

Victims and Villains Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Generally speaking, do you like to cheer for the underdog or the GOAT (i.e. the person or team considered to be the greatest of all time)?
2. Describe a time when someone unexpectedly helped you?

Read the following passage: 2 Kings 5:1-19a.

In this fascinating account, a young, unnamed girl from Israel plays a crucial role that leads to Naaman's healing. Even though she had suffered a great deal at the hands of the Syrians (the people of Aram), her desire to help Naaman led to his connection with the prophet Elisha, and, ultimately, God. This unnamed girl and Naaman teach us something about two roles we often play: the victim and the villain. Even though this young girl was a victim by experience, she was not a victim by identity. She believed that a good God could help her enemies and transform their lives. Naaman, on the other hand, demonstrates that we don't have to respond to our pain by making ourselves big and others small. Instead, if we will choose the path of humility and vulnerability, we can experience healing and transformation.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. The young girl in this account maintained her confidence in the God of Israel even after being taken away from her land and her people. What can we do to foster a robust faith in Jesus even when those around us may not agree with our beliefs?
2. Why do you think Naaman was angry when he received the message from Elisha? What do you think God was doing by communicating this message in this way?
3. What's the difference between having the *experience* of a victim and embracing the *identity* of a victim? Do you ever find yourself tempted to embrace the identity of a victim? Explain.
4. Victims often feel like they are doomed, that there is no way out. What can we, as followers of Jesus, do to combat this mindset in our own lives? Why is embracing responsibility for the things we can control so important? How does this connect to the reality that God will ultimately evaluate our actions?
5. Consider the adage, "Let go and let God." In what circumstances might this be helpful and in what circumstances might this be unhelpful?

6. Pain is not experienced in the same ways or to the same degree. Even so, nobody is exempt from pain. What are some healthy and unhealthy ways of dealing with the pain we experience in this life?
7. Are you ever attempted to dismiss or downplay the successes of others? Explain. Why might this be an unhealthy response?

Pray