



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

Content
with what
comes from
God

Elijah

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

The
Centurion

2015

August

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 them. As believers in God we can't simply stop at learning about God through the testimonies of others. We can't simply stop at reading the experiences in the Bible. We must all experience God on our own in order to grow in our knowledge of Him so that we can truly know Him.

The Canaanite woman that Jesus encountered in the region of Tyre and Sidon is a great example of someone who sought after God and remained diligent in asking for help. Jesus didn't immediately respond to her and His disciples urged Him to send her away. After kneeling before Jesus and making another plea, Jesus replied to her saying, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." Even after that, the woman kept following Jesus. As a result of her faith, her daughter was healed. By the end of this story, we can see that the formula played out; the Canaanite woman's experience gave her knowledge, which in turn strengthened her trust in the Lord.

Each one of us has the opportunity to experience our God on a daily basis. The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit have a constant presence in our life. Therefore, every day our knowledge of God can deepen and our trust can mature.

Discussion Questions:

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

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?

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).

CA Thoughts

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.

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?

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?

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.

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?

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?

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.

Perhaps you’ve heard the expression, “God calls ordinary people to live extraordinary lives.” However, as ordinary people, we can’t do it on our own. In James 5 we read that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours... But God had a plan for this ordinary man: to once again bring the Israelites back to God. The nation had been divided in two, and King Ahab was reigning in Israel. Not only did the king worship idols, but all the people did as well. So God sent a drought to the land and told Elijah to go into hiding (Deuteronomy 28:15, 24).

God helps in extraordinary ways. During the drought Elijah had no way of providing food for himself, but God provided water from the brook and sent ravens to feed him. But soon the drought effected the brook and it dried up as well. When has this happened in your life? You feel you’re doing everything God asks, and then your water dries up and the ravens no longer come. We can’t forget that God helps us in extraordinary ways, and sometimes those ways change when we least expect it. Are we flexible enough to allow God to help us in new ways?

Read 1 Kings 17:8-24.

We can’t lead extraordinary lives on our own; it’s only possible through the grace and provision of God.

The drought has gone on for 3 years and King Ahab and the Israelites are still worshipping Baal. They still can’t see that this idol isn’t able to provide for them. Let’s face it, the idols we build ourselves today will never come through for us either, whether they be businesses or bank accounts. We have to remember that God has a plan for us, and that is what makes our lives extraordinary! He wants us to spend eternity with Him, so much so, that He sent His Son to die for us and reconcile our broken relationship. But, it is a struggle, and we are constantly called to grow and mature. If we trust in Him, He’ll give us the strength required to experience the fulfilment of His plan.

Read 1 Kings 18:16-39.

Sometimes our voice is one against 450, but in these moments God can do extraordinary things through us for His glory. Through Elijah, God turned the Israelites’ hearts back to Him.

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.

Going Deeper

The Message

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.

Discussion Questions:

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

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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.

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?

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?

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?

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?

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.

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.

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?

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?

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?

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

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.

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.

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?

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?

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

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

9. As result of our experiences with God, we can grow to believe that God can do anything. Do we find ourselves ever making requests to God for a specific miracle or sign to prove to us something about Him? What does this say about our faith in God?

10. Throughout this series we talked about how experience builds knowledge and knowledge then creates trust. How has this series impacted how you look at the experiences of your life and your relationship with God?
