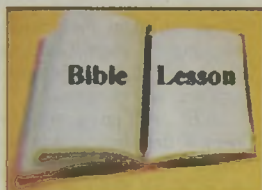


8B

## RELIGION

Life 1B



## Syrian plight

2 Kings 5:1-4

Naaman's Situation (v.1)  
Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and honorable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valor, but he was a leeper.

Naaman is introduced to us as captain of the host of the king of Syria. This means that he is a high-ranking officer in the army of that country. He has distinguished himself in this capacity, as indicated by the descriptions that he is a great man, honorable and a mighty man in valor.

But while Naaman is unquestionably a capable leader, he is in truth an instrument in the greater, more honorable and mightier hands of the Lord. It is through Naaman that the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria.

When we study the Old Testament history, we usually think of God's activity in delivering His people from their oppressors (as in exodus or in the days of the judges). But God is the Lord of all nations (Isaiah 14:26, 27). He is as capable of aiding them as He is of aiding the Israelites. In this case His deliverance of Syria may refer to a victory that the nation achieved over the Assyrians around the middle of the ninth century B.C., the time in which the events in today's lesson take place.

One might think that the fact that Naaman is a leper would prevent him from carrying out any kind of military activity. However, the Hebrew word often translated leprosy in our Bible does not always indicate the severe, debilitating affliction ("Hansen's Disease") that we often associate with that term. It can also describe less serious skin conditions, such as psoriasis or eczema.

Naaman's condition, whatever it may be is, most likely in its earliest stages. Note Naaman's reference to "the place" in verse 11, as if there is a specific spot on his skin that is particularly troublesome.



## Expanding faith, vision

University Park's latest acquisition consolidates efforts



ILLUSTRATION/LUQUIRE GEORGE ANDREWS

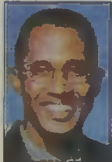
University Park Baptist Church is moving to the Charlotte Merchandise Mart in 2007.

By Herbert L. White  
herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

One of Charlotte's largest megachurches is growing again.

University Park Baptist Church's deal to buy the Charlotte Merchandise Mart on Independence Boulevard will give UPBC the room it needs to expand its ministry. The church's main campus, to be called Park Place, will

feature a 100,000-square-foot worship center seating 6,000 as well as capacity to serve the region through business incubation and development, education and training, conferences, meetings and receptions.



Alexander

"The Scriptures command us to evangelize the world and carry out our ministry fully," said the Rev. Claude Alexander Jr. "Our church continues to be blessed

by growth, and the acquisition of this wonderful facility will allow us to better serve our family of faith and also work for the good of the community at large."

The Merchandise Mart, now home to 72 trade shows, expos and special events, is owned and operated by the D.L. Phillips Company. UPBC will subcontract with D.L. Phillips to manage events through 2008.

University Park has grown into one of the largest churches in the Carolinas, averaging near-

Please see EXPANDING/7B

## Adult video store evicted by church owner

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MILFORD, Conn. — Two years after buying a building that houses an adult video store, the Kingdom Life Christian Church is moving to evict its tenant.

The church bought the building in 2003 for \$245,000 in an effort to force Video Pleasures to close. But owner Michael Friend remained in the building by exercising a three-year lease agreement he had with the previous owners.

That lease expires in December 2006, but the church has decided not to wait.

Bishop Jay Ramirez said Friend owes more than \$4,800 in back rent, and he plans to start eviction proceedings this month.

ings this month.

"We're trying to have a little bit of grace," Ramirez told the New Haven Register. "We want to do things in a responsible business manner. One way or another, they will be gone before next December. I hope they choose to leave before we throw them out."

Friend declined to comment on the status of his business, but said he is "not surprised" that church leaders are confident his store will not be around much longer.

"The whole effort has been to drive me out of business," he said.

City officials hope the church can do just that.

"The sooner that business is not

there the better," said Mayor James L. Richetelli Jr.

Kingdom Life officials have raised Friend's rent the past two years from \$1,886 a month to \$2,486. Ramirez said that wasn't to force Friend out.

The church has spent \$100,000 to install a new roof, and new heating and electrical system in the building as preparation for when it will have a new tenant and the rent reflects fair market value, he said.

Ramirez said the church has no plans to buy other adult businesses. He noted that Video Pleasures is the only such business located in a residential zone.

"I don't intend to make this a city-wide crusade," Ramirez said.

