

# LEPERS WITH GOOD NEWS

2 Kings 6:24 - 7:20

## STRUCTURE

**Key-persons:** Elisha, King of Israel, king's chief officer, and four lepers

**Key-location:** Samaria, capital city of Israel, the Northern Kingdom

### Key-repetitions:

- Despair/desperation: Israel's king during the siege (2 Kin 6:27-30); woman who cried out to the king (2 Kin 6:26-29); four lepers (2 Kin 7:3-5); the mob that trampled the chief officer (2 Kin 7:17).
- Prices: Cost of food during the siege (2 Kin 6:25); Elisha foretold that the next day food prices would be dirt cheap (2 Kin 7:1); prices became dirt cheap (2 Kin 7:16).
- Elisha foretold: the king was sending someone to execute him (2 Kin 6:32); the next day food would be dirt cheap (2 Kin 7:1); the chief officer would not eat the cheap food (2 Kin 7:2); things happened just as Elisha foretold (2 Kin 7:18-20).

### Key-attitudes:

- Despair/desperation during the siege.
- Elisha's confidence in the Lord.
- Aramean soldiers' panic when they heard what sounded like an approaching army.
- Four lepers' selfishness when they plundered the abandoned Arameans' tents.
- Four lepers' shame when they realized they were silent about good news.
- The king's fear that the Arameans' deserted camp was a trap.

### Initial-situation:

Elisha was a prophet in the nation of Israel where Samaria was the capital city. All the kings of Israel promoted idolatry and immorality.

### Initial-problem:

The king of Aram mobilized his entire army and laid siege to Samaria. This brought a terrible famine in the city.

### Final-situation:

Things happened just as Elisha foretold to the king, "This time tomorrow, a sack of flour or two sacks of barley will sell dirt cheap." Also things happened as Elisha foretold to the chief officer, "You'll see it with your own eyes, but you'll not eat any of the food!" That is exactly what happened to the chief officer, because the people trampled the chief officer to death at the city gate.

## BIBLE STORY

The king of Aram mobilized his entire army and laid siege to Samaria. This resulted in a terrible famine in the city. The siege lasted so long that a donkey's head sold for two pounds of silver, and a bowl of dove manure for two ounces of silver (2 Kin 6: 24-25).

A woman cried out to the king of Israel, "Help me, Your Majesty, the king!"

The king replied, "If the Lord doesn't help you, how can I help you? What's the matter?"

She answered, "This woman said to me, 'Let's eat your son today, and tomorrow we'll eat my son.' We cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Now, let's eat your son,' but she hid him."

The king heard the woman and ripped his robes. Underneath his robe, he wore sackcloth. The king said, "May God punish me, if Elisha's head remains on his shoulders today!" (2 Kin 6:26-31).

Elisha was in his house with some elders. Elisha told the elders, "This murderer is sending someone to cut off my head."

The executor and the king arrived. The king said, "This disaster is from the Lord. I'm fed up with the Lord!"

Elisha said, "Hear the word of the Lord. This time tomorrow, a sack of flour or two sacks of barley will sell dirt cheap."

The king's chief officer spoke, "That can't happen, even if the Lord opens trapdoors from heaven."

Elisha warned the chief officer, "You'll see it with your own eyes, but you'll not eat any of the food!" (2 Kin 6:32-7:2).

Four men with leprosy were sitting outside the city gate. They said to each other, "Why stay here until we die? If we enter the famine-struck city, we'll die. If we stay here, we'll die. Let's go to the Aramean camp. They might kill us; they might let us live."

The lepers went to the Aramean camp at nightfall and didn't find anybody. The Lord caused the Arameans to hear what sounded like chariots, horses, and a mighty army marching. The Arameans panicked and ran for their lives, abandoning tents, horses, and donkeys.

The four lepers reached the camp and entered a tent. They ate and drank, and carried away silver, gold, and clothes and hid them. They returned and entered another tent, looted it, and hid their plunder.

Then the lepers said to each other, "We're doing wrong. Today we have good news and we're keeping it to ourselves. Let's report this news to the king's palace."

The four lepers went to Samaria and shouted to the gatekeepers, "We went into the Aramean camp and the place was deserted, only horses and donkeys were tied to something." The gatekeepers reported the news to the palace.

The king was afraid of a trap and sent out two chariots with horses to investigate. The men found the road strewn with clothing and equipment which the Arameans threw away in their panic. The messengers returned and reported to the king. The people went

out and looted the Aramean camp. So a bag of flour and two bags of barley became dirt cheap, as the Lord had promised.

Now the king had put his chief officer to guard the gate. But the people turned into a mob and trampled the chief officer to death at the city gate. Things happened just as Elisha foretold the king, "This time tomorrow, a sack of flour or two sacks of barley will sell dirt cheap." Things also happened as Elisha foretold of the chief officer, "You'll see it with your own eyes, but you'll not eat any of the food!" That is exactly what happened to the chief officer, because the people trampled the chief officer to death at the city gate (2 Kin 7:3-19).

### GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

### SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How bad did things get in Samaria when it was under siege?
2. Why did the king plan to kill Elisha?
3. Why did the king blame God for the disaster?
4. When we face desperate situations, who do we tend to blame?
5. What predictions did Elisha make?
6. How did the lepers react to finding wealth in the Arameans' abandoned camp?
7. Why is it wrong to keep silent about good news?
8. What happened to the king's skeptical chief officer?
9. Today, what is the result of doubting God's promises?
10. Why do people have reasons to trust God?

### LIFE-LESSONS

1. **People suffering as consequences of wrong choices, often blame God and his messengers.** Israel's king blamed Elisha for the famine and troubles of the siege; when in fact, the disaster was caused by the sins of the king and the people (2 Kin 6:31-33).
2. **When people are desperate, God has the opportunity to magnify his own power.** The king of Israel and his chief officer despaired of any hope and were convinced that God could not help them. Elisha foretold that the next day food would sell at bargain prices. The king and his chief officer didn't believe Elisha's prophecy; however, God made it happen (2 Kin 7:1-20).
3. **God's promises come true, even to people who say it can't happen.** Elisha

prophesied God's deliverance, but the king's chief officer said it couldn't happen (2 Kin 6:1-2). However, God's words came true (2 Kin 7:14-16).

4. **Skepticism is a sin against God, and deprives the skeptic of blessings that God is ready to grant.** The king's chief officer disbelieved Elisha's prediction that cheap food would be available the next day. Consequently, he was unable to participate in the blessing (2 Kin 7:1-2, 16-20). Skepticism on the part of individuals can have national consequences. The Israelites had to wander in the wilderness for forty years because of unbelief (Nu 13:25-14:38). See Matthew 13:58 and Hebrews 3:16-19.
5. **Good news needs to be shared. The person who is blessed by God should share the news with others so they too can receive the same blessing.** The lepers found the Arameans' camp vacated and they discovered wealth beyond their wildest dreams. It was a time of good news. It is wrong to hide good news (2 Kin 7:3-9).
6. **Both God's threats and his promises will be accomplished.** Elisha foretold both the promise of food at a bargain price and the death of the king's unbelieving chief officer. Both came true (2 Kin 7:1-2, 17-20). Both God's threat that unbelievers will be damned and God's promise that believers will be saved will be accomplished.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### Twitter Prayers (short, concise prayers):

Invite listeners to pray about the story in "twitter" length prayers. Tell God:

- How they feel about the story.
- How they are similar to or different from Israel's king and his chief officer who blamed God for their troubles.
- Pray for people who are in a desperate situation, that they will have faith in God.
- How they are similar to or different from the lepers who kept silent about good news.