



Monday

# True and False Witness

The little maid and Gehazi

**E**ver since our daughter was old enough to understand the simple task of picking up toys, we have encouraged her to tidy her room or play area. We help her, of course, and as she has grown, she has learned to make her bed by herself and put away her own clothes.

On occasion we have rewarded her for helping us with other tasks around the house, such as folding laundry or other tasks not normally expected of her. One day she came to us, beaming and expectant, and asked for a reward because she had picked up some of her toys! We explained that we were happy that she had done such a good job, but that her toys were her responsibility anyway. Her reward was a job well done.

When you do your job, do you expect a reward? Probably not, although it is wonderful to receive words of affirmation. What about when you witness to others? Do you expect a reward from God? Second Kings 5 tells the story of two kinds of witnesses: those who tell others about God without expecting a reward and those who think they deserve something for their efforts.

## **A CHILD'S WITNESS**

The narrative begins with the witness of a child, a little girl carried away from her home in the land of Israel to serve in the house of Naaman. She is unnamed, but her words set in action a course of events that resulted in the conversion of the Syrian commander.

Naaman, we are told, was a great military leader in Syria. God had used him to give the Syrians victory. But Naaman was a leper. Rather than seek revenge against the commander who had either personally captured her or overseen the raid that led to her

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capture, the little girl had compassion on the diseased man. “She said to her mistress, ‘Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy!’” (2 Kings 5:3).<sup>1</sup>

The nations of Israel and Judah had largely failed in the purpose God had intended for the descendants of Abraham: “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Rather than modeling love for God and neighbor, they had adopted the pagan practices of the nations around them and oppressed and exploited their own people. There were those who persisted in their faith, however. They continued as a witness to their fellow Israelites and, when taken into exile, brought a blessing to the foreign homes and courts where they served.

Ellen White wrote, “The parents of that Hebrew maid, as they taught her of God, did not know the destiny that would be hers. But they were faithful to their trust; and in the home of the captain of the Syrian host, their child bore witness to the God whom she had learned to honor.”<sup>2</sup>

### A FALSE WITNESS

Naaman took the girl’s words seriously and traveled to Samaria in search of healing. He came to the house of Elisha, expecting a miraculous display by the prophet, but instead he was sent to the river Jordan to bathe. Despite his initial anger at Elisha’s command, he obeyed and was healed. He returned to Elisha’s house a healthy man and, in gratitude, offered gifts to Elisha. The prophet refused to take them and sent him home.

Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, was indignant that the prophet had not accepted the gifts of the Syrian commander: “See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him” (2 Kings 5:20). Out of greed Gehazi reasoned that if Elisha would not take his due, then he at least would take some reward.

Naaman had received one witness from a young Israelite girl, a true witness based on faith in God and empathy for a sick man. Now he received a second witness, a false witness from Gehazi, who told a lie to gain wealth for himself. Gehazi said that he had been sent by Elisha to take gifts—a talent of silver and two changes of clothing—for two visiting sons of the prophets. Naaman was eager to show his gratitude and urged Gehazi to take double the amount of silver he requested.

When Gehazi returned, Elisha questioned him, and once again, Gehazi lied. But Elisha knew what had happened: “Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants?” (verse 26). A miracle performed by God was not the time to accept gifts. Elisha was not

responsible for the miracle—God was! Taking a gift sent the wrong message about God, who had healed Naaman out of mercy. As a result of this sin, Gehazi became a leper.

We do not know what happened to the little Israelite girl, but her words of sympathy and truth brought healing and faith to the household of Naaman. By contrast, Gehazi desired material gain, as if he were somehow responsible for the miracle God had performed. His false witness brought upon himself the very disease from which Naaman had been healed.

It is legitimate and necessary that ministers, Bible workers, and all those employed by the church receive payment for their efforts. But we should not offer witness about the One who paid the ultimate cost with the expectation of material gain. There are people all around us who are broken in spirit and body, who need the healing that only Christ can offer. Our witness may result in someone’s choosing to follow Christ; perhaps our prayers are answered with miracles, but we should always remember that our reward for giving testimony to the mercy and love of God is in heaven. Glory and honor are His alone. ☉

<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), p. 246.

### Questions for Reflection:

1. What does it mean to be a true witness?
2. Whom are we called to witness to?
3. What is our reward for proclaiming the love of God?