

Sharing Jesus With Rich and Powerful People



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 25

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Daniel 4; 2 Kings 5:1–19; John 3:1–12; Matthew 19:16–22; Matthew 27:57–60.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘ What good is it [this life] if someone gains [gets] the whole world [fame, riches, everything money can buy] but loses their soul? Or what [thing] can anyone trade for their soul?’ ” (Matthew 16:26, NlrV).

God loves rich and powerful people as much as He loves the poor and weak people who need His help.

THE BIBLE is the Word of God. The Bible shows us God's plan for our lives. An important Bible truth is the teaching that all people are sinners who need God's mercy. Rich and powerful people also belong to this group.

Rich and powerful people in Bible times weren't much different from rich and powerful people in modern times. Both groups wanted fame, riches, and control. Sad to say, they often hurt other people to become rich and powerful (but not always). God loves rich and powerful people as much as He loves the poor and weak people who need His help. We can read stories in the Bible about people who were powerful or rich, or both. The Bible shows us how God uses these rich and powerful men and women to bless other people. Job, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Deborah, Abigail, Solomon, and Esther are a few examples.

This week, we will look at God's work among rich and powerful men: King Nebuchadnezzar, Naaman, Nicodemus, and Zacchaeus, to name a few. We will learn about how God touched the lives of these men in Bible times. Today, God trains Seventh-day Adventist men and women to share with the rich and powerful the Good News about Jesus.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR (Daniel 4)

Some Christians believe that Jesus died for a special group of people. They believe that only this group will be saved. As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that Jesus died for all humans. “God wants all people to be saved. And he wants everyone to know the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4, ICB).

“He gave his life to pay for our sins. But he not only paid for our sins. He also paid for the sins of the whole world [all humans]” (1 John 2:2, Nlrv). That’s why “God chose us to belong to Christ [Jesus] before the world [earth] was created [made]. He [God] chose us to be holy and without blame in his eyes. He loved us” (Ephesians 1:4, Nlrv). Not everyone chooses to accept God’s offering for our sins. But some people do. Many of these people are very powerful. We can read about some of these powerful people in the Bible.

Read about King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4. What happened to the king? How did God save him?

At first, King Nebuchadnezzar didn’t believe in God. The Bible shows us how God judged King Nebuchadnezzar in much the same way that He judged and punished some Israelite kings. (You can read more about these kings in 2 Chronicles 32:25, 26; 1 Kings 14:21–31; 1 Samuel 28.) After God judged Nebuchadnezzar, the king behaved the same as an animal. His fingernails, hair, and beard grew long. He ate grass the same as a cow. After seven years, God healed Nebuchadnezzar’s mind. Then the king worshiped God as the One who made everything. Nebuchadnezzar’s amazing story shows us that God wants to save more people than only the ones who are weak and in need. God wants to save rich and powerful people, too. At this time, King Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man on the earth. The king said, “ ‘Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, give praise, honor, and glory to the King of Heaven. Everything he does is right. He is always fair, and he is able to [can] make proud [filled with pride] people humble [empty of all pride]!’ ” (Daniel 4:37, ERV). If only all the powerful and proud people on this earth understood this Bible truth!

What can we learn from this story? First, God uses Daniel to touch the king’s heart. In the same way, God will work with us to touch lives. Second, God can do what we can’t do. God can work a miracle to save someone. As we will see, God has other ways to empty a heart of all pride.



After God judged Nebuchadnezzar, the king behaved the same as an animal.

NAAMAN (2 Kings 5:1–19)

Read Naaman’s story in 2 Kings 5:1–19. What two things does Naaman ask for? What does his story teach us about why we must be patient and understanding with new Christians?



Naaman may have thought that if he brought dirt from Israel to his house, God would be in control of his home.

In 2 Kings 5:1–19, Naaman asks Elisha for two things we may think are a little strange. First, Naaman says, “ ‘Let me have enough dirt from Israel to fill the baskets on two of my mules’ ” (2 Kings 5:17, ERV). Naaman explains to Elisha that he “will not give burnt gifts or kill animals on the altar in worship to other gods any more. I will give only gifts to the Lord’ ” (2 Kings 5:17, NLV). Naaman understood that the Lord was the only God there was. At the same time, Naaman thought God was connected in some special way to the land of Israel and must be worshiped on its ground. So, Naaman wanted to take some dirt from Israel back to Syria. Naaman’s story teaches us an important lesson about leading people to Jesus. New Christians may need time to change some of their old beliefs.

Next, Naaman talks to Elisha about something he must do from time to time: “ ‘And I pray that the LORD will forgive me for this: When my master goes to the temple of Rimmon to worship that false god, he will want to lean on me for support. So I must bow down in the temple of Rimmon. I ask the LORD now to forgive me when that happens’ ” (2 Kings 5:18, ERV). Is Naaman asking for permission to sin in the future? What is going on?

