

Lesson 55

Floating ax and Syrian Army

2 Kings 6:1-23



Teacher, please remember that the commentary below is intended to help you in your study, not to be read to your students. Make your own list of applications, using the help from the commentary, but don't necessarily try to cover everything! Think of the students in your class, then be prayerfully selective.

Contents:

1. Preparation
2. Memory verses
3. Theme
4. Lesson introduction
5. Verse by verse commentary (suggested location of activities included)
6. Suggested prayer to close
7. Attention grabbers
8. Activities
9. Bible Text (in full, without commentary)

1. Preparation

- 1) Choose memory verse
- 2) Select attention grabber to start off lesson / break the ice - optional, recommended for younger classes. (see point 7)
- 3) Suggested activities- optional, recommended for younger children (see point 8)

2. Memory verse

Philippians 4:6-7

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

(Bold for younger children)

or

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

3. Theme

God cares about the things that concern us, and loves us even if we are disobedient.

4. Lesson introduction

It seems that Elisha devoted much of his time and attention to the training of the young prophets. There was one group at Bethel, another at Jericho (2 Kings 2:3,4), and another at Gilgal (4:38). It was very important to Elisha that he teach and train the next generation of preachers and leaders in the ways of

the Lord. One of Elisha's student prophets had a mishap—one perhaps that we would view as a little thing—but to the prophet, it was a big concern. Big or small, God is concerned about the things that concern His children. God cares about the things that concern us.

Elisha did not only train the prophets, he was also concerned for the welfare of Israel. The children of Israel did not obey God fully when Joshua brought the people of Israel to the Promised Land. God told them to destroy all of the other nations, but they did not. As a result, they were constantly at war with the different people groups that still lived in the land. But the Lord let Elisha warn them and protected them when the Syrians came to destroy Israel. Although Israel had been disobedient, God loved His people and will move to take action.

5. Verse by Verse Commentary

2 Kings 6:1-3

It appears Elisha may have lived with the students as he taught them and worked with them. The school had grown and become too crowded. The students respectfully sought Elisha's consent to build another dwelling. Proud leaders resent any suggestions that come from those under their care. Elisha demonstrates his humility in his quick consent to the students, "Go." Leaders should never consider themselves above receiving ideas from others. Proverbs 1:7b tells us, "...fools despise wisdom and instruction." Elisha's students desired their teacher to accompany them. Elisha must have had a great relationship with these young prophets. Perhaps it was like the relationship that Paul, of the New Testament, had with Timothy. Paul called Timothy his "son in the faith." While we are young, God is faithful to give us role models to look up to--men and women who have served the Lord for a long time and are willing to help us to grow in our relationship with the Lord.

Suggested Activity: A Home for The Prophets

2 Kings 6:4-7

As the young prophets were busy working, one dropped an iron ax head into the water. The man cried, "Alas, master!" addressing Elisha. It seemed the young man brought his concern immediately to his master, Elisha. The readiness with which he approached Elisha showed a pretty good master-student relationship. Our relationship with our loving heavenly Father should reflect a great relationship. When trouble comes, we should feel confident of God's concern and quick to "cast our cares upon Him." God cares about the things that concern us. Note, the young prophet's concern for the property of another person: he was very aware it was not his own ax, but another person's. It is important for us to value other people's property higher than our own. "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." (Philippians 2:4) God performed another miracle through the hand of Elisha! When Elisha put the stick into the water, the iron head of the ax floated up to the top. Have you ever tried to make iron float? Iron is a very heavy metal, and it does not float; it sinks! God is never bound to the laws of gravity, or any other law of nature. What a joy and awe there must have been in the man's heart as he retrieved the ax head he thought was lost for good. What seemed to be a bad accident turned out to bring God glory! "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28) Have you ever had anything happen in your life that seemed to be a disaster, but God worked it out for good in your life? God delights in helping His children in impossible circumstances. Remember, as the young prophet quickly brought his concerns to his mentor, so we should not worry or fret, but quickly bring our

