

- Language barrier
- Cultural differences
- Previous misunderstandings
- Others (please specify) _____

24. Do you feel that the brothers and sisters are sensitive to and understand your needs?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

25. What would you suggest to promote better understanding and fellowship between the members of the church? _____

Discussion:

1. From the survey responses, do you think the needs of the different ethnic groups in your church are met?
2. What forms or practices contribute to this?
3. What kind of ambience does our church generate, i.e. do we give people the impression that we are a “Chinese church” or do others see the church as one that welcomes all races?
4. What things can we do to be sensitive to the needs of those different from us?
5. From the article, how did the brothers and sisters of Paris church deal with some of their cultural differences?
6. What guiding principles does the author suggest to promote harmony and unity between members of diverse cultural backgrounds?

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Living in a multicultural society, we will encounter people of all walks of life. As the church stands in the 21st century, we need to learn how to reach out to people of backgrounds very different from our own. "Therefore welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." (Rom 15:7)

Lesson 4

Naaman and Gehazi

Listed Scriptures

2 Kgs 4:12-36, 5:1-27, 8:4,5

Lesson Aim

- 1) To realize the importance of inner transformation after believing in the Lord Jesus.
- 2) To know the importance of resisting temptation.

Memory Verse

“For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end.”
(Heb 3:14)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Isaiah 16-20

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Syria

Syria was Israel’s neighbor to the northeast. Its boundaries varied over the centuries but generally included areas south of Taurus Mountains, north of Galilee and Bashan, west of Arabian Desert, and east of the Mediterranean. Its chief cities included Damascus, Antioch, Carchemish and others. Syria and Israel were rarely on friendly terms. Under King David, Syria paid tribute to Israel (2 Sam 10:6-19). It became independent under King Solomon. In Elisha’s day, Syria was growing in power and she frequently conducted raids on Israel. Israelite captives were often taken back to Syria after successful raids (2 Kgs 6:8-33).

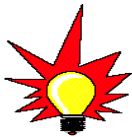
Leprosy

Leprosy was one of the most feared diseases of Bible times. The word leprosy in Hebrew is sara’at, which is a term of uncertain origin and meaning but includes a variety of skin diseases as well as other molds and fungi. The leprosy found on

clothing or house walls was more like a mold, fungus, or bacteria. Like mildew, this fungus could spread rapidly and promote disease. Only one of these was the disease we call leprosy today. Some were contagious. The worst type of leprosy slowly ruined the body. In most cases there was no cure for it. The afflictions could be marked by swellings under the skin, pink spots or reddish areas of skin. If the priests discovered white hairs on the lesion and evidence that its head penetrated the skin, the person was quarantined for two weeks as a suspected leper. After that, if the lesion exhibited “raw flesh” such as skin ulcers or bright pink patches of skin that was obviously spreading, the sufferer was diagnosed as a leper and prohibited from living in the community.

In all cases of suspected leprosy, the priests were consulted and Leviticus 13 provided them with detailed diagnostic directions. Since priests were responsible for the health and sanitation of the camp, it was also their duty to expel leprous people. Those who had leprosy were separated from family and friends and confined outside the camp. A person with leprosy had to wear torn clothes, let the hair of his head hang loose, cover his upper lip and cry, “Unclean, unclean” (Lev 13:45,46). This was to protect others from coming too near. If someone’s leprosy appeared to go away, he had to show himself to the priest who then decided if he was truly cured. Leprosy is often used in the Bible as an illustration of sin because sin is contagious and destructive and leads to separation from God.

W A R M U P



1. What is most important—a good beginning or a good ending?
2. Are you the type of person who starts something but leaves things unfinished, or do you see things through to the end?



Part 1

The Healing of Naaman

The healing of Naaman is a beautiful story about a sinner coming to grace. Naaman, whose name means pleasantness, was transformed from being a proud and arrogant man to a contrite and God-fearing person. Naaman's journey of faith is a representation of the journey that non-believers tried in their search for the truth. Naaman also typifies those in the world today.



A • He Had Worldly Success

At this point in history, King Jehoram was king of Israel. He did not fear God and did what was evil in God’s sight. As a result God allowed Syria to be a constant threat to Israel. Syria was a very powerful country and Naaman was the commander in chief of the army of Syria. Naaman was no ordinary person. He was above the masses and a man of high status, authority, power and wealth. Naaman contributed greatly to his country for “by him the Lord had given victory to Syria.”

Amidst all the prestige and honor, Naaman suffered from one defect—he was afflicted with leprosy. Although Naaman commanded the army, he was not able to control his sickness. Each day, leprosy brought him closer to death. Naaman’s suffering symbolizes mankind’s common suffering. Regardless of rank, gender, age, success, and wealth, we all face sufferings and problems which stem from sin. Before knowing Christ, each of us is afflicted with “leprosy,” which is sin. Just as leprosy, if left untreated, may eventually cause death, sin, if not dealt with, will lead to spiritual death. Thus we all need God and His healing.



