. These two incidents of boys raised from the dead are almost the only instances of resurrection in the Old Testament.

If you decide to spend more time on this, it is worth looking also at 2 Kings 8:1-6 to see a later chapter in the life of this woman and her family.

The poisoned stew

This miracle also shows the concern God has for the ordinary incidents in our lives. For people who were experiencing famine (v38) to lose a large pot of food would be a disaster. The fact that one of the prophets collects food that is growing wild in the field shows again the level of poverty of the people around Elisha.

The feeding of the hundred

This miracle must have been all the more wonderful in a time of famine. The present of twenty loaves was remarkable in itself. This miracle more than the others reminds us of the miracles of the Lord Jesus. The class can note in the workbook which miracles of the Lord Jesus they are reminded of in this chapter.

Digging deeper

Raised from the dead

In the Bible we are told of eight resurrections. This section reminds the students of them, and points out that Jesus' resurrection was different in that he was to die no more.

Relevance to our lives

The last section in the workbook can be used to draw together ideas from the class about the issues that these miracles show God is concerned about. He is concerned about poverty and hardship, hunger and need. He is concerned about ordinary people. None of these situations would have rated a headline if there were a newspaper of the day, yet God intervened with his power. He considers unimportant people important.

The class could think during this week of unimportant situations in their lives which would not make a headline in a newspaper and yet are important to God.

Prayer

'Lord, help us to remember that all people and all situations are important to you.' The class could write the prayer that the widow might have said after the first miracle.

Other suggestions for activities

- The students could look in more detail at 2 Kings 8:1-6 and consider what the king might have been told by Gehazi of all that Elisha had done.
- They could cut up the squares illustrating the four miracles, and put each group of four together with an explanation underneath about what is happening.
- They may like to make a chart of the miracles that Elisha did and note the similarity to many of those of Jesus.