



the miracle worker

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 4.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 19.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Summarizing the heart of this lesson, Ellen White said: “The lesson is for God’s children in every age. When the Lord gives a work to be done, let not men stop to inquire into the reasonableness of the command or the probable result of their efforts to obey” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 243). This challenge to boldly pursue the work God calls us to do—in spite of how unreasonable or impossible it seems—is an exciting invitation to put one’s faith fully in Him. When we do this, miracles are often the result.

Second Kings 4 tells of the following miracles: the widow’s oil multiplied, the dead boy raised to life, the poison in stew purified, and the prophets’ food multiplied. To teach about these miracles, it is helpful to understand the context of the ancient world and the popularity of Baal worship. Baal was a false god worshipped by many Israelites. He was the god of rain, fire, and crops; moreover he required child sacrifice. Elisha’s miracles demonstrate the power of the true God over the domain of Baal. The story of the dead boy being raised to life stands in contrast to Baal’s requirement of child sacrifice and illustrates the priority God puts on the life of a child.

While this lesson is primarily about miracles, there are other topics you may wish to explore with your group. The key text emphasizes that Elisha was a holy man. You could unpack what that means and challenge your students to live similar lives of holiness. The corresponding chapter in *Prophets and Kings* is titled “A Prophet of Peace.” You could look at this virtue and

discuss what peace and contentment look like today. Another theme that emerges from this study is the topic of kindness. Ellen White comments: “The kindly spirit that enabled Elisha to exert a powerful influence over the lives of many in Israel is revealed in the story of his friendly relations with a family dwelling at Shunem” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 237). Whatever direction you take this lesson, clearly God is calling us to do His biddings in the spirit of Elisha.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Consider the miraculous works of God. (*Know*)
- Sense the possibilities when fully trusting God. (*Feel*)
- Be challenged to live a life of faith. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

- Gift of prophecy¹
- Authority/respect
- Contentment/peace

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

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.

Divide the class into two groups and separate them so they cannot hear the other group. Give each group two minutes to write down all the miracles they can think of that are in the Bible. They are not allowed to use their Bibles. After the two minutes have each team read their list. Cancel out all of the same miracles that are on both lists. Have each team tally up the miracles listed that were not included on the other team's list. The team with the most miracles wins!

Next, share a personal experience of a miracle. This might be a story of surviving an accident, receiving a miraculous healing, observing an event that can't logically be explained, etc. Another option would be to invite a guest who would share either a personal story of a miracle or tell of a story they have heard. A third option would be to simply read a story of a miracle.

Illustration

Share this illustration from Mark Galli's book, Jesus Mean and Wild:

A group of Laotian refugees who had been attending the Sacramento church I pastored approached me after the service one Sunday and asked to become members. Our church had sponsored them, and they had been attending the church only a few months. They had only a rudimentary understanding of the Christian faith, so I suggested we study the Gospel of Mark together for a few weeks to make sure they knew what a commitment to Christ and His church entailed. They happily agreed.

Despite the Laotians' lack of Christian knowledge—or maybe because of it—the Bible studies were some of the most interesting I've ever led. After we read the passage in which Jesus calms the storm, I began as I usually did with more theologically sophisticated groups: I asked them about the storms in their lives. There was a puzzled look among my Laotian friends, so I elaborated: We all have storms—problems, worries, troubles, crises—and this story teaches that Jesus can give us peace in the midst of those storms. “So what are your storms?” I asked.

Again, more puzzled silence. Finally, one of the men hesitantly asked, “Do you mean that Jesus actually calmed the wind and sea in the middle of a storm?”

I thought he was finding the story incredulous, and I didn't want to get distracted with the problem of miracles. So I replied: “Yes, but we should not get hung up on the details of the miracle. We should remember that Jesus can calm the storms in our lives.”

Another stretch of awkward silence ensued until another replied, “Well, if Jesus calmed the wind and the waves, He must be a powerful man!”²

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Mark Galli follows his story with this postscript: “At this, they all nodded vigorously and chattered excitedly to one another in Lao. Except for me, the room was full of wonder. I suddenly realized that they grasped the story better than I did.”

In what way did the Laotian refugees understand the miracle of Jesus calming the waters better than the pastor?

Do the miracles in the Bible ever seem as if they are from another time and another place, and God doesn't perform the same kind of miracles today?

How does one retain a sense of wonder for the miracles that occur today?

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

Divide the students into four groups and have them act out the four miracles in 2 Kings 4 (the widow's oil, the Shunammite's son restored to life, death in the pot, and the feeding of a hundred). After you have enjoyed the dramatic sketches of the stories, engage the students in a conversation by using the following questions:

When you see God at work caring for the widow, raising the Shunammite's son from the dead, and so on, what does this tell you about God? Is the God of the New Testament any different than the God of the Old Testament? Explain. How might these miracles help us keep God's harsh judgment toward the unrepentant in proper perspective?