B • He Turned to God Upon Reaching An Impasse

Due to his sickness, Naaman began his search for healing. He would have certainly sought healing from the best physicians throughout Syria, but to no avail. It was at this juncture that God beckoned to him. In 2 Kings 5:8, the prophet Elisha said, “Let him come now to me.” This is the calling of the Lord to all sinners who have tried every other way but are at a loss. Oftentimes, God reaches out to men only when they have admitted defeat. Sometimes because of sickness, death, and emptiness man turns to God as their last thread of hope. For Naaman, this angel of hope came in direct contrast to his character—a weak and humble maidservant captured from Israel. If we humble ourselves and turn to Him in our time of need, God will heal us (Mt 11:28).

Reflection:

1. Was there a time where you found help through someone or something that you least expected? How did you respond?
2. “When God closes a door, He opens a window.” How has this proven true in your life?



C He Relied on His Wealth and Abilities

To see the prophet Elisha, Naaman brought with him an exorbitant amount of gifts of silver and gold and expensive garments. The Bible tells us that Naaman took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. Ten talents equal thirty thousand shekels which is about seven hundred and fifty pounds of silver. The six thousand shekels of gold equal about one hundred and fifty pounds (one gold shekel equaled fifteen silver shekels). Converted to today's buying power, this would have been in the vicinity of three-quarters of a billion dollars. We can get an idea of the proportions by understanding that a typical wage would have been ten silver shekels per year, and a talent of silver, three hundred years of wages. Armed with his gifts, Naaman came seeking for help using power, status and wealth. He did not realize that God's grace and blessings cannot be bought (Eph 2:8; Ac 8:17-24). After Naaman was healed, he begged Elisha three times to accept the gifts, but Elisha refused because he wanted Naaman to understand that all the money in the world cannot buy God's grace. God's gift is given freely to whomever He pleases.

Reflection:

1. Naaman boasted of his wealth, power and ability. What things are we proud of?



D He Was Filled With Pride

After the long trek to Israel, Naaman arrived at Elisha's house where he was greeted not by the prophet, but by a messenger. As if seeking for help from his enemies was not humiliating enough, being greeted by a mere messenger was too much of an insult. Naaman however was to learn that God's ways are not man's ways. What may be honored and revered among men may not be in the kingdom of God. Power, status and wealth cannot be exchanged for God's grace. God used this opportunity to strip Naaman of his pride and arrogance. As sinners we need to come before the Lord with a humble and repentant heart in order to experience the true power of God.



E He Had Preconceived Ideas

The messenger informed Naaman what he had to do to be healed. He was to "go and wash in the Jordan seven times." This was not what Naaman expected. Naaman was expecting the prophet to come out, call on the name of God, wave his hand over the place and cure him of leprosy. Then to add insult to injury, the

prophet told him to wash in the Jordan river. In his estimation, Abana and Pharpar, the rivers in his own country were far better than the waters of Israel. These preconceived ideas and expectations caused Naaman to turn around and leave.

Many people today possess Naaman's attitude. They want to use their own method to be saved; methods that seem more logical or convenient. The Bible describes such people as "being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (Rom 10:3). In actuality, God has a standard which is the truth. The truth is not according to human rationale or reason, but is the pattern that God has laid out since the beginning of time for salvation (Gal 1:8; 2 Tim 1:13). To receive the grace of God, we need to abandon our own expectations and former beliefs and submit to God's commands.



F He Completely Obeyed

When Naaman heard the words of the prophet he stomped away in total disbelief. He needed some concrete evidence before he could have faith in the prophet. The only thing that the prophet gave to Naaman, however, was the promise that if he bathed seven times in the River Jordan he would be healed. Bathing seven times in the River Jordan was God's way of testing his faith and obedience. Similarly, God trains each person that comes before Him. The number seven in the Bible implies completeness. A sinner needs to have complete faith and obedience in God's word to be saved. Only through faith can we submit to God's word even when we don't understand why. For example, the Bible tells us to offer tithes. There are some believers who have difficulty giving tithes because they do not have the faith to see that God will bless and reward them. God commands that we observe the Sabbath. Some truth seekers have turned away from the church because they lack the faith to see the true meaning of Sabbath. Every promise in the Bible stands, but it depends on whether we have the faith to trust and obey.

Reflection:

1. What aspects of Naaman's behavior are typical of those who are seeking the truth?
2. What examples can you give of people who use their own righteousness to be saved?



G Thanksgiving

After experiencing God's miraculous healing, Naaman was filled with immense gratitude and thanksgiving. He openly and publicly testified about God's grace.

Naaman also expressed his gratitude by resolving to lead a God-fearing life. He offered two mules to be used as a burnt sacrifice and resolved henceforth, to worship and sacrifice to no other god but the Lord. After we have received the salvation of God, besides feeling thankful, we need to tell others. God's grace is not only for us to enjoy, but it is a means by which He may be glorified and others may get to know the Lord (Ps 105:1-2).



