

Aim of lesson

To contrast worldly pride and self-importance with the humility and obedience which God considers of real value.

Bible background

2 Kings 5

Outline of lesson

Naaman

Naaman was a captain or commander in the Syrian army. He was probably equivalent in rank to a 5-star general. Syria was one of Israel's most powerful and troublesome neighbours at this time. The king, Benhadad, had troubled Israel in the past during the reigns of Baasha and Ahab. Now, during the reign of Joram (Ahab's second son to become king) Syria was still raiding the land of Israel. It was during one of these raids that a young girl was taken captive and became the servant of the wife of Naaman. Naaman was probably the one who led the raid, and therefore kept a large part of the spoil. His leprosy does not seem to have led him to live an isolated life as it would have done under the law of Moses. He was an important man and he knew it.

Important or unimportant

Ask the class to consider the people involved as you read together 2 Kings 5:1-9. Which of these people would consider themselves important, and which would not? Yet, which are the most important in events that happen? The people in the chapter whose names we do not know are probably the most important. The maid whose faith in God was strong and genuine in spite of all she had suffered; the servants of Naaman who gave him such good advice when he was angry; those who told Elisha about the king of Israel tearing his robes in despair. All are examples of unimportant nameless people, playing a key role in the plan of God. Without them Naaman would not have been cured.

Lessons for Naaman

Discuss with the class what Naaman learned of the God of Israel from the events of this day. Note v15. He recognises the God who has healed him to be the only God in all the world. He learns of his power, and of the faith some of his people had. He also learns that God values humility and obedience – an important lesson for us too.

Gehazi

Elisha's servant, Gehazi, also learns lessons this day. He learns them the hard way. Read with the class the rest of the chapter, v19-27, and discuss what he learns about the relative value of material riches, and what he learns of the results of greed and lying. It is possible that Gehazi repented and this punishment was later changed (as in the case of the punishment on Nineveh predicted by Jonah). We later find Gehazi in the presence of the king of Israel, a situation which would be unlikely if he were a leper at the time (2 Kings 8:4).

The workbook

The class can use the crossword puzzle in their workbook as a review of the events of the lesson. This can be done either at the beginning of the lesson for classes which already know something of the story and can search through the chapter for the answers to the crossword, or it can be done at the end of the lesson.

1 Across	Leprosy	10 Across	Syria
2 Down	Elisha	10 Down	Sent
3 Down	Obedience	11 Across	River
4 Down	Pity	12 Down	Earth
5 Down	Silver	13 Across	Naaman
6 Across	Gehazi	14 Down	Angry
7 Down	Jordan	15 Across	Seven
8 Across	Humility	15 Down	See
9 Down	Israel	16 Across	Greedy

Digging deeper

Naaman and baptism

There are some references for the students to look up to find some ways in which the story of Naaman is like the act of baptism.

Relevance to our lives

As the students may have already considered, this lesson has many parallels with baptism. It would be good to discuss the attitude of Naaman and the similar attitudes we can have towards being baptised. Ultimately, this must also be an act of humble obedience, and the attitudes of pride and self-importance must be left behind. The advice to us is also valid – if God asked us to do something difficult would we not do that? Will we not then do the simple thing that he asks of us?

Prayer

'Thank you, Lord, that you offer us a simple way to be cleansed from sin. Help us to be humble and obedient.'

The class could write a prayer that Naaman might have said that night.

Other suggestions for activities

- This lesson is a good one to dramatise if your students like acting. They could write the script for a full play or just act out one part of the story.
- A tape-recorded interview of the main characters could be prepared. This could take the form of questions prepared by the class to ask 'Naaman'. The teacher or another member of the class could take on the part, and think what it would be like to be in Naaman's situation.
- The class may like to find out from Leviticus 13 (particularly verses 45 and 46) about what the law said about leprosy and then see how Jesus treated lepers (Matthew 8:1-3).