

Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

rfour.org

Year 4: Session 1 – Putting God First

Class 2: 2 Kings 5:1-14 – The Pride of Naaman

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Provide some background to the period of history of when Elisha and Naaman lived
- Explore the concepts of “expectations” and “pride” and note how it initially keeps Naaman from receiving God’s offered healing (through Elisha)
- Emphasize how it is Naaman’s servants (i.e., community) that helps Naaman let go of his pride and put God’s directions in front of his own understanding of what was best.

Materials needed:

- Video clip (available on rfour.org) from the American TV series, *The Office*
- Electronics that show the video clip
- A 8.5" x 11" sheet of transparency / bendable plastic – hint: use the plastic inserts made for a binder – this is a far cheaper option than actual transparencies
 - Also, you might want to have more transparencies and tape available for more students to try it out at the end of class
- A ping pong ball

Setting up the cone / funnel

- You will want to roll the transparency into a megaphone / cone shape with one opening being about 1/4" wide and the other opening being at least 3 to 4 inches across (roll it the long way, not the short way). Then tape the transparency to stay in that shape. You might want to make more than one (just in case) since each cone can only be used by one person due to saliva issues.

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.

- Once I answer the question, we'll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it's your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- Here's this week's question:* What is something that you think you are an expert at?

TRANSITION to Activity

- Just a reminder: Our first session (a session is a set of three Bible stories) is looking at characters in Bible stories who "Put God First." And then our next session will be looking at characters in Bible stories who "Put God Not-First"
- Last week we saw how King David put God first and danced about because his country of Israel was putting the Ark of the Covenant at the center of their capital and country – he wasn't embarrassed by his dance moves even when his wife told him that he SHOULD be embarrassed.
- In that lesson, we saw how peer pressure *can* make it difficult to put God first.
- In today's lesson, we're going to see how our own thoughts and expectations can make it difficult to put God first.
- To help us get started, we're going to do an "upfront" activity.
- An upfront activity is one where not everyone participates in the actual activity, but we all get to have opinions about what might happen.

EXPLAIN Upfront Activity

- What I have here is a funnel and a ping pong ball.
- The challenge is to put this ping pong ball into the funnel and then see how far one person can blow the ping pong ball across the room
- Who accepts the challenge to see how far you can launch this ping pong ball across the room by blowing through the funnel [*put ping pong ball in funnel and mimic blowing through the funnel, include the angle at which to hold the funnel: angled up so that the ball doesn't roll out*]
- [choose a volunteer]
- Now before our capable volunteer begins – let's decide as a class how far s/he will be able to launch the ping pong ball.
- Our volunteer will stand here. [*have volunteer stand where they will be launching the ping pong ball from*]
- Do you think s/he be able to launch the ping pong ball this far? [*stand about two feet in front of the volunteer*]
- How about this far? [*Take a big step away from the volunteer*]
- How about this far? [*Take another big step away from the volunteer*]
- Does anyone think the volunteer can launch the ping pong ball BEYOND where I'm standing? [*listen to answers*]
- [Address volunteer] – You've heard what the class has to say about your ping pong ball launching abilities, do you agree with them or not? How far do YOU think you can launch the ping pong ball? [*listen to answer*]
- OK – we've all had our say. Now let's see what actually happens! This is very exciting! Let's drop the ping pong ball back into the funnel and be sure to hold the funnel in an upward angle so that the ping pong ball does not roll out of the funnel.
- As a class we'll count to three. When we say "three" – launch that ping pong ball!
- Ready? ONE TWO ... THREE!
- [*What to expect: The ping pong ball will **not** launch whatsoever because once the ping pong ball moves just the tiniest bit, the air will have room to escape by going around the ball and not providing any "push" to the ball. Spitwads work in straws because the air cannot escape and therefore the air pushes what's in front of it. A funnel does not have that same design "advantage"*]

ASK / TELL

- Oh no! The ping pong ball didn't launch at all!
- Who guessed that that would happen?
- Turns out that some/all of us over-estimated what our wonderful and brave volunteer would be able to do because we didn't expect how the aerodynamics of the funnel would work with the ping pong ball
- We were probably thinking it'd be like a straw or a bb gun where the air pushes the ammo out.
- But in this case, because we're using a funnel, the air escapes the moment the ping pong ball moves. With a funnel, there's no barrel to keep the air BEHIND the object.
- There's absolutely no other result our volunteer could've achieved.
- So let's give our volunteer a big round of applause for being willing to help and giving a very good effort.
- Knowing what we know now, what changes do you think we could make in order to successfully launch the ping pong ball? [make a tube the same size as the ping pong ball so that the air can't escape – get rid of the funnel approach]
- Good ideas! If we have time at the end of class, we can try those ideas out!