Part 2

Gehazi, the Servant of Elisha

Gehazi's name means valley of vision. He was the servant of Elisha, the man of God (2 Kgs 2:9-15). Gehazi was the kind of servant that Elisha was before he succeeded Elijah as prophet. Elisha performed such tasks as pouring water on the hands of his master and assisted Elijah (2 Kgs 3:11). Gehazi too assisted Elisha in his work and showed many fine characteristics. For example, when the Shumannite woman beseeched Elisha to save her son, Elisha told Gehazi to take his staff and place it on the face of the dead child. Gehazi obeyed (1 Kgs 4:29-31). When considering how to repay the Schumannite woman for her kindness, Gehazi demonstrated a keen sense of observation. Despite all this however, Gehazi had a tragic ending. Due to greed, Gehazi fell into temptation and lost his divine calling and blessings.



A • He Was Not Content

To be a servant of the prophet was an honorable and privileged status. Gehazi had a full view of the storehouses of God's blessings. He saw the raising of the dead; the healing of Naaman the leper and many other miracles (2 Kgs 4:16-17, 38-44). Sadly, Gehazi did not treasure what he had or recognize its value. Just as how Demas left Paul because of his love for the world (2 Tim 4:10). Gehazi was dissatisfied with his current status. Today many of us have grown up under the abundant blessings and providence of God (Eph 1:1-14). But many times, like Gehazi, we turn our attention to the luster and splendor of the things of the world. We believe that "the grass is greener on the other side" and as a result, we easily forsake what God has given us. In 1 Peter, it tells us that we are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pet 2:9). May God help us

see beyond the present things of the world and to know how great and immeasurable His choosing is.

Reflection:

1. How did Gehazi show his discontent with his current situation?
2. Are you content with what God has given you?
3. How do you demonstrate your appreciation?



B • He Did Not Care for God's Glory

Throughout this entire event, Elisha's ultimate goal was to bring glory to God. Elisha wanted Naaman to understand that the God of Israel was the one true God and He offers His grace freely to men. God did not desire Naaman's gifts but his humble and repentant heart. Gehazi on the other hand forgot all about giving glory to God the moment he laid eyes on the gifts. He failed to recognize that his ultimate purpose in life was to glorify God and not to seek his own pleasure. Therefore, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). Naaman's gifts were a temptation to both Elisha and Gehazi but Elisha used the occasion to bring glory to God and benefit men.



C • He Listened to His Heart

Man is born with natural desires which enable us to survive. God has given us sensations of hunger and thirst so that we know when to eat and drink to sustain our bodies. God has also given us sexual desires so that we can marry and procreate. However, when these desires are given free reign, we exceed the boundary of God's laws and commit sin. Gehazi's desire was not wrong. What caused his downfall was when he allowed his desire for greater wealth get out of control. He craved these things to the point that he could no longer hear God's words and devised a scheme to satisfy his greed (1 Tim 6:10). We have to be extremely careful to keep our desires in check and guard our hearts with the word and Spirit of God (Prov 4:23; Eph 6:10-18).

Reflection:

1. How did Gehazi sin in this incident?
2. Do you put boundaries on your desires, or do you tend to go after everything you see or desire?
3. If someone asked, "How do we know what things are ours and what things are not if we do not pursue after them?" how would you respond?

Do He Lost Discernment

Before falling into temptation, Gehazi could discern clearly what was right and wrong. However, the moment he succumbed to temptation his inner judgment became blurred and confused. Blinded by the luster of the things of the world, Gehazi misused the name of God. As a result disaster came upon him and his descendants. Swearing means to vow before God and to invoke God's help. We should therefore not use God's name in vain. Let us be cautious that we do not allow sin to deceive our minds and harden our hearts (Heb 3:13).

Reflection:

1. How does temptation cause us to lose discernment?
2. In what ways can we overcome temptation?

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



Due to the nature of this lesson, the Check For Understanding questions can be found after each Bible Study section under the heading "Reflection".

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



A Never Changing Faith

In any contest, the start is important, but the finish is even more crucial. Often a frontrunner will lose strength and fade into the middle of the pack. And there is the tragedy of the brilliant beginner who sets the pace for a time, but does not even finish. He quits the race, burned out, exhausted or injured. Today's lesson about Naaman and Gehazi reminds us that on our spiritual journey, it is imperative for us to sustain our faith right up to our last breath. Hebrews 10:23 exhorts us to hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for a crown of righteousness will be awarded only to those who remain steadfast.

Discussion:

1. How can we hold fast to our faith until the end? (guard our heart, spiritual cultivation, encourage one another to do good works, keep and practice the word, ask God to increase faith)

2. What is spiritual cultivation?
3. Why is spiritual cultivation so important?
4. What are our goals in spiritual cultivation?
5. What symptoms will occur when we do not spiritually cultivate daily?
6. How much time do you spend in spiritual cultivation each day?
7. What are some of your difficulties or challenges in spiritual cultivation?

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us. (Heb 12:1)