

Elisha Cares About His Enemies

(2 Kings 6:8-23)

Introduction

Has anyone ever

- Been mean to you?
- Called you a name?
- Made fun of you or teased you?
- Left you out of a game?

How did you react? Typically, if someone calls us a name, we call them a name back! Or, if someone sticks their tongue out or makes a face at us, we want to strike back and get even with them!

How do you think God wants us to react?

Our Memory Verse for today tells us how God wants us to treat people who are mean to us. He wants us to show people His kind of love, even when they don't deserve it! He wants us to be kind to people who are mean to us. He wants us to forgive people when they call us names or make fun of us or tease us. He does not want us to lash out and say or do anything that is ungodly.

Today during our class, be thinking about how you should respond to people who are mean to you. Be thinking about how God wants us to treat those who are unkind to us.

Opening Prayer

Father, help us to learn how to have self-control so that we might not sin against You. Help us to always treat everyone with love and respect because that is just how You have treated us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

...love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (Luke 6:27-28)

Lesson

When Elisha was God's prophet in the land of Israel, the king of Aram (present day Syria) was planning to attack Israel. Now when a king is going to fight a battle, he usually doesn't tell his enemies what his plans are—he wants to sneak up and surprise them with an attack! The king only tells his plans to men he can trust, and this is just what the king of Aram did. He called his most trusted officers together and made his plans.

2 Kings 6:8

When the king of Aram was at war with Israel, he would confer with his officers and say, "We will mobilize our forces at such and such a place."

But, when the Aramean army got to the place where the king sent them, there were no Israelite soldiers there for them to attack!

Somehow, God was making it possible for His prophet Elisha to tell the secret plans of the king of Aram to the king of Israel!

2 Kings 6:9-10

But immediately Elisha, the man of God, would warn the king of Israel, "Do not go near that place, for the Arameans are planning to mobilize their troops there." (10) So the king of Israel would send word to the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he would be on the alert there.

This was great for the Israelites but not so good for the king of Aram. And this happened again and again—and again!

2 Kings 6:11

The king of Aram became very upset over this. He called his officers together and demanded, "Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?"

The king of Aram was very angry. He called his officers together; he wanted to know which one of his men was the traitor.

2 Kings 6:12

"It's not us, my lord the king," one of the officers replied. "Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!"

This made the king of Aram angry; he wanted to kill Elisha.

2 Kings 6:13

“Go and find out where he is,” the king commanded, “so I can send troops to seize him.” And the report came back: “Elisha is at Dothan.”

So the king of Aram sent a powerful army of soldiers, horses and chariots to surround Dothan, the city where Elisha was staying.

2 Kings 6:14

So one night the king of Aram sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city.

The next morning, Elisha’s servant got up early and went outside. What he saw there frightened him!

2 Kings 6:15

When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. “Oh, sir, what will we do now?” the young man cried to Elisha.

Elisha’s servant saw the dreaded Aramean army and he asked Elisha what to do.

2 Kings 6:16

“Don’t be afraid!” Elisha told him. “For there are more on our side than on theirs!”

Elisha told him not to worry because their army was bigger than the Aramean army.

His servant must have wondered. *Our army? What army?*

2 Kings 6:17

Then Elisha prayed, “O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!” The LORD opened the young man’s eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.

Suddenly his servant saw that the hills around them were filled with another kind of army—one with horses and chariots of fire! Now he knew that God’s army was right there with them!

Elisha and his servant watched as the Aramean soldiers came into the city toward their house. Elisha knew what to do next—he prayed.

2 Kings 6:18

As the Aramean army advanced toward him, Elisha prayed, “O LORD, please make them blind.” So the LORD struck them with blindness as Elisha had asked.

God answered Elisha’s prayer and struck the Aramean army blind! He watched as the now-blind soldiers stumbled and fumbled and bumbled around. They were completely helpless and didn’t know which way to go!

2 Kings 6:19

Then Elisha went out and told them, “You have come the wrong way! This isn’t the right city! Follow me, and I will take you to the man you are looking for.” And he led them to the city of Samaria.

Elisha walked up to the blind Aramean soldiers and told them to follow him.

So, the Aramean soldiers followed Elisha. They blindly marched on and on and on, trusting Elisha to lead them. Finally, they came to Samaria, the city where the king of Israel lived.

2 Kings 6:20

As soon as they had entered Samaria, Elisha prayed, “O LORD, now open their eyes and let them see.” So the LORD opened their eyes, and they discovered that they were in the middle of Samaria.

As soon as all the enemy soldiers were inside the city, Elisha prayed and asked God to let the Aramean soldiers see again. Imagine the surprise of the Aramean soldiers when they saw where they were and who had been leading them!

Meanwhile the king of Israel saw all these Aramean soldiers marching into town.

2 Kings 6:21

When the king of Israel saw them, he shouted to Elisha, “My father, should I kill them? Should I kill them?”

When the king of Israel saw the Aramean soldiers, he shouted to Elisha, “Should I kill these enemy soldiers that you have brought me?”

But Elisha told him not to kill them. He told them to do something very unexpected.

2 Kings 6:22

“Of course not!” Elisha replied. “Do we kill prisoners of war? Give them food and drink and send them home again to their master.”

Elisha recommended that the king bless them with a feast and a celebration.

2 Kings 6:23

So the king made a great feast for them and then sent them home to their master. After that, the Aramean raiders stayed away from the land of Israel.

The king of Israel must have thought this was a strange way to treat their enemies. If you were the king of Israel, what would you have wanted to do to an army who was always trying to attack you?

