



SESSION 3: OPEN TO SURPRISE (INCLUSIVITY/ASSET-BASED THINKING)



SESSION 3: OPEN TO SURPRISE (INCLUSIVITY/ASSET-BASED THINKING)

The healing of Namaan, 2 Kings 5:1-14

Ministry on your behalf: Companion Synod relationship, missionaries

Where and how is ministry happening that I am not directly involved?

For directions on preparing for each session, review the “Accompaniment Bible Study Introduction.” Please note that in order to provide you with flexibility and choices in adapting each session to your particular setting, this facilitator guide contains more material than can be covered in a one-hour session. The guiding questions in the right column indicated in red provide the core elements of the study and should be ample material for a one-hour session.

SUMMARY

In response to global changes in Christianity, the ELCA has learned from our partner churches in Latin America, Africa, and Asia to approach mission work through the lens of “Accompaniment” — walking together. It is not a new theology but rather a new understanding of mission theology — one that responds to the changing reality that while historically the “global North” has sent missionaries, and the “global South” has received them, today there are more Christians in the global South than in the global North! As we have explored in the last two sessions of this study, Accompaniment is not a new concept. The Bible often models this approach to partnering across differences of power, resources and culture. That’s definitely the case in today’s story of the healing of Naaman.

ACCOMPANIMENT VALUE: INCLUSIVITY

God calls us to include everyone in the mission of reconciliation, yet we know that all communities exclude someone. In accompanying one another, we look to see who is excluded, and why, and commit to change community structures and habits that can exclude people without any deliberate intention. For those who experience exclusion, as well as for those who are “inside,” it takes great effort and courage to continue to attempt to build relationship across boundaries. Inclusivity requires self-reflection and honesty about our own communities and relationship. We often must ask ourselves “Who is part of our community? Who is absent? Why?”

ACCOMPANIMENT CAPACITY: ASSET-BASED THINKING

We learn to see our companion and ourselves as people and organizations with many assets, gifts and strengths, and to identify what these are. Acknowledging asymmetries of power in relationship, we work to recognize that what has been seen as negative can actually be positive, a strength and a resource to contribute to God’s mission of reconciliation.



<p>Welcome participants as they come in. Give a special welcome to anyone who is new to the group.</p> <p>You may want to begin with a brief summary of the last session and ask participants to share reflections about any of the “From Head to Heart” activities they did over the week or other things that stayed with them from the first sessions.</p>	<p>Welcome and Opening Prayer (2 min)</p> <p><i>You may offer an opening prayer or invite a participant to lead the group in prayer.</i></p>
<p>Depending on the question you choose from the right, write either the word “Missionary” or both “Mission” and “Service” on a chalkboard or flip chart. Ask participants to quickly name any words or images that come to mind when they hear these words. This is meant to be brainstorming, so it will be most effective if people just call out anything that comes to mind, without worrying about it being “right” or “what you are looking for.” Jot down words or phrases that capture what people are calling out. Encourage conversation about what the group has come up with, paying particular attention to any statements of awareness about the complex history of mission work — which includes both great sacrifice and work on behalf of the gospel, as well as a challenging legacy influenced by colonialism, cultural insensitivity, etc.</p> <p>Philip Jenkins is a widely published historian of religion. His recent research has focused on the impact of globalization on religion, particularly the growth of Christianity in the “Global South.” In this quote, “Western Christianity” refers to the impact that North America and Europe have had</p>	<p>Make disciples of all nations (8-10 min)</p> <p>Engage the group in conversation about one or both of these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What words or images come to mind when you hear the word “missionary”?</i>• <i>Your daughter, grandson or friend asks you to support them financially as they volunteer for a year-long program abroad. What kinds of questions would you want to ask them? What difference would it make for you if they refer to the program as a year of “mission work” or a year of “service work”?</i> <p><i>In his book, “The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity,” Philip Jenkins writes:</i></p> <p><i>By 2050, only about 1/5 of the world’s 3 billion Christians will be non-Hispanic Whites ... The era of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning. The fact of change is itself undeniable: it has happened, and will continue to happen (page 3).</i></p> <p><i>What is your reaction to this statement? Does it sound right to you? Where have you seen or experienced this shift happening?</i></p> <p><i>What difference should this shifting reality make in how we approach mission work today?</i></p> <p><i>Transition into today’s biblical story by reading out-loud the “SUMMARY” for this session (above).</i></p>



