



NAC-USA  
DEVELOPMENT  
INSTITUTE

# Midweek Experience Curriculum

Content with what comes from God | Elijah | The Centurion

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**2015**

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August

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# 2015 August FACILITATOR GUIDE

## Session 1: Content with what comes from God

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Hello, and welcome!

During the month of August our divine services are about “Experiencing our faith” and for our midweek discussions we’ll take a closer look at a few Biblical characters and their unique experiences with God. In each instance you’ll see the following formula: experience leads to knowledge and knowledge develops trust. The more deeply we know God, the more we trust Him. To grow in our knowledge of God, we must continually seek Him in our lives. Jesus said in His High Priestly prayer, “And this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

Simply knowing about something is different than having first-hand experience. Knowing about something is easy, academic, and only takes a short amount of time. Actually experiencing something involves spending time and energy learning about it. For example, prospective college students find out about colleges and what they offer. Couples thinking about marriage talk to married people to learn about what it’s like. Expecting parents often seek out other parents for advice. In each of these examples is a preliminary knowledge that leads a person to dive deeper in order to make a decision. Through personal experiences, a person moves on to the second step and gains the knowledge to discern whether they should trust what they’ve heard from others. It’s likely that they’ll find their own experience to be different than anything they’ve heard before though, because their experience is personal to



## NAC Catechism

### 4.2.1.5 Faith

The word “faith” is not mentioned in the Hebrew texts of the Old Testament. Wherever we find this term in modern translations, the original words used were “trust”, “loyalty”, “obedience”, “confidence”, or “certainty”. All of these meanings are implicit in the single word “faith”. In Hebrews 11: 1 we read: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”.

Faith always starts with God, who reveals Himself through His word and His works. As long as human beings trust God completely, they are able to obey God. Disobedience caused mankind to sin and therefore incur guilt before God. Ever since, mankind has had a broken relationship with his Creator. For any human being who desires to enter into fellowship with God again, it is indispensable to believe (Hebrews 11: 6).

the Word of God in the divine services, as well as consistent spiritual disciplines of continually seeking Him in prayer and reading the Bible, can contribute to daily experiences and help increase our knowledge of God. Keep this formula in mind if you find yourself struggling with trusting God – experience leads to knowledge and knowledge develops trust.

In our next session we’ll discuss the prophet Elijah. Elijah trusted in God because of what he had experienced in his life. From being fed by ravens while hiding in the Kerith Ravine to his experience with the widow in Zarephath, Elijah’s trust in God grew.

Thank you for watching. Please turn to the questions in your discussion guide.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What does the phrase “knowledge of” remind you of? What are ways to gain “knowledge of” something?

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2. How does experience change knowledge? Thinking of the examples used in the session (college, marriage, parenting), how did the experience differ from the knowledge gained from the experiences of others?

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3. Read Psalm 9 and reflect on the life of David and how his experiences resulted in him writing this expression to God. How have your life experiences changed your relationship with God?

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## CA Thoughts

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### Wrestle for experiences

Before one can be a true witness of Christ, one must first have experienced one's faith in Him. It happens that we sometimes notice a discrepancy between theory and practice. There is at times an enormous difference between what is preached from the altar and what we experience. There is a great danger that we might begin to doubt and question everything. That is the moment when we must secure our election and say, "No, I want to experience this! It is not enough for me to hear them say that it is so. I want to experience it." We must wrestle and fight for that.

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## Bible References

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**Proverbs 18:15** The heart of the prudent acquires knowledge, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

**Proverbs 3:5-6** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

4. How has your knowledge of God evolved as you have gone through life? Is it possible to know everything about God or will we always be learning about God?

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5. During our lives we have the chance to experience God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. How is it possible to be able to experience each of the persons of God separately? Describe how you have experienced the Father, the Son, or the Spirit.

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6. When Jesus walked on the earth, people like the Canaanite woman sought after Him in order to experience His power. How do you seek after Jesus today when He is at the right hand of the Father? Why do you seek after Him?

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7. The Canannite woman recognized Jesus as the "Son of David" and as a result she trusted in His power to heal her daughter. How have you been able to build up your trust in Jesus?

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8. During Jesus's earthly ministry, the message of what He was doing spread from person to person and many people sought after Him because of the knowledge they had gained from other's experiences. How can you help someone gain knowledge of Jesus today through your experiences?

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## Going Deeper

### Doxology

The term, which is derived from the Greek *doxa* (glory), denotes an ascription of praise to the three persons of the Blessed Trinity. In its commonest form, known as the *Gloria Patri* or “Lesser Doxology,” it is rendered: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.” Its use at the end of the Psalms, as directed, e.g., in the Book of Common Prayer, dates from the fourth century. It is thus a symbol of the duty of Christianizing the Psalms and serves at the same time “to connect the Unity of the Godhead as known to the Jews with the Trinity as known to Christians.”