It probably wasn't easy, but the king had his servants prepare a huge feast for the enemy soldiers. And when the Aramean soldiers had eaten and drunk all they wanted, Elisha and the king of Israel allowed them to go home as free men! Because of Elisha's kindness to the very army who had wanted to capture him, the Arameans stopped attacking Israel. Elisha's kind actions were unexpected, and they had some very unexpected results!

God wants us to show His kind of love to everyone, even people who don't deserve it. What are some ways you could be kind to people who are mean to you? (Pray for people who call us names and tease us. Walk away from an argument. Pick them for a team at recess. Share a treat from your lunch. Sit by them on the bus if they have no friends. Be patient with brothers and sisters.)

God knows it won't be easy. But remember that God showed His love for us by sending His Son, Jesus, to die for everyone, even people who sin and say bad things about Him or who treat Jesus like their enemy.

Closing Prayer

Father, when someone treats me unfairly, or is unkind to me, I pray that You will fill me with the power of the Holy Spirit so that I might hold my anger; so that I might not lash out and say or do anything that would displease You. Please give me the power to love my enemies. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Foil Etching

Materials: heavy aluminum foil, ruler, scissors, cardboard, craft knife, crayons, pencils, tape.

Preparation: Cut aluminum foil into squares at least 8" x 8" in size, one square for each student. Cut squares of cardboard a bit smaller than the foil. Make a foil etching following the directions below.

Procedure:

1. Have each student color heavily over a square of foil, making patterns and using as many different colors as desired. Dark-colored crayons work best. Encourage the students to color carefully so that they do not tear the aluminum foil. Bring some extra foil to class in case of tears.
2. When the student finishes coloring, have them use a pencil to write a phrase from Luke 6:27-28 on the colored foil, such as, "Do good to those who hate you." Or, optionally, they can draw a picture of something which reminds them to care for others they dislike or who may dislike them. The pencil will take away the color, leaving a silver message or pictures. Make sure they use a rounded (rather than newly sharpened) pencil and work on a hard tabletop to make the message appear most clearly.

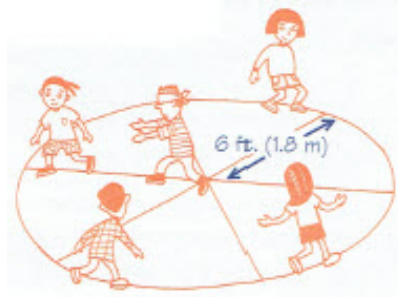
- When the student finishes writing or drawing, have them lay the foil square over the cardboard square and mount it by taping the edges of the foil to the back of the cardboard.

Game Center

Tag and Talk

Preparation:

Make a circle 10 to 15 feet wide. Make three lines across the center to divide the circle into 6 equal sections.



Procedure:

Play a game of tag in which "It" is blindfolded. Lead "It" to the center of the circle. Students stand around the circle on the lines. On "Go," students begin walking quickly along the lines in any direction they want, trying to stay away from "It". But they must stay on the lines. "It" may walk anywhere to tag a student. (If no one is tagged within one minute, add the rule that the students must freeze in one place.) When "It" tags someone, that student tells a way in which God wants us to care for people who are mean to us and then becomes "It".

(If a child needs help in thinking of answers, ask Questions 13-16.)

Penny Toss

Divide class into teams of 4. Give each team a penny. Volunteer in each team flips coin at your signal. Volunteer whose coin lands on *Heads* answers one of the review questions. [Optional: child with correct answers gets to draw a card with point values for his team or use a spinner.]

Or, use the following questions in a game of your choice:

- When the Aramean army attacked Israel, why were there no Israelites there? (God had told Elisha the Aramean's secret plans.)

- When the king of Aram found out that Elisha was telling his secret plans to the king of Israel, what did he do? (He wanted to kill Elisha so he sent a powerful army to surround Dothan, the city where Elisha was staying.)
- What did Elisha's servant see that frightened him so much? (The morning after the Aramean soldiers surround the city, Elisha's servant got up early and went outside and saw the dreaded Aramean army.)
- How did Elisha comfort his servant? (Elisha told him not to worry because their army was bigger than the Aramean army.)
- What did Elisha ask God to show his servant? (The heavenly army.)
- What did Elisha ask the Lord to do to his enemies? (Strike them blind.)
- How did Elisha care for his enemies? (He led them when they couldn't see where to go. He kept the king from killing them.)
- What did Elisha tell the king of Israel to do to the enemy soldiers? (Give them a feast.)
- In our lesson today, what did Elisha do that was surprising? (Told the king of Israel where the Aramean army was going to attack. Told the king of Israel to feed his enemies a big feast and let them go.)
- Who couldn't see in our story today? (Elisha's servant when he couldn't see God's army. The Aramean army when Elisha led them to the king of Israel.)
- How do kids your age usually treat people who are mean to them?
- How does Jesus command us to treat people who are mean to us? (See Luke 6:27-28)
- In what way does Luke 6:27-28 tell us to care for people we dislike or who may dislike us?

14. What are some ways you can do good to people who dislike you at school? At home? In your neighborhood? (Pray for people who dislike you. Pick them for a team at recess. Share a treat from your lunch. Sit by them on the bus if they have no friends. Be patient with brothers and sisters.)
15. What could you do to follow Luke 6:27-28 when you feel mad at a brother or sister? When you feel left out by kids at school? When someone makes fun of you, or calls you a name, or teases you, or picks a fight with you?
16. How might it surprise other kids if you did what Luke 6:27-28 tells you to do? How would that help them learn about God?

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