

Putting God First Study
Lesson 6: THE CONCLUSION
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A Bible Study Series of
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Introduction: Having spent time studying the concept of Putting God First, we now come to the concluding lesson. Each of us must now determine how to put what we have learned into action. The purpose of this lesson is to ensure that we are not like the one described in James 1:22-25:

22 Be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Otherwise, you are deceiving yourselves. 23 For anyone who hears the word but does not carry it out is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror, 24 and after observing himself goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom, and continues to do so—not being a forgetful hearer, but an effective doer—he will be blessed in what he does.

Each of us must come to understand the intent of study is to move us to action. Knowledge for knowledge's sake does not benefit the kingdom of God. Knowledge for the purpose of putting what has been learned into action helps us to impact the world around us. Discipleship then is the process of taking in information and then utilizing what was learned as often as we can.

Learning + Practicing (Doing) = Discipleship

By the end of this lesson, students will begin the process of creating an action plan for putting God first. Enjoy!

Lesson Scripture: 2 Kings 5:1-14

5 ¹Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.^[a]

² Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

⁴ Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. ⁵ "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents^[a] of silver, six thousand shekels^[a] of gold and ten sets of clothing. ⁶ The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

⁷ As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!"

⁸ When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹ So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."



¹¹ But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So, he turned and went off in a rage.

¹³ Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'" ¹⁴ So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

I. Why First Matters—2 Kings 5:3

³ She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

In the initial lesson, we learned about positionality with God. We were reminded that first is not about position but is about a recognition that there is no other option but God.

	vs.	
The way we think of God		The way we ought to think of God
First= Position		First= One and only whether we acknowledge or not

The soldier, Naaman, faced a dire situation. He experienced remarkable success in his vocation as a soldier. Simultaneously, he experienced great challenge in his health situation because of leprosy. This contagious skin disease prevented Naaman from living a normal life. Though he had a wife, servants, and wealth, his inability to solve the bigger problem of health caused him to be defined as sick rather than success. Each time he was described, he would have been mentioned as a great soldier BUT he has leprosy.

“If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.”

Naaman’s solution is to find the help that comes from seeking the guidance of the prophet of God to solve his sickness. The servant girl did not offer him multiple solutions. She offered Naaman the one solution she knew that would be a guarantee of help.

- When people come to us with problems, how regularly do you tell them their solution is in seeking God first?
- Why is there danger in giving people your opinion instead of God’s answer?

Even though the healing comes through the direction of the prophet, God was referenced throughout the entire situation. Elisha was the prophet of God. He was not simply Elisha with answers. This again reminds us that we are not functioning outside of God’s authority. We are disciples of Jesus. Therefore, even when we direct people to hear God’s word and act, we must be sure that we are speaking only what we have been told to speak. While the context of

John 16:13 and Luke 12:12 relate to times of speaking truth to those in power, we can see that Jesus intends for us to be led in what we say by the Holy Spirit (God within us). This covers all opportunities to speak for Him.

John 16: 13

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

Luke 12: 12

For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.”

The servant cares about her boss enough to share that God and only God can solve the problem. She puts God first in her work and then offers the same solution to her master (employer). First mattered in this instance because Naaman would have a lifetime of suffering if he is not offered God as the only option. Remember, first, is more than a simple position. First describes the choices we make to manage our lives. Whatever is first, will be our god. The hope is that we recognize that there is one true God who is first and only, not first among others.

II. Faith to Our First—2 Kings 2:10-12

¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, “Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.” ¹¹ But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn’t I wash in them and be cleansed?” So, he turned and went off in a rage.

“You are not the boss of me, ” began the study in our second lesson. Reading this childish statement challenged our notion that we, who are created, function outside of the direction of God, who is creator. Our acknowledgment of God being first causes us to submit to His boundaries and directives. In 2 Kings 2:10 we read God setting a boundary for Naaman’s healing. Take a moment and identify the directive.