<p>on Christian thought and identity, and “Southern Christianity” to the growing impact of Latin America, Africa and Asia on the future of Christianity.</p> <p>TIP: It may be helpful to have the statement from Jenkins’ book written out so that all can see it.</p> <p>EXTRA: Find a link to a video of a presentation by Philip Jenkins in the “From Head to Heart” section.</p>	
<p>CROSS-GENERATIONAL TIP: The story of Naaman is an epic story, involving power and intrigue — it is a story for the “big screen.” As a way to engage visual learners, invite participants to identify an actor to “play” each of the roles in this session’s biblical story. List the characters on the chalkboard and invite participants to name famous actors who could play the roles as you read the story. You could provide the following examples: Naaman: Brad Pitt in “Troy” or Russel Crowe in “Gladiator” Elisha (he was probably a bit of a wild man like his mentor Elijah): Jim Carrey in “Mr. Popper’s Penguins” or Steve Martin in “Pink Panther” Sir Anthony Hopkins would make a great King of Aram and Adam Sandler could play the rather anxious King of Israel.</p> <p>Israel and Samaria: From New Testament stories, we are familiar with the tensions between Samaritans and Jews. These tensions developed with the split of Israel’s kingdom into Northern (Israel) and Southern (Judah) Kingdoms and became more complex after the Babylonian exile. The story of Naaman takes place early in that</p>	<p>Though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy (8-10 min)</p> <p>Read 2 Kings 5:1-3</p> <p>What do you hear? What do you notice? What stands out to you?</p> <p>Imagine that you are making a movie of this story. What would be the characteristics of the actor you would want to play Naaman? What title and position would he hold if the story took place today in the United States? What kind of disease would be equivalent to the leprosy of his day?</p> <p>Who would play the role of the young girl in the story?</p> <p>From the short introduction to the story, what kinds of tensions do you think there were between the Arameans (whose army Naaman leads) and the Israelites (where the young girl is from)?</p> <p>Given his position and influence, Naaman would likely have already tried everything he could think of to deal with his leprosy. How do you think he would have heard the advice of the young girl from Israel?</p>



