

## Sermon: Simple Acts of Obedience

Text: 2 Kings 5

### Discussion Questions:

Last Sunday, we heard Emily Shoenleber share this quote in our Sunday services:

***“A simple act of obedience can change the world.”***

I can't think of a better illustration of this than the life and ministry of evangelist Billy Graham. Billy Graham's estimated lifetime audience, including radio and television broadcasts, tops 2.2 billion. That means that somewhere around two and a quarter billion people have heard the gospel from Billy Graham's mouth—more than any other person in the history of the world. What you might not know, though, is how Billy Graham came to know the Lord.

Have you ever heard of Edward Kimball? Probably not. Mr. Kimball was a “lowly” Sunday School teacher in Chicago way back in the 1850's. He took his role very seriously, and not only prayed for the hyper boys in his class but also sought to win each one to the Lord personally. He decided he would be intentional with every single one of them. One young man, in particular, didn't seem to understand what the gospel was about so Kimball went to the shoe store where he was stocking shelves and confronted him in the stock room with the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That young man was Dwight L. Moody. In the stockroom on that Saturday (April 21, 1855), Moody believed the gospel and received Jesus Christ as his Savior.

But the story doesn't end there. Actually that's where it begins. Under Moody, another man's heart was touched for God, Wilbur Chapman. Chapman became an evangelist who preached to thousands. One day, a professional baseball player named Billy Sunday had a day off and got saved at one of Chapman's evangelistic meetings. Another young man was also converted whose name was Mordecai Ham. Ham was a scholarly, dignified gentleman who, along with Billy Sunday, began traveling the country sharing Christ in tents—or wherever else they could gather a crowd.

In 1934, when Ham came to Charlotte, North Carolina, a sandy-haired, lanky young high schooler, vowed that he wouldn't go hear him preach. But Billy Frank, as he was called by his family, did eventually go. Ham announced that he knew for a fact that a house of ill repute was located across the street from the local high school and that male students were skipping lunch to go there. When students decided to go to interrupt the meetings of Mordecai Ham, Billy Frank decided to go see what would happen.

That night Billy Frank went and was intrigued by what he heard. Returning another night, he responded to the invitation and was converted. Billy Frank eventually became known as Billy Graham, the evangelist who preached to more people than any other person who ever lived, including the Apostle Paul.

- What were some simple acts of obedience in this story that changed the world?
- What do you think was going through Edward Kimball's mind as he went to that shoe store to “confront” young Moody with the message of the Gospel?
- How have you “simply obeyed” Jesus in some small way this past week?

## Examination:

- **Read 2 Kings 5:1-7:**
  - Most of us are not completely familiar with the locations of ancient nations. One of those nations is Aram—since it doesn't exist by that name today. Aram was where modern Syria is—northeast of Israel. Based on what you've possibly heard in the news these past few years, what is your impression of Syria? Is this a place you would like to visit? Do you struggle to think of God working in a powerful way in a place like Syria?
  - The Bible is calling Commander Naaman “a great man,” “a valiant soldier,” and a man that God was using to bring victory to the Arameans (v. 1). And yet, later in the account, Naaman admits that Jehovah God is not “his God.” (v. 11) Do you believe that God uses people who aren't believers, and who don't even know that God is using them? In what ways do you see this happening in the world today?
  - What role does the young Isrealite slave girl play in this story? (v. 2) In what ways might we consider this young girl a “missionary”—placed by God in a location (Naaman's home) that “traditional missionaries” would never be invited to go? Do you believe that God can even use captivity and imprisonment as a form of “missions placement”?
  - What was this young girl's “simple act of obedience”? Do you think she spoke her words with confidence—believing to the core of her being that God would be able to heal Naaman? (v. 3)
  - How did God use crisis in Naaman's life to open his heart to the simple suggestion of this lowly servant girl?
  - What happens next reveals a thoroughly secular mindset. The king of Aram believed he could “pay off” the king of Israel to command the prophet Elisha to heal Naaman—or even possibly do it himself. Do people still believe that God can be controlled and manipulated in this way?
  
- **Read 2 Kings 5:8-19a:**
  - When Elisha hears about all of this, what is his first thought? Whose glory and honor is Elisha most concerned about?
  - Naaman arrived at Elisha's house with a parade of horses and chariots (think what it would be like if the President were to visit your house). How put-off do you think Naaman was that Elisha didn't even come out of the house to greet him? What did Naaman imagine would happen? (v. 11) Why didn't Elisha come out of the house?
  - Elisha was requiring Naaman to humble himself, and follow-through on a simple act of obedience (washing 7 times in the Jordan River). Why do you think Elisha handled the situation like this? Why do you think Elisha didn't, as Naaman expected, come out and make a big show out of the healing?
  - Here's the big question: How often do we expect God to work in our lives, or the lives of those we love and pray for, when we neglect the simple acts of obedience that God clearly calls us to in His Word? Why do you think this is?

## Application:

The application today is obvious and practical. We are handing out a booklet in all five services that outlines fifteen simple acts of obedience. Take a booklet. Study it. Tuck it into the fold of your Bible—and take action on all fifteen points of application. Go wash in the river 7 times, and watch God work!