

2 Kings 5

Aim of lesson

To show the importance of obedience.

Background study

Leviticus 13:1-8. Consult reference books regarding leprosy, and attitudes towards it in Bible times. Find a map to show the route that Naaman took, and the rivers mentioned. Proverbs 15:33.

Suggested outline of lesson

Introduce the story by describing the position of the little Jewish girl who had been taken captive by the Syrians during an attack on her country. She had been separated from her family and all that she held dear, deprived of her possessions and, although she was still very young, she had been made to work hard as a slave. It would appear, however, that she was treated well by the master and mistress of the house, probably because she accepted her lot and endeavoured to work conscientiously and to please. Despite the fact that she was having to adjust to living in a different country with strange ways, she remembered that she belonged to God's people, and still trusted in him. Not only did she do her duty in the household; she also felt genuine concern when she learned of her master's illness. Describe the symptoms of leprosy and the horror it produced in others, in an age when there was no known cure. Point out the contrast between the girl's humble status and her master's high-ranking position. Yet her recommendation was heeded.

Naaman's journey

Describe the elaborate preparations for Naaman's journey - the large retinue, the costly gifts and the royal letters which led up to his arrival at the king of Israel's palace, and the king's irritation at being presented with this problem. The king suspected a plot. It was Elisha's job to remind the king that God had a prophet in Israel.

Are not Abana and Pharpar better?

Elisha's humble life-style also contrasted strongly with Naaman's opulence. The latter considered it a personal affront that the prophet would not even grant him an audience, and he rejected Elisha's instructions - they offended his dignity. Furthermore, Naaman had no faith in the efficacy of bathing in the river. He had expected a spectacular miracle to be performed, which would be more in keeping with his high office. Dramatize the attitude of Naaman, paraphrasing his angry outburst, and conveying his resentment and disgust. Dramatize also the attitude of Naaman's servants who, in their loyalty and concern for their master, persuaded him to obey Elisha's instructions. Just as he had listened to advice from the little girl, he listened again to advice from those who served him.

Humility comes before honour

This great military leader now had to prepare, in front of all his soldiers, to wade into the water. Build up the suspense as he emerged from the river, watched expectantly by his men. Where was his dignity now? As you approach the climax of the incident, ask the children what they think happened next. Then, looking at your hands with pleasure and amazement, describe Naaman's relief and joy at discovering that he was cured.

Now his loss of dignity seemed unimportant. He felt humble and chastened; honoured that he had been so blessed. In gratitude, however, he felt constrained to shower Elisha with gifts. Here, too, he was to learn that in God's sight, his wealth and position were worthless. He had, in fact, already given what was required of him - obedience. He also confessed belief in the God of Israel, acknowledging him as the one true God. Ask the children to imagine what a happy welcome Naaman would have received from the little girl, not only because of his cure, but also because of his recognition of the power of the God of Israel.

The greed of Gehazi

Tell the children that this is not the end of the story. Unhappily, not all people are trustworthy and loyal. Elisha's own servant, Gehazi, let him down badly. Although he had accompanied Elisha on his journeys and witnessed the power of God, nevertheless his head was turned by the riches and costly gifts from Naaman, and he coveted them. Wrong thoughts lead to wrong actions, and Gehazi was prepared to go against his master's decision and to lie in order to satisfy his greed. He was blind to the fact that his actions were known to God, and that God's prophet had the authority to punish him.

Relevance to the children's lives

Naaman learned a very important lesson. What does God require of people who want to be blessed by him? (Obedience). Whom should we obey (parents, teachers, Jesus, God). This discussion can lead to the topic of baptism, depending on the age and maturity of your scholars.

Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, help us to realize that it is only doing what you want us to do that will bring us happiness. Amen.

Memory verse

"The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey" (Joshua 24:24).