Naaman knew that serving God wasn’t going to be easy in his own country. Part of Naaman’s job included going with his king to Rimmon’s temple. When the king bowed to Rimmon, he needed to lean on Naaman’s arm for support (2 Kings 5:18). Naaman didn’t want anyone to believe he bowed in worship to Rimmon, too. So, before Naaman left Israel, he shared his worry with Elisha. Elisha listened to Naaman and told him, “ ‘go in peace’ ” (2 Kings 5:19, ERV).

We must not think these words mean that Elisha gave Naaman permission to worship false gods. When Elisha said, “Go in peace,” he meant that Naaman should go with no doubt in his heart about God’s love. As time passed, and Naaman grew in faith, God would show Naaman the things he needed to change in his life. In the same way, God leads new Christians today. God knows the best time to ask new Christians to change their behavior. We must remember this important rule when we work with God to save people.

SHARING JESUS WITH EDUCATED PEOPLE (John 3:1–12)

Nicodemus had a lot of knowledge. The Bible says that Nicodemus was a Jewish leader (John 3:1). Jesus said that Nicodemus was a teacher of Israel (John 3:10). Nicodemus understood the Bible well. He also wanted to know the Lord. To our eyes, Nicodemus may have looked as if he was God’s follower. Nicodemus kept all the commandments. The Jewish people respected him. Nicodemus was powerful and rich. Many people believed that Nicodemus’s riches and power were signs that God blessed him. But Nicodemus felt that something was missing from his life.

Read Nicodemus’ story in John 3:1–12. What does this story show us about Nicodemus’s spiritual needs? How does Jesus take care of Nicodemus’s needs right away?

When Nicodemus came to Jesus, he tried to pretend that everything was fine with his spiritual life and that he didn’t really need anything from Jesus. But Jesus knew Nicodemus’s heart. In the same way, God knows the hearts and needs of rich and powerful people today. Nicodemus came to Jesus because Jesus’ teachings touched his heart. Nicodemus’s pride kept him from announcing in public that he believed Jesus was the Savior. So, Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. That night with Jesus changed Nicodemus forever. After that meeting, Nicodemus didn’t make a public announcement that he accepted Jesus as his personal Savior. But Nicodemus became a secret follower of Jesus.

Read John 7:43–52 and John 19:39. What do these verses tell us about Nicodemus and Jesus?

These verses show us that Nicodemus’s life had been changed by Jesus. Nicodemus tried to protect Jesus when He was alive. Then Nicodemus wanted to honor Jesus after He died. For sure, Jesus touched Nicodemus’s heart. This powerful man, with all his knowledge and education, needed the Savior. We all do.

Yes, we have Bible truth. But why must we be careful not to fall into the “trap” of thinking that what we know is enough to save us? Why must we also accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior?



Nicodemus understood the Bible well. He also wanted to know the Lord.

RICH PEOPLE AND GOD’S KINGDOM (Matthew 19:16–22)

The rich need to be saved as much as anyone else.

Read the story about the rich young man in Matthew 19:16–22. Compare the rich young man with Nicodemus. Nicodemus accepts Jesus. The rich young man doesn’t. What lessons can we learn from the rich young man’s story?

The story about Jesus and the rich young man shows us that riches can be a terrible “trap.” We must avoid falling into it. Look at Jesus’ words about the dangers of riches: “ ‘Yes, I tell you, it is easier [not as hard] for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God’s kingdom’ ” (Matthew 19:24, ERV). Of course, Jesus isn’t saying that rich people can’t be saved. But they must be careful not to love their riches more than they love God.

In the end, the rich and the poor will die (if Jesus doesn’t come first.) So, the rich need to be saved as much as anyone else. Whatever else money can buy, it can’t buy us freedom from death. Only Jesus can make us free from death when we have faith in His gift of everlasting life. Jesus said, “ ‘I am the resurrection [waking up from the dead]. I am life. Everyone who believes in me will have life, even if they die’ ” (John 11:25, ERV).

Read about Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10. How is Zacchaeus’s story different from the rich young man’s story?

Zacchaeus accepted Jesus, and the rich young man turned away from Him. Do you see in Zacchaeus’s story that Jesus doesn’t tell Zacchaeus to sell everything he owns and give the money to the poor? Jesus knew that the young man loved his riches very much. So, Jesus asked the rich young man to sell his stuff.

We don’t know everything that Jesus says to Zacchaeus when He visits him in his house. We do know that Zacchaeus felt that He needed to make some changes in his life after he met Jesus.

“ ‘What good is it if someone gains [gets] the whole world [fame, riches] but loses their soul [everlasting life]? Or what can anyone trade for their soul?’ ” (Matthew 16:26, NlrV). What is Jesus warning us about?

HELPING GOD SAVE POWERFUL PEOPLE (Matthew 27:57–60)

Jesus knew how to make friends with powerful people. Many powerful people liked and respected Jesus. There also were many powerful people who didn't like Jesus. Powerful people in the Bible came to Jesus for help. They felt that He cared for them. Also, many rich and powerful people didn't come to Jesus right away. They waited until they were sure that Jesus was really God's Son. That's what happened with Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea.