concerns to our God. God cares about every situation, small and large, and there is no situation too difficult for Him. Philippians 4:6,7 tells us, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” God cares about the things that concern us. This is also a good picture of how God can work miracles in the heart of man. If he can raise an iron ax head, then certainly he can change a hard, iron heart. Matthew Henry says, “God’s grace can thus raise the stony, iron heart which has sunk into the mud of this world, and raise up affections naturally earthly, to things above.” If He can raise up an iron ax head, He can change the hardest of hearts and bring him or her into a loving relationship with Himself.

*Suggested Activity: 1) Ax Craft
2) Thankful Balloons*

2 Kings 6:8-12

The king of Syria was at war with Israel. He was in constant consultation with his captains and commanders, making plans to capture the armies of Israel and do damage to the nation of Israel. Elisha, the man of God, warned the King of Israel many times, about where the King of Syria was going to strike next. The King of Syria was enraged. Since the King of Israel seemed to be aware of their every move, he thought for sure a spy was working in his camp. His men knew it was not any of them; they were completely loyal to their king! They blamed “the prophet,” Elijah! “...the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.” There is nothing done in secret that God does not know about. He even knows our thoughts and the plans of our hearts. God knows everything about us, even how many hairs are on our heads! He knew what the King of Syria was planning, and God desired to protect His people. God protects His children.

2 Kings 6:13-18

The King of Syria thought he could solve this problem. He made plans to trap Elisha! He surrounded Elisha’s hometown with a great force of soldiers. Elisha’s servant went out that morning and saw the situation—he was petrified! He saw himself surrounded with no way out! He must have thought, “We’ve had it now Elisha!” In contrast to his servant, Elisha was not concerned. He saw something his servant did not see—the army of horses and chariots of fire that belonged to God. He knew that God was going to take care of him, for he saw the “unseen.” God protects His children. We do not know for sure if this army of God was an army of angels, but it would seem so. The Bible has much to say about angels—what they are like and what their purposes are in God’s plan. Here are some things from the Bible that we know about angels:

Angels are created beings (Colossians 1:16) who can speak audibly (Job 4) and can appear as men (Hebrews 13:2).

They worship God (Revelation 5); and they are ministers of God (Psalm 103).

They are ready and willing to do His bidding (Matthew 26:53).

They execute God’s judgment (1 Chronicles 21).

They protect God’s children (this passage, Psalm 91:11,12; Psalm 34:7).

Elisha prayed that God would open his servant’s eyes so that his faith would be strengthened; and he, too, saw the army of God.

Suggested Activity: Coat of Arms

2 Kings 6:19-23

Struck with blindness, those men must have been awfully nervous. They were separated from the main force of the Syrian army with no backup. They followed willingly when the man of God said, "I'll lead you to the man you are looking for." They knew they were vulnerable, but what else could they do? Elisha led the men to Samaria.

When Elisha prayed again, the men could see. What a surprise awaited them. They found themselves inside Samaria, a walled city surrounded by forces of the enemy Israelites! Again, the King of Israel looked to Elisha for wisdom in the situation. He knew only God could have brought this about! It would have been easy for him to put those prisoners to death; after all, it was wartime. Conquest was now made easy. But, God had a different kind of conquest in mind. He desired to conquer their hearts—to show them the glory and grace of the God of Israel. His counsel was to give a great feast! How would you feel if you were set down at a feast; fed as a guest of honor; given back your weapon, and sent back to your commander?! The Bible does not say they sent the soldiers back with a message. But they had a "big" one! What story could these soldiers tell about what happened?

'I was blind, but now I see.'

'I was hungry, they fed me. I was thirsty, they gave me water.'

'I was a prisoner, they freed me. I was sent back to you.'

