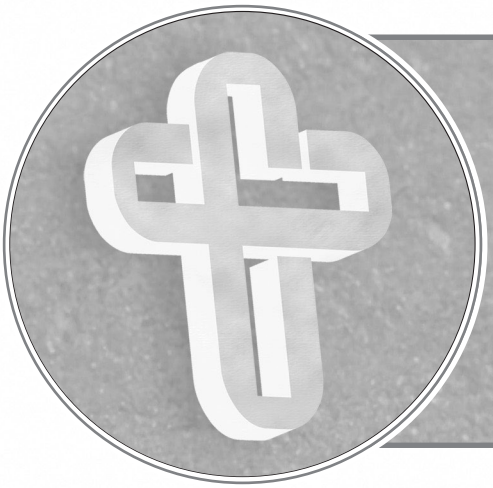


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
APRIL 27 2024

test of faith

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 5.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 20; 21.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

We live in a world that tends to be very casual about the problem of pride. We're swamped with books on how to achieve wealth, beauty, happiness, and success, but there aren't many bestsellers with titles like *Seven Steps to a Less Glamorous Life* or *How to Land the Lowest Job*. Don King, the boxing promoter, captured our culture's attitude toward humility when he said, "Sometimes I amaze even my own self . . . and I say that humbly." Let's face it—our culture is quite ambivalent about this humility deal.

This casual attitude toward pride, however, is not biblical. Listen to Scripture: "The LORD preserves those who are true to him, but the proud he pays back in full" (Psalm 31:23, NIV). "Whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate" (Psalm 101:5, NIV). "The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished" (Proverbs 16:5, NIV). "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble" (James 4:6, NIV). "And those who walk in pride he is able to humble" (Daniel 4:37, NIV).

Given the clarity with which the Bible speaks against pride, the story of Naaman offers an ideal opportunity to engage your students in a conversation about the importance of humility. While there are other directions you could take this lesson (obedience, self-image, witnessing, etc.), the issue of pride seems to be a worthwhile focus. In the end, William Barclay was right in his summation: "Pride is the ground in which all the other sins grow, and the parent from which all the other sins come."

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See the serious, self-destructive nature of pride. *(Know)*
- Sense the benefits of humility. *(Feel)*
- Be challenged to confess pride and walk humbly with God. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Christian Behavior, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 22

"We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with biblical principles in all aspects of personal and social life. . . . (Gen. 7:2; Exod. 20:15; Lev. 11:1-47; Ps. 106:3; Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 10:5; Eph. 5:1-21; Phil. 2:4; 4:8; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; Titus 2:11, 12; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 John 2:6; 3 John 2.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Discussion questions: How would you define pride? When does pride become a bad thing? Where is the line between feeling self-confident and being proud? Why is pride harmful to friendships?

Illustration

Share this illustration:

A student applying for admission to New York University gave a creative answer to the question "Are there any personal accomplishments or significant experiences you have had that helped to define you as a person?" He answered,

"I am a dynamic figure, often seen scaling walls and crushing ice. I have been known to remodel train stations on my lunch breaks, making them more efficient in the area of heat retention. I write award-winning operas. Occasionally, I tread water for three days in a row. I can cook 30-minute brownies in 20 minutes.

"Using only a hoe and a large glass of water, I once single-handedly defended a small village in the Amazon basin from a horde of ferocious army ants. I play bluegrass cello. I was scouted by the Mets. I am the subject of numerous documentaries. When I'm bored, I build large suspension bridges in my yard. I enjoy urban hang gliding. On Wednesdays after school I repair electrical appliances free of charge.

"I am an abstract artist, a concrete analyst, and a ruthless bookie. . . . I am a private citizen, yet I receive fan mail. I have been caller number nine and have won the weekend passes. Last summer I toured New Jersey with a traveling centrifugal force demonstration. My deft floral arrangements have earned me fame in international botany circles. Children trust me.

"I balance, I weave, I dodge, I frolic, and my bills are all paid. Years ago I discovered the meaning of life, but forgot to write it down. I have made extraordinary four-course meals using only a blender and a toaster oven. . . .

"I have won . . . cliff-diving competitions in Sri Lanka, and spelling bees in the Kremlin, . . . performed open-heart surgery. . . .