TRANSITION to BIBLE STORY

- What we just experienced in our activity was an expectation of how we thought things were going to work out running into the reality of what actually happened.
- In our case, having our expectations proved wrong was no big deal. And was maybe even a little amusing.
- AND -- we now have some ideas about how to improve upon what we learned.
- But what if we were disappointed or angry when our expectations were proven wrong?
- What if we didn't think of changes to make because we were too disappointed and too scared to admit to being wrong?
- Then nothing would change or be different, right?
- Keep this idea of expectations vs reality and our response to the difference as we read today's Bible story.
- In the story, we see that one of the characters, who is named Naaman, has a skin disease called leprosy and he wants to be healed.
- However, he also has a number of expectations about how that healing will go.
- Let's see what happens

READ 2 Kings 5:1-14 (recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse)

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. 2Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. 3She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." 4So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. 5And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. 6He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy." 7When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

8But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel."

9So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. 10Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." 11But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! 12Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. 13But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" 14So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

ASK

- Verse 1 – Who is Naaman and who does he work for? (commander of the army for the King of Aram, who was very successful, but also had leprosy)
- Verse 2 – What country do we learn that the Arameans once raided? (the land of Israel – which means the two nation aren't very friendly to one another)
- Verse 4-5: What's the plan to heal Naaman? (He's going to Israel with a bunch of money and gifts from his king to demand that the king of Israel find the prophet in Samaria to heal Naaman)
- Verse 7: Is the king of Israel happy about Naaman arriving with this letter and gifts? (Nope – he tears his clothes – a sign of great distress)
- Why do you think the king of Israel is upset? (Because he doesn't seem to even know who Elisha is AND thinks that if he doesn't somehow heal Naaman, then the Arameans are going to attack Israel)
- In verse 8, Elisha sends a message to the king of Israel saying, "Send Naaman to me." Then when Naaman shows up, does Elisha actually talk to Naaman in verse 10? (nope – he sends out a messenger)
- Verse 10 – What are the instructions for Naaman? (wash 7 times in the Jordan River)
- What do you think? If you had a bad disease, would you wash 7 times in the Jordan River to be healed? Or would that be too tough for you?
- Verse 11 and 12 – What does Naaman think about the instructions? Do they fit his expectations? (He doesn't like the instructions. He's mad Elisha didn't come out and wave his hand over the leprosy. He doesn't like the Jordan river)
- Verse 13 – Who talks some sense into Naaman? (his servants)
- What do they tell Naaman? (this isn't a hard thing to do – just give it a try)
- Verse 14 – Does it work? Is he healed? (Yes)

TELL

- For most of the story, Naaman does not put God first. Instead, Naaman puts first his own expectations
- He and his king think that they can buy Naaman's healing.
- And, Naaman thinks he is to be treated a certain way.
- However, by putting his expectations first, Naaman almost didn't get healed – not because an enemy country tried to sabotage him or because God was against him, but because he, Naaman, thought his expectations of how things should happen were more important than what God was actually offering.
- This story, though, gives us a clear picture about how pride, expectation, and assumptions keep us from experiencing the good things that God is offering to us.

- The story also shows us how silly pride can be.
- Can't you just imagine Naaman's servants looking at each other and rolling their eyes at Naaman's response?
- Their suggestion to Naaman, though, is caring and has a simple wisdom to it.
 - "Uh – Naaman? We've traveled 5 days or so to get here – and since we're here and since it is not a difficult task, why not give it a go? If it doesn't work, we won't tell anyone what happened. Besides, if it WERE a difficult task, you'd be all over it! So how about we just go try it?"
- So what we see is that Naaman's healing is not just because Naaman puts God first, but because the people he is with put God first as well.
- If Naaman had been by himself, he probably would not have been healed because no one would've been there to help him see past his pride.
- So, to help us imagine what this story would've been like if Naaman's servants had NOT been helpful or caring, let's watch the following video clip.
- In it, the boss of a small office thinks he's going to astound and astonish his employees with a magic trick.
- Let's see how his pride gets in the way and if his employees help him navigate his pride.

WATCH VIDEO CLIP

ASK

- What was the magic trick supposed to be? (the boss, Michael, was going to free himself from a bunch of chains)
- How was he going to free himself from the chains? (By using a key that he was "hiding" in his mouth)
- So what happened to the key? (the boss dropped it and one of the employees covered it up, on purpose, with his foot)
- Did the boss ask for help at any point? (Nope. Even at the end of the clip, when he sort of asks for help, he starts out by saying, "On an unrelated note...")
- So was the boss "healed" -- that is, unlocked? (No!)
- And would it have been a simple thing to get unlocked? (Yes!)
- What stopped him? (His pride)
- And ... who didn't help him out? (His employees / community)

TELL

- The solution for the boss was really simple, but because of pride and expectation, the solution was never experienced.
- The same ending could've been true in the Naaman story as well, except Naaman's employees wanted to help Naaman.
- And they *did* help him. They helped him let go of his pride and put God's instructions first.
- This story reminds us that who we surround ourselves with can really help us with hearing and acting on what God is calling us to do.
- Because of the good company Naaman kept, Naaman was able to put God first and therefore experience the better way that God was offering.
- *Optional* (if there's time): Let's see if we can make a tube that can actually launch the ping pong ball with our breath

CLOSING PRAYER