The so-called Greater Doxology is the *Gloria in Excelsis*, “Glory be to God on high.” On account of its opening words, taken directly from Luke 2:14, it is sometimes known as the Angelic Hymn. This doxology is of Greek origin (fourth century) and was used at first as a morning canticle. Later it became incorporated into the Latin Mass, where it occupied a place at the beginning of the service. In the English Communion Service of 1552 the Reformers transferred the hymn to the end of the office, no doubt in accordance with the usage at the first Eucharist: “When they had sung a hymn, they went out” (Matthew 26:30). In this position it forms a fitting conclusion to the Christian sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

It is now generally agreed that the doxology at the end of the Lord’s Prayer is not part of the original text of Matthew 6:9-13. It may be regarded as an ancient liturgical addition to the prayer, which was adopted by the Greek church but not by the Latin.

*sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.*

Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. When those 450 voices are against you, when you’re being questioned about your faith, challenged about decisions, or mocked for doing the right thing, fix your attention on God. Because in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him. (Romans 8:28) With confidence in the One who does all things well, even in the midst of adversity, you can live a life that is extraordinarily lead by Him.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever thought of God as being extraordinary? How might that view of God change our relationship with Him?

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2. If God is awesome and powerful and extraordinary, and we are followers of that God, should our lives be ordinary? How can our lives reflect an extraordinary God?

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3. Read the doxology, the glory statement, at the end of Romans 11. How does it make you feel to know that God has intricately worked to redeem you through Christ and that everything is from Him, and through Him, and goes back to Him?

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## Going Deeper

The Message is a paraphrased version of the Bible written by Eugene Peterson. A paraphrased version of the Bible adds explanatory words or phrases that do not correspond to anything in the original text and are not necessary to preserve the sense of the passage, but which, nevertheless, give the text added freshness and impact.

Eugene Peterson said the following about why he wrote this version: "While I was teaching a class on Galatians, I began to realize that the adults in my class weren't feeling the vitality and directness that I sensed as I read and studied the New Testament in its original Greek. Writing straight from the original text, I began to attempt to bring into English the rhythms and idioms of the original language. I knew that the early readers of the New Testament were captured and engaged by these writings and I wanted my congregation to be impacted in the same way. I hoped to bring the New Testament to life for two different types of people: those who hadn't read the Bible because it seemed too distant and irrelevant and those who had read the Bible so much that it had become 'old hat.'"

The goal of The Message is to engage people in the reading process and help them understand what they read.

4. Read Romans 12 in the Message. How can we take our everyday, ordinary life, and place it before God as an offering? How can doing this transform our hearts and bring spiritual maturity to our lives?

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5. Which part of the story of the prophets of Baal stuck out to you the most? How does this story proclaim God's kindness?

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6. Have you ever found yourself placing your trust in something else in place of God? Why did you make that choice? What was the end result?

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7. Share a moment in your life when you felt like there were 450 voices against you and what God was telling you? What was the outcome of holding onto God? If you are in that moment right now, how can you stand on faith?

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8. Do you believe that God put you where you are right now for a reason? How can recognizing that God is in charge of your life and wants to use you for His phenomenal purpose change your attitude wherever you might be?

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## Bible References

Romans 8:28

1 Kings 17:8-24

1 Kings 18:16-39

Romans 11:33 – 12:2

### Romans 12:1-2 MSG

*So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.*

9. What is God calling you to stand on in faith right now? How would our perspective change if we believed God was working all the time for His glory and for our good?

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10. God is using our present circumstances to prepare us to fulfill His future purposes for our lives. Do you believe that God sees you and is doing something inside of you that will unfold into something absolutely incredible for His purposes and glory? How does that make you feel?

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## Session 3: Centurion

Hi and welcome back. Let's start today's session by reading the story of the Centurion in Matthew 8:4-13 before watching the rest of the video.

This month, we've been discussing experiencing our faith. We've talked about how experiences lead to knowledge about God and how this knowledge leads to greater trust in Him. We've also discussed how an extraordinary God uses ordinary people, like Elijah, to accomplish things for His glory. Now we'll take a look at the story of the Centurion of Capernaum.

In Matthew 8 we see the centurion's servant was sick and ready to die. We find an indication that the slave must have been dear to the centurion because his master intentionally sought out Jesus to heal him. Furthermore, there must have been a mutual respect between the centurion and the Jews. This is based on the fact that the Jewish elders

testified of the centurion's love for the Jewish nation, and additionally that he had even been instrumental in building their synagogue.

The centurion requested the elders to go on his behalf and ask Jesus if he might be willing to heal his dying servant. Jesus agreed, and immediately went to see the centurion. What an honor to get a response so quickly from Christ! When the centurion finally met Jesus, though, he showed great humility, telling Jesus he wasn't even worthy enough to receive Him under his own roof.