"But I have not yet gone to college."[1]

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Like this student (who, by the way, did get accepted at NYU!), Naaman had lots and lots of skills. He was larger than life with hordes of talents, money, power, and fame. But Naaman had one other thing that all the power and fame in the world couldn't fix—a patch of discolored skin. This little spot of leprosy would kill him. Naaman's only hope for healing came through humbly accepting his limitations and obeying the command to go dunk in a polluted river. Only when he humbled himself before God did he receive healing.

Out of the Story for Teachers

Use the following phrases and discussion questions from the Into the Story *section with your students to process the story with them.*

Verse one tells us that Naaman was "a great man in the sight of his master" (NIV). What makes a person "great" today? Might someone be great in the eyes of the world but pitiful in the eyes of God? Explain.

Another detail in verse one is that Naaman "was a valiant soldier" (NIV). In other words, he was not just a keen military strategist; he excelled in the battle. He loved a good challenge. "But he had leprosy," the verse goes on to say (NIV). Do you know of any examples today of people who love any challenge but are brought to their knees by some seemingly small patch of discolored skin? Does God ever allow these challenges to teach us humility? Explain.

Review the reasoning of Naaman's servants in verse 13. In what other ways might Naaman have responded to them? How open are you to confrontation? In what ways can we grow when we receive criticism with a spirit of humility?

Read verses 22, 23 and describe what kind of person you think Gehazi was when he was a teenager.

What does God's punishment in verse 27 reveal about God? Does this punishment seem too harsh? Why or why not?

There are many examples of prideful people in the Bible. Take some time to check out each of these verses with your students:

Deuteronomy 8:11-14
2 Kings 20:12-18
2 Chronicles 26:16-21
Esther 3:1-6

Daniel 5:18-21
John 11:45-53
Luke 18:11-14
Acts 12:21-23

How did each person show his or her pride? What was the result of their pride? What do these verses say about pride in our lives?

Here are some additional passages that relate to this lesson:

Psalm 138; Proverbs 16; Proverbs 27; Proverbs 29; Romans 12:3; Galatians 6:3.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. Naaman's Disease

Leprosy was much like AIDS today. It was one of the most feared diseases in the ancient world. According to Wikipedia.com, leprosy is also known as Hansen's disease. It is a chronic infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae*. If left untreated, there can be progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs, and eyes. Leprosy has affected humanity since at least 600 B.C., and was well-recognized in the civilizations of ancient China, Egypt, and India. In 1995 the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that between two and three million individuals were permanently disabled because of leprosy. Although the forced quarantine or segregation of patients is unnecessary, and can be considered unethical, a few leper colonies still remain around the world in countries such as India, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

In Bible times many lepers were quarantined to death camps. Because Naaman still held his post, his form must have been mild, or he caught it in an early stage. In any case, he would have interpreted the disease as a death sentence.

2. The Maidservant

The name of Naaman's maid is unknown. While we don't know much about her, it was her suggestion that brought healing and faith in God to a powerful Aramean captain. We do know that she was an Israelite. For an Israelite to come into contact with a leper was strictly forbidden. If they did there were certain ceremonial washings that Jews had to perform in order to be considered clean again. Yet Naaman's maid was in contact with a feared leper.

3. Naaman's Pride

The *NIV Life Application Bible* connects Naaman's story with this practical teaching on the topic of pride:

Naaman, a great hero, was used to getting respect, and he was outraged when Elisha treated him like an ordinary person. A proud man, he expected royal treatment. To wash in a great river would be one thing, but the Jordan was small and dirty. To wash in the Jordan, Naaman thought, was beneath a man of his position. But Naaman had to humble himself and obey Elisha's commands in order to be healed.

Obedience to God begins with humility. We must believe that His way is better than our own.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Teaching Through Humility

Brett Justus, an ATP and FAA Gold Seal flight instructor, links the importance of humility to teaching. Although his counsel is specifically for flight instructors, the principle applies equally to Sabbath School teachers and issues of faith. He writes:

"How does a good pilot become a good teacher? Books have been written on the subject. Learning to fly is a challenging and dynamic endeavor. Many subtle, personal skills are required to excel in fully and effectively molding safe, skilled pilots.