## Critics make shopping a religious question

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Critics of Wal-Mart, the retailing giant based at Bentonville, Ark., are asking a question that's a twist on a popular Christian slogan.

Some Christians say they operate on the principal of "What Would Jesus Do?" and the initials WWJD. on bracelets or headbands or tee-shirts are a symbol of that stand. Now the Wal-Mart critics are asking WWJ.S. — "Where would Jesus shop?"

According to the union-backed critics of Wal-Mart

Stores Inc., not at the world's largest retailer. WakeUpWalMart.com on Thursday unveiled a religious-themed campaign Thursday asking shoppers whether God wants them to buy things from the company.

The group, funded by the United Food and Commercial Workers union, launched a TV ad and released a letter signed by 65 clergy members and religious figures. The group says Wal-Mart's policy over wages, health benefits and other issues harm families



PHOTOS/WADE NASH

Would Jesus shop here? One group says no.

and communities.

Wal-Mart accused the group of using union dues to exploit religion and said it would give nearly \$200 million in cash contributions to charities this year.

The 30-second TV spot, starting Friday in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Oklahoma and Texas, is part of the latest seasonal-themed campaign

Please see WAL-MART/7B



## 'Project': Praise full, stunning at times

William Murphy Project  
All Day  
William Murphy, producer  
Sony Urban/Epic



Lots of gospel fans know Shekinah Glory Ministries' "Praise Is What I Do," but few know of its writer, William Murphy. He's the minister of worship at Eddie Long's New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta and breaking into the business with his own recording.

Murphy combines choirs from New Birth, Hope & Life Fellowship, Free Chapel Worship Center, Church In The Now, Full Harvester and Cathedral Of The Holy Spirit — all Atlanta area megachurches — to record this CD. Most of the work was recorded live at New Birth last year in front of what seems to be an enthusiastic congregation. The choir isn't as full sounding as I like, but there are times when the results are stunning. Murphy combines a number of genres to get his message across but this is generally praise and worship. It's not as repetitive as most praise and worship and there's a lot of life to the songs without digressing into disco gospel.

Murphy does his own take on "Praise Is What I Do" with great results. It's a powerful song that almost sings itself. Once the congregation kicks in with the choir on the chorus, it's a wrap. He displays his knowledge of the secular by using the Drifters' "On Broadway" in the energy-charged "Good." It's unsettling at first, but Murphy makes the song into gospel with little trouble. "Let It Rise" is getting great airplay but pales in comparison to the rousing "Hear My Prayer" or the majestic "I Know Why I'm Here." It's these kind of songs which make this choir shine.

Murphy proves himself to be a fine songwriter and decent singer on this debut. There are no weak songs and all the performances are solid. He couldn't ask for better.



## Ratings

Classic	★★★★★
Excellent	★★★★★
Good	★★★★
Fair	★★★
Why?	★★
No stars — A mess	★

## CHURCH NEWS

The deadline for announcement in the calendar is 5 p.m. on Fridays. Fax your announcements to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail your announcement to cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com.

## Ongoing

New Outreach/Hoskins Community is seeking donations of turkeys for Christmas Dinners. Donations are being accepted at 3900 Gossett Ave. For more information call Pastor Brenda Stevenson at (704) 398-1777.

## December 18

The United for Christ Inspirational Mass Choir will be in concert at 5 p.m. The concert will be held at the Haven of Rest Baptist Church, located at 2435 Toomey Ave.

• University Park Baptist Church presents "Christmas: It's All About Love," a dramatic presentation at The Park South 13733 Lancaster Highway Pineville. Show times are 3:30 and 7 p.m. Admission is free.

• The Haynes Schofield Missionary will

sponsor Christmas around the World at 1:30 p.m. at Greater Bethel AME Church, located at 201 Grandin Road. Admission is \$7 for adults and \$3 for children.

• New High Springs Baptist Church, located at 811 South Dalton St. in Gastonia, will hold its Christmas program at 2:30 p.m.

## December 24

United Christian Fellowship Church will host "Christmas Explosion" beginning at 6 p.m. The event will feature the production "No

Christmas without Christ." As well as Face 2 Face Mime Ministry, Perfect Praise Dancers and Voices of Triumph. The church is located at 118 Miller Chapel Road, Salisbury.

## December 25

New High Springs Baptist Church, located at 811 South Dalton St. in Gastonia, will hold its Christmas Day service at 8:30 a.m.

Sunday School will be held at 7:45 a.m.