God's goodness was great! They faced death and were spared. They were shown compassion and mercy by their enemies, the Israelites. The king of Syria was affected deeply by these experiences. "So the bands from Syria stopped raiding Israel's territory." Jesus taught us to love our enemies. He loved and helped those who cursed Him and were against Him. It is the goodness of God that leads one to repentance. Let us remember to show compassion and mercy, just as God did to the blinded Syrian army. And, the next time we are overwhelmed and frightened with the circumstances that surround us, let us remember Elisha's servant when he was surrounded by the Syrian army. What was seen was much less powerful than what was not seen—the mighty army of God! Though we may not see the means and way in which God intends to help us; through the eyes of faith, we can be confident He is present and able to deliver. God protects His children.

6. Prayer

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord that He cares about all of the things that concern us—even if others do not think that they are as important as we do, and that the Lord is always present and able to protect them. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

7. Attention Grabbers

What you will need:

- 1) A long piece of yarn or string (long enough to stretch across your room), masking tape, a small beanbag, and a whistle.
- 2) Events of angels in the Bible written down for guessing.

Carrying out the attention grabber:

1) Beanbag Volley:

For this game, you will need a long piece of yarn or string, masking tape, a small beanbag, and a whistle. The Lord is concerned about everything in our lives--even the little things. Use this game to get the children to think of ways that the Lord has answered prayer in their own family's lives. Form two teams. Have them go to opposite sides of the room. Use a string (or yarn) long enough to go across the room. Tape the ends of the string to the wall on either side of the room. Have the string be at least 1 foot above the children's head. On the board write "Team 1" and "Team 2." When you say, "Go," toss the beanbag to one of the children. They need to give one example of how the Lord has answered a prayer for them. If they do, their team gets one point. If they have a hard time answering, allow another child from their team to give an example. Keep it timed though, (maybe 15 - 30 seconds per answer). If the team cannot answer then the other team receives the point. After they have answered, the child will toss the beanbag over the string for a child to catch on the other team. Keep repeating until everyone has had a turn to catch the beanbag and share how the Lord has answered a prayer. Declare a winning team, but have the children clap and cheer for one another.

2) Who Am I?

In today's lesson we will see an army of angels sent by God and ready to defend His children, Israel. Angels are ministers from the Lord who have helped God's people in many different ways in the Bible. This game, "Who Am I?" is a game of guessing who the angel helped and where it is in the Bible. See if the children can guess where the event is in the Bible and how the angel was used. The following are some examples:

I am a guard. My weapon is a flaming sword. Watching over a tree, who am I? Answer: Genesis 3:24, the angel standing guard over the tree of life.

We came to a city. To rescue a family. Lost one to salt. Who am I? Answer: Genesis 19:1-26, the story of Lot and his family.

We had a parade. Going up and down a ladder. It was like a dream. Who are we? Answer: Genesis 28:12, Jacob and the ladder.

We came at night to a prison. Picked a few locks. Set a great man free. Who am I? Answer: Acts 5:19, Peter in prison is set free

Think of some additional examples to read. God is always at work in our lives and protects us!

8. Activities:

What you will need:

1) Graham crackers, broken into squares (5 squares for each child), cake frosting in a can, tongue depressors, and paper plates.

2) Gray and brown construction paper, scissors, glue, and markers.

3) Balloons, small strips of paper, ribbon or string, markers, and a pin.

4) Construction paper, enough copies of the "Coat of Arms" template for each child in your class, scissors, and markers.

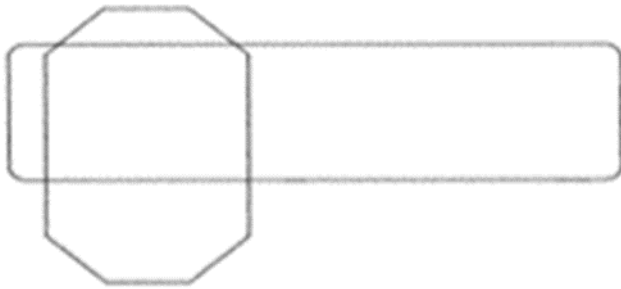
How to carry out the activities:

1) A home for the prophets.