"I think humility should be the first skill added to an instructor's tool belt. When this attribute is embraced, the door will be open for all the other skills necessary to be a true teacher.

"Revealing humility in your approach will help defensiveness end, so learning can begin. More of your students will complete their training if you assure them that you and others have struggled with certain areas, just as they are currently struggling. You don't have to show your students what a great pilot you are. They already know you're a skilled pilot. Show them what a good teacher you are by sharing specific instances of when you had problems with the current maneuver that they can't seem to perfect. Then they will be encouraged and tell themselves, 'If my instructor could get through this and get to where he or she is now, then I guess I can do it too!' "[3]

We may not always understand His ways of working, but by humbly obeying, we will receive His blessings. We must remember that (1) God's ways are best; (2) God wants our obedience more than anything else; (3) God can use anything to accomplish His purposes.[2]

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Tell the students that they have been selected to present a seminar to the world church on the topic of humility. Their challenge is to make it as practical as possible so that everyone in attendance will leave the seminar with a clear picture of what they must do in order to grow in the area of humility. Turn the class loose to develop the curriculum and then have them share their practical suggestions on how to be humble.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Proverbs 16:18 (NIV) says: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." Pride is sin. But God will forgive us when we confess our sins. The Bible warns us that pride leads to destruction. Conceit is a cancer to Christians. It ruins friendships, damages relationships, and compromises intimacy with God.

Close with a time of prayer for your students to reflect on any pockets of pride that might hinder their walk with God. After a brief season of solitude, invite the students to ask God for forgiveness—and for strength to take the focus off of themselves and fully on God.

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[1]Adapted from "But I Have Not Yet Gone to College," *Still More Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), pp. 116, 117.

[2]*Life Application Bible,* New International Version (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), p. 613.

[3]As quoted at https://www.aopa.org/news-and-media/all-news/2003/august/flight-training-magazine/cfi-to-cfi.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 20; 21.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 5.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 20; 21.

test of faith



Photo © Getty Images

keytext

"Naaman's servants went to him and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?' . . . So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy."

(2 Kings 5:13, 14, NIV)

flashlight

"The proud spirit of Naaman rebelled against following the course outlined by Elisha. The rivers mentioned by the Syrian captain were beautified by surrounding groves, and many flocked to the banks of these pleasant streams to worship their idol gods. It would have cost Naaman no great humiliation of soul to descend into one of those streams. But it was only through following the specific directions of the prophet that he could find healing. Willing obedience alone would bring the desired result" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 249).

what do you think?

Which of the following individuals do you think are prideful? Explain your answers.

___ José ignores his friends whenever a cute girl walks by.
___ Katelyn is constantly showing off her latest high-tech gadget.
___ Your band teacher doesn't listen to feedback from his students.
___ Reagan ignores advice from his parents and friends about not smoking.
___ Sarah shares her straight-A report card on her social media page.
___ Lindsey complains whenever she falls short of her goal of perfection.

Questions to consider:

1. How would you describe someone suffering from the disease of pride?
2. What are the symptoms of this disease?
3. How can the disease of pride be cured?

did you know?

The pride of sin is listed in Proverbs 6:16-19 and in Mark 7:21-23. Like all sins, pride begins in the heart. Ellen G. White in *Steps to Christ,* says that "pride, selfishness, and covetousness . . . are sins that are especially offensive to God; for they are contrary to the benevolence of His character, to that unselfish love which is the very atmosphere of the unfallen universe" (p. 30).

INTO THE STORY

"Now Naaman was com-mander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

"Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, 'If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.'. . .

"So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, 'Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.'

"But Naaman went away angry and said, 'I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. . . .' So he turned and went off in a rage.

"Naaman's servants went to him and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, "Wash and be cleansed"!' So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

"Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, 'Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.'

"The prophet answered, '. . . I will not accept a thing.' . . .

"So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. 'Is everything all right?' he asked.

" 'Everything is all right,' Gehazi answered. 'My master sent me to say, "Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing."' . . .

"When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, 'Where have you been, Gehazi?'

" 'Your servant didn't go anywhere,' Gehazi answered.