The centurion displays great faith in Jesus' power to heal when he says, "but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Jesus marveled at the centurion's faith, saying "Truly I say to you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Remember the Canaanite woman's story from Session 1? Here's another gentile who shows unshakable belief in Jesus.

Now, there are two main points from this story that we're going to focus on: one, that Jesus' miracles always served God's purposes; and two, that faith is an essential characteristic of a Christian's life.

Jesus' miracles always served God's purpose, and each gospel speaks of these miracles as real events. Through them we know Jesus is the Messiah, and that God cares about us as human beings. The miracles which the Son of God performed, primarily in the earlier half of His ministry, were many and diverse: He healed the sick, cast out evil spirits, and raised the dead. In this instance where the centurion's servant was healed, as in many other instances, the purpose was to reveal Jesus' deity as the Son of God. God is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is God.

So why is faith such an essential characteristic of a Christian's life? I think the centurion is a model example of why. You see, He wasn't the type of guy to sit around and wait for God to act. He sought to experience God's power firsthand. We also have to have that kind of experiential faith rather than a passive faith. We need to keep Mark 9:23 in mind, "If you can believe, all things are possible..."

Jesus' response to the centurion, who was a Gentile, reveals that God doesn't look at our outward appearances, but is more interested in the salvation which comes by faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 11:6 reads, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." The servant was healed based on the centurion's faith in Jesus' power to heal. Interestingly, we don't know whether the servant had faith in Jesus, or not.

## Bible References

Matthew 8:4-13  
 Luke 7:1-10

## Going Deeper

### Centurion

An officer in the Roman army, nominally in command of one hundred soldiers. In Matthew 8:5, a centurion who lived at Capernaum approached Jesus on behalf of his ailing servant. In Mark 15:39, a centurion who witnessed the crucifixion identified Jesus as the Son of God. In Acts 10:1, the conversion of the centurion Cornelius marked the beginning of the church's outreach to the Gentile world. In Acts 27:3, the centurion Julius treated the apostle Paul with courtesy. These passages illustrate the generally favorable impression made by the centurions who appear in the New Testament. They were usually career soldiers, and they formed the real backbone of the Roman military force.

Similarly, the church extends an invitation to all mankind, both living and dead, to place their faith in Jesus Christ as their healer and redeemer. Those who believe in Jesus as their savior and who profess their faith in Jesus Christ to others and intercede for them can experience His saving grace, so that they can continue to grow in their spiritual development.

This concludes our series on experiencing our faith. Thanks for watching, and please turn to your discussion guides for further exploration.

### Discussion Questions:

1. The centurion sought the help of Jesus on the behalf of his sick servant with the belief that Jesus had the power to heal him. Have you ever sought after Jesus for healing on behalf of a friend?

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2. What Christian characteristics did the centurion display in his desire to have Jesus help his sick servant? Are these same characteristics revealed in you and your caring for others? What does the presence or absence of these characteristics say about your relationship with Jesus?

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3. Do we reveal an unbiased and non-judgmental attitude towards those around us? Are we willing to intercede for others who are different than we are?

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## CA Thoughts

### Perspective on miracles

God gave man laws and rules and He acts according to them. God gave natural or physical rules. God acts within the framework of these rules, i.e the law of gravity: when an apple falls from a tree, it always falls to the ground, it never floats in the air. On occasion, God acts outside these natural, physical laws. When He does, it is usually because he wants to draw man's attention to something specific. That is when and why God does a miracle. He suspends the natural laws momentarily so man can see something.

A miracle is a signal from God. A miracle conveys a Godly message for man.

Jesus performed miracles for a specific purpose: to prove that He was the Son of God, sent to earth by God, The Father.

Jesus wanted the people to see that He was sent by God to bring salvation

People often ask God to show with a sign or miracle that He loves them. They want proof. The greatest sign of God's love is the sending of His Son, and the sacrifice of Jesus.

4. Do we intercede and believe that Jesus can help others even if we don't know if they have a relationship with Him?

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5. The centurion recognized Jesus' power and displayed great humility in his asking for His help. What role does humility play in our prayer life? Do we make humble requests or demand God's help? Why is humility so important in our relationship with God?

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6. The Bible says that Jesus marveled at the faith of the gentile centurion. At another place in Scripture it says that Jesus marveled at the lack of faith of the people of Israel. Consider your relationship with Jesus today. Do you think He would marvel at your faith or would He marvel at your lack of faith?

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7. Jesus said that "but without faith it is impossible to please Him." What are the characteristics of a faith that pleases God?

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8. As the result of the answers you have received to your prayers, how has Jesus been revealed to you?

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