

DO WHAT TO YOUR ENEMY?

by Jeff Linthicum and Carol Duerksen

KEY VERSE:

II Kings 6: 23 "So he prepared for them a great feast; after they ate and drank, he sent them on their way, and they went to their master. And the Arameans no longer came raiding into the land of Israel."

FAITH STORY:

II Kings 6: 8-23

FAITH FOCUS:

The King of Aram was at war with Israel, and the prophet Elisha kept warning the King of Israel about the movements of the Arameans so they could remain safe. This angered the King of Aram and he demanded to know who the traitor in his midst was. When told it was the prophet in Israel, he sent a great army to capture Elisha. When the army arrived, Elisha prayed for the eyes of the Arameans' eyes to be blinded. After their eyes were blinded, he led them to the King of Israel. The King of Israel asked Elisha if he should kill them, but Elisha told him to feed them and send them home. This act of mercy and non-resistance put a temporary end to the raiding by the Arameans.

SESSION GOAL:

To help students realize the power of a loving response to an enemy.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the session students will be familiar with an Old Testament story and Jesus' words regarding a non-violent response to our enemies, and will have processed their own response to an "enemy" in their lives.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1** Dartboard and darts
- 2** 1 8x10 picture of Jesus (if you have the Nov/Dec 2004 issue of WITH Magazine, that'll work. If you need a copy, email carold@mennoniteusa.org)
- 3** 1 8x10 piece of construction paper
- 4** One piece of 3x5 paper and pen for each student
- 5** Scotch tape
- 6** Bibles for each student
- 7** A CD player and a CD with a song that challenges listeners to follow Jesus, love our enemies—something on that theme. If you don't have a song, call several youth prior to class and ask them to bring one.

NOTE TO TEACHER: Take time before the lesson to think of ways you have responded positively to people you had a hard time getting along with; and a time when you just ignored or didn't deal very well with a person you didn't like.

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5–10 minutes)

Before the youth arrive, tape the picture of Jesus to the dartboard and put the construction paper over it.

When the youth arrive, hand out the 3 x 5 papers and pens to the students. Tell them to write down a name of someone they know that they dislike or have a hard time getting along with. After they've written the names, ask them to tape their paper to the construction paper with the name on the inside so others can't see who they wrote down.

When all the pieces of paper are taped on the board, instruct students to take turns throwing the darts, telling them to try to hit their piece of paper.

After everyone has had several chances to throw the darts, ask them to sit down.

CONNECT: (3–5 minutes)

Remove the construction paper to reveal the picture of Jesus. Allow students to study the picture of Jesus.

Ask: How do you feel? Would you have been willing to throw the darts at the picture of Jesus if you'd seen it earlier? Why or why not?

Ask students: Why do you think I "tricked" you like this? What was the point of this exercise? (To illustrate the point that the way we treat others is the way we treat Jesus, and the way we treat Jesus is the way we should treat others.)

Place the construction paper with the students' slips of paper back over the picture of Jesus.

Transition Statement: *"We have a very interesting story today. It's an Old Testament story about when the enemies of Israel were treated as Christ would want them to be treated."*

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (20 minutes)

Ask students to divide themselves into two groups: Group A is Actors and Group S is Storytellers. Tell both groups to read Kings 6:8-23, and to use the student worksheet to prepare a story or skit to share the story with the class. The Storytellers can use the worksheet outline to tell the story, filling in the details of each section. Remind them that the important thing is to tell the story, not read it. The Actors should assign parts and act out the story. When each group is ready, they can share their presentation with the whole group.

After the presentations, lead the students in a round of applause. (A round of applause is clapping your hands in a large circle in front of you.) Using the Scripture Insights as background information, lead a discussion about this story: **Questions to ask:**

- 1 Why was the ending of this story so unusual?
- 2 Why do you think Elisha told the king to feed them and let them return home?
- 3 Is the true essence of Biblical non-resistance just avoiding our enemies, or is it going the extra mile and being active in loving our enemies?
- 4 What did Jesus say about this? (Encourage students to find passages that state what Jesus said.)

APPLY: (5–7 minutes)

Share your own personal story or stories of times when you have felt good, and not so good, about how you've related to someone with whom you didn't get along.

Ask students to turn to Matthew 5:38-48 (they may have located this passage in the previous activity already.) Ask students to go to the dartboard, remove their paper, and place it in their Bible at the Matthew passage. Ask students to go through the passage, quietly on their own, and substitute their person's name for each word in the passage that refers to an enemy, such as "evildoer," "anyone," "enemy," or "unrighteous."

RESPOND: (5–7 minutes)

Play the CD. Ask students to think about what God might be calling them to do that is pro-active in relationship to the person named on their card. They should refer to the Bible text—it makes some strong suggestions about how to be pro-active. Ask them to write down what God is saying to them. Encourage students to take their card home and follow through. Close with a prayer, naming each student one at a time, and asking God to give them strength and courage to follow through on what they wrote on their cards.

INSIGHTS FROM THE SCRIPTURE:

The story of the prophet Elisha releasing the prisoners with a meal is one of great mercy. It has the enemy—the Arameans—coming to capture Elisha because he'd been "snitching;" to Israel about the Arameans' strategy in fighting Israel. In the midst of coming to capture Elisha, the raiding party is blinded by the prayer of the prophet. The word for blindness used here is only used one other time in the Bible (Genesis 19:11). The definition is unknown, but both uses of the term involve a spectacular or miraculous act (1), and both are used for deliverance from danger.

When Elisha tells the army they are at the wrong city, and leads them to Samaria, the story shows that the army was more deceived than blinded. When Elisha shows up in Samaria, leading the enemy into the king of Israel's hands, the king is naturally quite overjoyed. He's ready to kill them, and asks Elisha if that's what he should do.

Elisha's reply is way out of character for that day and age. His response is to not kill them but to "Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink; and let them go to their master." (II Kings 6:22b.) This act is in direct opposition to all the customs of that age—the custom of that time would be to kill your enemies. IF you would take prisoners they would be forever your slaves. (2). This story stands out like an isolated mountain peak, high above the moral level of those days, and connects directly with the message Jesus would bring to the earth many years later.

END NOTES:

1 Word Biblical Commentary #13 II Kings

2 The Interpreters Bible #3

DO WHAT TO YOUR ENEMY? • Student Worksheet

Once Upon A Time There Was A King...

2 Kings 6:8-10

And The King Got Ticked Off...

Verses 11-14

*Meanwhile, Back At Home With God's Man And His
Administrative Assistant...*

Verses 15-17

Now God's Man Had A Plan...

Verses 18-19

And The King Of Israel Had A Plan...

Verses 20-22

Eat, Drink And Be Merry!!???

Verse 23a

And They All Lived Happily (For A Few More Years)

Verse 23b