"But Elisha said to him, '. . . Naaman's leprosy

will cling to you and to your descendants forever.' Then Gehazi went from Elisha's presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow."

(2 Kings 5:1-3, 9-16, 21-27, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Read the story to note details that are new to you.

Circle the different people in the story.

What character qualities do you see in:
Naaman's servant girl? _____
Naaman? _____
Elisha? _____
Naaman's servants? _____
Gehazi? _____

If this story were to be made into a motion picture, what title would you give it? _____

What similarities do you see between the following Bible characters and contemporary public figures?
Naaman's servant girl—Hillary Clinton, former secretary of state to U.S. president Barack Obama _____
_____
Naaman—Rush Limbaugh _____
_____
Elisha—Billy Graham _____
_____
Naaman's servants—Cabinet members for the president of a country _____
_____
Gehazi—Martha Stewart _____
_____

What other contemporary counterparts might compare today to the Bible characters?

_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load" **(Galatians 6:3-5, NIV).**

"Though the LORD is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly; though lofty, he sees them from afar" **(Psalm 138:6, NIV).**

"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you" **(Romans 12:3, NIV).**

"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" **(Proverbs 16:18, NIV).**

further insight

"Men may think to hide their evil deeds from human eyes, but they cannot deceive God. . . .

"Truth is of God; deception in all its myriad forms is of Satan, and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 252

Sabbath

Read Psalm 138:6.

Discuss the people in the *What Do You Think?* section. Rank them from the most prideful to the most humble. Explain your reasoning behind your ranking.

Sunday

Read 2 Kings 5:4-7.

Tell the story of Naaman from the following perspectives:

- The perspective of the captive girl.

_____
_____
_____

- The perspective of Naaman's guardian angel.

_____
_____
_____

- The perspective of the king of Israel:

_____
_____
_____

Monday

Read Colossians 2:13, 14.

In what area of your life do you long to be "washed and cleansed"? Write a letter to God confessing this struggle in your life. Burn or shred the letter to remind yourself of God's perfect and complete forgiveness. (If you would like some resources about issues with which you are struggling, go to http://livingiths.org/resources/at-risk-help/risk-behaviors).

Tuesday

Read Proverbs 16:18.

Read the *Flashlight* section. Compare it to the following quotation from Ellen White in *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 416:

"Few realize the full meaning of the words that Christ spoke when, in the synagogue at Nazareth, He announced Himself as the Anointed One. He declared His mission to comfort, bless, and save the sorrowing and the sinful; and then, seeing that pride and unbelief controlled the hearts of His hearers, He reminded them that in time past God had turned away from His chosen people because of their unbelief and rebellion, and had manifested Himself to those in heathen lands who had not rejected the light of heaven. The widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian had lived up to all the light they had; hence they were accounted more righteous than God's chosen people who had backslidden from Him and had sacrificed principle to convenience and worldly honor."

Wednesday

Read Romans 12:3.

What is your impression of conceited people? Check the answers that apply.

I think they're usually . . .
____ jealous of their friends.
____ deceiving themselves.
____ admired by others.
____ in need of being humbled.
____ very popular with the opposite sex.
____ glued to the mirror.
____ extremely confident in themselves.
____ secretly admired.
____ hard to get to know.
____ good listeners.
____ insecure.

What do arrogance and self-debasement have in common?

_____
_____
_____

Thursday

Read Galatians 6:3-5.

What are the steps God is asking me to take in my life to grow in humility?

_____
_____
_____

What do I need to do to make this a reality in my life?

_____
_____
_____

Friday

Read Galatians 4:4, 5.

Reflect on this quote from *The Youth's Instructor*: "The more we think about Christ's becoming a babe here on earth, the more wonderful it appears. How can it be that the helpless babe in Bethlehem's manger is still the divine Son of God? Though we cannot understand it, we can believe that he who made the worlds, for our sakes became a helpless babe. Though higher than any of the angels, though as great as the Father on the throne of heaven, he became one with us. In him God and man became one, and it is in this fact that we find the hope of our fallen race. Looking upon Christ in the flesh, we look upon God in humanity, and see in him the brightness of divine glory, the express image of God the Father" (Ellen G. White, *The Youth's Instructor*, November 21, 1895, para. 3).

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 20; 21.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.