Elisha is remembered as a man who performed many miracles to help those in need. Can you think of a better legacy that you could leave? Explain. How do you want to be remembered? How should you live today so that you can be remembered as you want to be?

Sharing Context and Background

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

There are different words in the Bible that can be translated as “miracle.” However, each word carries with it a unique nuance. Among the most common words we call “miracles” are the following:

1. *Terata*—Wonders

Terata is usually translated “wonders” (see Matthew 24:24; John 4:48; Acts 2:43; 5:12; 6:8; 15:12; Romans 15:19). This word indicates the state of mind of those eyewitnesses who experienced miracles. To the witnesses, such a display of power was contrary to their expectations—opposite to anything with which they were accustomed.

Such miracles, however, were not merely “wonders,” producing momentary amazement. The focus was on their purpose and their inner spiritual appeal. A good example of this is the healing of the crippled man in Lystra (see Acts 14:8-15).

2. *Semeia*—Signs

Semeia is usually translated “signs.” In 2 Corinthians 12:12 the apostle Paul wrote: “The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance” (NIV). The purpose in these “signs” was to be an indication of the near presence and working of God and proof of the authentic nature of revelation. For example, the “signs” or “miracles” of Christ authenticated His divine calling and His nature as the Son of God. These signs were evident in the work of the disciples (see Mark 6:30). Similarly, the signs and miracles performed by Paul and Barnabas testified of God’s Spirit at work in them (Acts 14:3). Hebrews 2:3, 4 (NIV) puts it like this:

“This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

3. *Dunamis*—Power

Dunamis is usually translated “power.” Miracles can be considered “powers” in that they show the mighty power of God that was evident in Jesus, “the Great Power of God” (Acts 8:10, NASB). This word suggests that there are higher forces at work in this lower world of ours (see Hebrews 6:5). The plural form, “powers,” is the same word translated “mighty works” (Matthew 11:20; Mark 6:14; Luke 10:13) and “miracles” (Acts 19:11; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; Galatians 3:5).

These three words are combined in one verse—“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles [*dunamesi*], wonders [*terasi*] and signs [*semeiois*], which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22, NIV).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask the students to form small groups and discuss the following question: If you had a guarantee that God would perform any miracle in your life right now,

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**

Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **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 read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

The Power of Personal Testimony

It is important not to allow this lesson to slip into the ethereal realm—totally removed from any reality in the life of the teenager sitting in your Sabbath School class. Students might be tempted to blow off the topic of miracles as something that “possibly happened in Bible times but they certainly don’t happen today.”

Included in the teacher’s helps this week are a couple of contemporary miracle stories. While you can share these stories—and hopefully they will make a strong impact—there is no substitute for the power of a personal testimony. Therefore, to really make this lesson sing, share from your own story. While you may not have a personal story of some dramatic miracle (“I died and then four days later I was raised from the dead—just like Lazarus . . .”), chances are you have experienced signs, wonders, and the power of God in your life. Share these stories and help the young people see the miracles in everyday life.

RABBI 101

what miracle would you pray for? Covenant with one another in your small group to make each individual request a matter of prayer. Keep one another posted on any answers to prayer.

Summary

Share the following as a conclusion to this lesson:

Dr. Ben Carson tells of facing the seemingly inevitable death of a patient, the father of three children.

Lord, I need a booster here, I remember praying. You could do wonders for my faith right now.

Within two days, Rob was off the respirator. A few days after Rob went home there was an interesting development. Since I first entered the field of medicine, I have met doctors who have difficulty dealing with unanswerable situations. Often they’ll finally admit, “Well, there’s some explanation, we just don’t understand it.”

One of the neurosurgeons, an especially brilliant man and one who doesn’t acknowledge a belief in God, pondered this matter of Rob for several days. He asked question after question, determined to figure out an answer. None of us could offer an explanation for Rob’s recovery.

“I know, but I think I’ve finally figured it out,” he said. “It’s the mitochondria at the subcellular level, and they can go into shock.”

I listened to his explanation before I asked him a question. “Tell me, did you ever see such a thing before?”

“No, not really, but . . .”

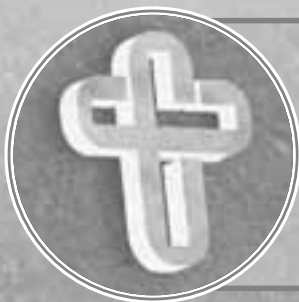
“This is a miracle,” I said. “Why not accept it for what it is? They don’t come any more blatantly than this. Rob was gone and now he’s back. This is the only time I’ve ever seen an adult sink to such a low neurological level and then recover.”

As my final statement I said, “We don’t have to explain miracles; all we have to do is accept them.”³

¹ Fundamental Belief No. 18.

² Mark Galli, *Jesus Mean and Wild* (Baker, 2006), p. 112.

³ Adapted from www.homeandholidays.com/files2/viewarticle.php?articleid=6399.



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*, chapter 19.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.