- Naaman do the following: _____ and _____.

- Why did Naaman have to go to the Jordan? _____

Through Elisha, God would heal Naaman, but only in the way God intended. God first means God’s way. Regardless of how we perceive matters, obedience to God is the option we should take. Naaman was not told why the Jordan. He also was not told why seven times. Do you have to understand why before you are obedient? How does faith play a role in our obedience?

Notice Naaman’s real thoughts: “I want to be healed, but I want to do it my way.” Or “I am suffering and I want change, but I do not want to do things the way The Lord prescribes.” Or “I know better, as the one in need, than the one I am going to for help.” Each of these and many other thoughts Naaman and we have towards God seem foolish in isolation, yet how often do we act or think in this same manner? We effectively tell God that we are the ones in control and not Him.

If Naaman went to the Jordan river before seeking God’s guidance would anything have happened? Why or why not?

Whatever previous solutions Naaman tried were not successful. Only when he lowered himself (submission) was he able to elevate God to the first position.

PRAYER PUPS BY JEFFREY SMITH



MANY OF US NEED AN "OBEDIENCE TO GOD" CLASS!

The humor of the comic strip by Jeffrey Smith is the Naaman issue. It is our issue. We want and fight to be the master. We, however, are not the master. We are servants!

The trick of Satan is to get us to believe and act upon the thought that we “can be just like God” (Genesis 3:5).

Naaman becomes angry because Elisha did not offer a solution befitting his understanding. Many people do not realize God's approach often stretches us beyond our understanding. The challenge is to have obedient faith and move even when we do not understand God's method. We do this because He is first.

- When do you find it hardest to follow God by faith and not by sight?



BENEFIT OF TRYING GOD'S WAY: Our faith in God as first helps us to know God on a deeper level. We come through situations of faithful obedience and realize we did not know what God could do on our behalf. In Naaman's circumstance, the potential of his healing depended upon his adherence to the command, even though he perceived there was a better approach than the dirty Jordan River. When he chose obedience he was healed!

III. The Final Step

Now it is time for the obedience game. If you are reading this lesson alone, watch the following video instead. This will help to reinforce the idea of obedience to God!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CIYbBjTMD8>

Bible game rules:

STEP 1: With a partner or in a group, give one another directions such as:

1. Give your partner a high five
2. Tell a funny story
3. Give your partner an encouraging thought
4. Roll a ball to your neighbor
5. Share something nice about your neighbor to someone else in the group

Step 2: After completing the actions/ commands, ask the members of the group how they felt during the game? Were the actions too hard? Did anyone know the outcome or reason for the actions? Did anyone resist doing the actions and if so why?

Step 3: Discuss how this game relates to Putting God First

In most instances, students will have done the different commands simply because the person leading this lesson asked them to try. With no knowledge of a benefit or consequence, students played the game. This is the same way we grow in our obedience to God's commands. We resist the temptation to say, "I do not want to play this game (be obedient)." And we begin to say, "I will try, even though I may not know why I am following these rules."

Step 4: If you are physically with people during this lesson, give your partner a high 5 (the blessing of obedience). Obedience to the game and to God always has blessings attached.

In this activity, you received a high five. Naaman received a healing for his obedience. What would be our spiritual outcomes if we chose obedience to God in the same way?

Conclusion: Putting God First has been a study designed to cause each of us to consider God's plan of structure for our lives. In each lesson, we came to understand that we benefit from understanding that God is first and should be acknowledged as such. Once we reverence God in His deserved place as Lord, we then find that we can rest in the fact that he will care for us and bless us. We do not work for the blessings. We obey our God who withholds no good thing from our lives. The only thing left for us to do is to do!

Next Steps: Over the next few days, write in your journal the next thing God is telling you to do. Why do you believe He has the next step for you and what will be the outcome when you are obedient? As you discover God's plan for your life, continue to step out on faith and trust that God will not let you fall!