Read Matthew 27:57–60 (also read Mark 15:43–47; Luke 23:50–53; and John 19:38–42). What does this story tell us about how the Lord used a rich man whose life Jesus changed?

The Bible doesn't tell us anything about Joseph of Arimathea before this time in Jesus' life. Then Joseph of Arimathea shows up from nowhere and God uses Him to keep Bible promises He made about Jesus during Old Testament times. God will continue to use rich people in His saving plan. So, we must work with God to help Him save them.

How do you make friends with powerful people? The best advice is don't try to take the lead in making friends with them; let them come to you. Jesus followed this plan. Rich and powerful people were witnesses of Jesus' message and His healing power from God. These rich and powerful people believed that Jesus was the Son of God.

Powerful people may want to help you do God's work for many reasons. They may want to be part of something good that changes the lives of people. Our success for God shows them that Jesus can change their lives.

Start doing work for God that rich and powerful people also can join and be a part of. Take time to help the rich and powerful people in your community and make their lives better.

Task #1: Add to your daily prayer list the name of someone who is a powerful person. This person shouldn't be a member of your church. Also, this person should be someone you may get the chance to meet from time to time.

Task #2: Send a letter or an email to a powerful leader. Don't worry if you've never met. Tell this person, "I am praying for you." Then be sure to do it!



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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Ministry to the Rich,” *The Ministry of Healing*, pages 209–216; “Captive Maid Shows Concern for Naaman,” *Reflecting Christ*, page 337.



Jesus died for princes and also homeless people.

Jesus loves poor people as much as He loves rich and powerful people. Jesus died for princes and also homeless people. Jesus knew the best way to touch human hearts. He warned us, “ ‘Yes, I tell you, it is easier [not as hard] for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God’s kingdom’ ” (Matthew 19:24, ERV). This week, we learned about why we must share the Good News about Jesus with rich and powerful people. Sometimes rich and powerful people may not know they need Jesus. But they need God’s saving mercy as much as anyone else.

“Many people say that we need to help the poor. Shouldn’t we also give help to the rich? Many people think that rich people are bad and that they can’t be saved. . . . Thousands of rich men die without being warned. Rich people may look as if they don’t care about everlasting life. But many of them carry heavy loads in their hearts.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 210, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Jesus broke down the walls that separated the rich and the poor. How do we as Seventh-day Adventists continue to do this same work?
- 2 Jesus said, “ ‘The seed that fell among the thorns is like [the same as] others [people] who hear the message. But then the worries of this life and the false promises of wealth [riches] crowd it out. They [worries and riches] keep the message from producing [growing] fruit’ ” (Matthew 13:22, ERV).
- 3 In class, review the question asked at the end of Tuesday’s study that talks about how knowing Bible truth isn’t the same thing as our being saved by it. Why is this idea so important? If knowing the truth only isn’t what saves us, what does save us?
- 4 What other reasons may explain why the rich young man rejected Jesus while Zacchaeus accepted Him?

THE ROAD TO SPAIN: PART 3

God worked a miracle in Pastor Luis Paiva's life. God gave Luis \$1,000 dollars to pay off a loan. This miracle helped Luis believe that God wanted him and his family to leave Venezuela. But they didn't have any savings.

Luis prayed, "Lord, how do I leave with no savings?"

Luis's wife told him that a pastor in the United States called to talk with him. The pastor needed a volunteer to work for a year in a part of Mexico that didn't have a Seventh-day Adventist church. So, Luis went to Mexico. His wife and children joined him two months later. Over the next eight months, 35 people were baptized because of Luis' hard work. One new member gave the Adventist group a building. The building became the new church for the group.

But the government refused to give Luis a visa to allow him to stay in Mexico. A visa is a special passport. Luis didn't know what to do. He didn't want to move to the United States without a visa or to stay in Mexico without a visa. Luis made friends with someone who worked in the government's visa office. When the government worker heard about Luis's problem, he promised not to send Luis back to Venezuela. Luis believed his friend. At the same time, Luis trusted God more than any human. God said, "Don't depend on your leaders for help. Don't depend on people, because they cannot save you" (Psalm 146:3, ERV).

Worried, Luis prayed. He also made phone calls to churches in the United States and Canada and asked for legal advice about leaving Mexico. Only two churches in Canada answered Luis. Luis continued to stay in Mexico. Then a church member visited Luis's home. He asked Luis, "What is your biggest fear?"

Luis said, "I don't want to live in Mexico without a visa, and I don't want to travel without a visa to the United States. I also don't want to go back to my country."

The man asked, "If you had the money, what would you do right now?"

Luis answered, "I'd buy a plane ticket to fly to Spain." Luis had an aunt who went to Spain 20 years earlier. If he moved there, he'd be near her. Also, Luis visited Spain three years earlier and liked the country very much.

The church member said, "So, let's buy the tickets so you and your family can fly to Spain."

The man bought the plane tickets and told Luis not to worry. He said, "God is leading you."

Today, Luis and his wife work for God in Spain.

Thank you for you Sabbath School offering that helps support church workers worldwide. Read next week about how Luis left a fruit stand to become a worker for Jesus.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



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