<p>process, therefore there is reference in the text to both Israel and Samaria. The young girl in the story is taken from “the land of Israel” (the Northern Kingdom) where Elisha the prophet lived, in the area of Samaria.</p>	
<p>There is quite a bit of humor and tension built into this story, which can be easily missed unless the group really gets into the story. Help participants delve into the thickening plot by exploring things like the tensions between Aram and Israel (the former had just defeated the latter at the hands of Naaman) and the assumptions Naaman makes that he can “buy” his healing (the young girl from Israel didn’t tell him he needed to go to the kings, nor that he needed to bring such large offerings with him).</p> <p>Tearing of clothes was a common expression of grief and distress (e.g., Genesis 37:34 and Job 1:20). The King of Israel is understandably distressed by the expectation that he figure out how to heal Naaman (who recently defeated him!) from leprosy. His mistake, of course, is to assume that as “the leader” he is the one who has to come up with the answers, rather than recognizing that it is not all up to him — Elisha will invite him, and Naaman, to learn that “there is a God in Israel.”</p> <p>We live in a broken world, one that is often marked by “asymmetries” — inequalities in power or resources. Our work of mission has in the past — and unless we are careful it can be in our present — been plagued by hidden motives that must be examined. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The imperialist motive (turning “natives” into docile subjects of colonial authorities)	<p>Am I God, to give death or life...? (8-10 min)</p> <p>Read 2 Kings 5:4-7</p> <p>What do you hear? What do you notice? What stands out to you?</p> <p>Continue imagining that you’re making a movie of this story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How would you stage the scene of Naaman deciding to go to his master, the King of Aram, with this request?• What would the scene look like as the King of Israel sees Naaman coming toward him, letter in hand and with a huge caravan. <p>Contrast what the young girl from Israel told Naaman to do (verse 3) with what he actually does. Why do you think Naaman goes to the kings instead of directly to Elisha? Why does he feel the need to bring an official letter from his king as well as such lavish gifts?</p> <p>Naaman’s power, position and wealth make the king of Israel feel “set up.” If he can’t deliver, he feels he will be in trouble. Have you ever been in a situation in which your position of power, privilege or wealth complicated your relationship with someone else?</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The cultural motive (mission as the transfer of the missionary’s “superior” culture)• The romantic motive (the desire to go to far away, exotic countries and peoples)• The ecclesiastical colonialism motive (the urge to export one’s own confession and church order to other territories)	
<p>EXTRA: The relationship between kings and prophets in the Bible was often tense — perhaps somewhat akin to the contemporary relationship between politicians and “the media”! Prophets were always calling kings to task, and kings struggle for popularity and power with prophets. This tension is played up in the interaction between the King of Israel and the prophet Elisha. If participants are interested in this, you could explore the following question together: “How would you stage the interaction between Elisha and the King of Israel? What tensions do you think existed between them?”</p> <p>From early childhood, we organize the world into categories — man/woman, adult/child, friend/stranger. These categories help us make sense of a complex world; however, they also greatly limit our ability to receive others for who they are and can lead to stereotyping. Like it was for Naaman, the categories that order our world can become the way we define others and what we expect of them. Take time to explore with participants the categories that can become boundaries between us and those with whom we seek to engage in ministry. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rich/middle class/working poor/destitute	<p>Going to the other side (8-10 min)</p> <p>Read 2 Kings 5:8-10</p> <p>What do you hear? What do you notice? What stands out to you?</p> <p>Picture Naaman — with his whole caravan of servants, soldiers, and gifts — going down to Elisha’s home. In our imaginary movie, how would the scene play out when Elisha refuses to come greet to Naaman, but instead sends a servant to tell him to go take a bath?!</p> <p>Who would play the role of Elisha’s servant in our movie version of this story?</p> <p>Think back to the equivalent title and position Naaman would have if his story was told today in the context of the United States. What expectations would a person with that title and position have when visiting a foreign land?</p> <p>What expectations might we — who live in the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world — bring with us when we travel to other places?</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Black/White/Asian/Native American/mixed race• High-school educated/college educated/illiterate• Hindu/Atheist/Bhuddhist/Muslim/Christian• Human/animal/plant/mineral• Lutheran/Episcopal/Catholic/Pentecostal• Citizen/Immigrant/Undocumented	
<p>The humor and cleverness of this story can help participants explore more in depth their own questions, some of them perhaps expressed in the introductory activity, about mission and service work abroad. In preparation for the session, give some thought to how you may want to engage this more serious conversation about expectations we bring to our relationships to others, the missionary work done on our behalf by either full-time missionaries abroad or other ministries we support, and asymmetries that complicate our relationships with brothers and sisters around the world.</p>	<p>Better than all the waters of Israel? (8-10 min)</p> <p>Read 2 Kings 5:11-14</p> <p>What do you hear? What do you notice? What stands out to you?</p> <p>Naaman throws a tantrum when told to go wash in the river Jordan. He yells out something along the lines of “My daddy’s rivers are bigger than your daddy’s rivers!” What does this outburst reveal about him?</p> <p>Have you ever been in a similar situation where frustrated expectations got in the way of healing or mission?</p> <p>Who would play the role of the Naaman’s servant in the story? Look back through the story and pay close attention to the role of the servants — those played by a variety of “extras” — throughout the story (the young girl, Elisha’s servant, Naaman’s servant). How would the story be different without them?</p> <p>Given the changes in global Christianity (that the church in the Global South is growing at faster pace than the church in the Global North), how may the story of Naaman inform the way we approach mission today?</p>



	<p>From Head to Heart (3 min)</p> <p><i>Encourage participants to connect today's conversation with their lives throughout the week. You could open the conversation up and invite everyone to share ideas on how they would see this happening during the week or share the suggestions below.</i></p> <p>Asset-Based Thinking: Read the definition of "Asset-based thinking" at the beginning of this study and discuss it with the group or reflect on it individually during the week in light of the story of Naaman.</p> <p>What the Mighty Might Learn: Read the Rev. Dr. Barbara Lundblad's powerful sermon on the story of Naamaan at http://day1.org/530-what_the_mighty_might_learn.</p> <p>"The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity" Check out a copy of Philip Jenkins' book from your local library or watch his one-hour presentation at http://vimeo.com/10125210.</p> <p>Stewardship Guidelines: As a class project or as individuals, engage the leadership of the congregation in a conversation about how ministry partners are identified for financial support. See Sample Stewardship Guidelines in the appendix.</p> <p>Asset-Based Community Development: Explore this powerful approach to community development described in "Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets" (John P. Kretzmann, John L. McKnight, 1993) and by the authors on a free online course at www.abcdinstitute.org/resources/ (scroll down to the third offering)</p> <p>A sample of ABCD in action in the Philippines in partnership with the Anglican Board of Mission in Australia: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCS7gg4uPD0</p>
	<p>Closing Prayer (3 min)</p> <p><i>You may offer an opening prayer or invite a participant to lead the group in prayer.</i></p>