Use this edible craft as an illustration for the story and for snack! In our lesson we saw how the prophets needed a bigger home. We are going to get to build our own home for the prophets--the fun part is that after the story, we will get to eat it! Give each child 5 graham cracker squares and a tongue depressor. Have them spread the frosting with the tongue depressor on the two edges of the graham crackers to make the four walls. Then have them make a roof by placing the remaining section on the top. You may want to remind the children to go light on the frosting! For an added variation, they can try to break out or cut doors and windows in the squares. Have the children set aside their graham cracker houses to take home with them when their parents pick them up.

2) Ax Craft

Using gray and brown construction paper, make an ax. See the example below. Have the children cut out the ax head in gray construction paper and the handle in brown construction paper. Glue the ax head to the handle. Write the memory verse reference and/or theme onto the ax head for the children to take home and remember.



3) Thankful Balloons

You will need balloons, small strips of paper, ribbon or string, markers, and a pin. Write out the following verses about thankfulness on small sheets of paper. Do enough for each child in your class.

2 Corinthians 9:15

1 Thessalonians 5:18

1 Corinthians 15:57

Ephesians 5:20

Philippians 4:6

Psalms 107:1

Insert the small strip of paper into the balloons. Blow up the balloons and tie with a ribbon. Place the balloons around the room. Have the children sit in a semi-circle. Call on one child to select a balloon. Ask the student to think of something to thank God for. After the response, have the child break the balloon with the pin and read the enclosed verse. Continue until all the balloons have been broken.

Variations: You can either insert the papers into the balloons and blow them up before class, or allow the children to do it in class. For younger children you may want to use only one balloon, the popping might frighten some children. You can place all of the strips of paper into the one balloon, pop the balloon and allow the children to get a scripture. Help them to read the verses on thankfulness.

4) Coat of Arms

A coat of arms was kind of like a shield or crest used by families to show others a little bit about themselves. Since we are in the family of God, there are many ways that God has shown His faithfulness in our lives. He provides for us, protects us, loves us and has given us eternal life through Jesus. These are just to name a few. This craft, a coat of arms, can show different ways that God has been faithful in your life. You will need construction paper, copies of the enclosed template (enough for each child in your class), scissors and markers. Take one sheet of construction paper and cut into a shape of a shield, or crest. Next, divide the shield into four sections. In one section, have the child write their name. In the other three sections, have the children choose from the template three things that represent God's faithfulness in their lives (or they can make up their own). The heart for example can represent God's love, the dove can represent the Holy Spirit, the cross represents Jesus dying for us to give us eternal life, and the Bible represents how God speaks to us today. Encourage the children to come up with their own ideas and perhaps share together how the Lord has protected them.

9. Bible text (NIV):

2 Kings 6:1-23

An Ax head Floats

1 The company of the prophets said to Elisha, "Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. 2 Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to meet." And he said, "Go."

3 Then one of them said, "Won't you please come with your servants?"

"I will," Elisha replied. 4 And he went with them. They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees.

5 As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the water. "Oh no, my lord!" he cried out. "It was borrowed!"

6 The man of God asked, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float. 7 "Lift it out," he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it.

Elisha Traps Blinded Arameans

8 Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, "I will set up my camp in such and such a place."

9 The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: "Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there." 10 So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places.

11 This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, "Tell me! Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?"

12 "None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom."

13 "Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan." 14 Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city.

15 When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked.

16 "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

17 And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

18 As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, "Strike this army with blindness." So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.

19 Elisha told them, "This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for." And he led them to Samaria.

20 After they entered the city, Elisha said, "Lord, open the eyes of these men so they can see." Then the Lord opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria.

21 When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, "Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?"

22 "Do not kill them," he answered. "Would you kill those you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master."

23 So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory.

Template - Coat of Arms



