

Faith, Presumption, and Getting Ahead of God

**An AI Generated Workbook Based on
Input from Rod Myers**

**A Ministry of Central Missions International
6221 Proctor Rd
Sarasota, FL. 34241**

**To be used in CMI's Intercessory Prayer Watch
Ministry**

FAITH, PRESUMPTION, AND GETTING AHEAD OF GOD

A Biblical Study of Prayer, Discernment, Waiting, and Acting

Theme Scripture

“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.”

— Psalm 19:13

Key Principle

Faith acts because God has spoken. Presumption acts and expects God to endorse it.

INTRODUCTION

Christians want to know and do the will of God. Yet one of the challenges of the Christian life is distinguishing between:

- what **God wants**,
- what **we want**, and
- what we **assume God wants**.

Sometimes we fail to follow God because we are afraid to act. At other times, we move too quickly and expect God to bless a decision we have already made.

This study examines biblical examples of people who **got ahead of God**—sometimes with good motives and sometimes while pursuing something God actually desired.

The goal is not to make us afraid to make decisions. The goal is to develop a life of **prayerful dependence upon God**.

LESSON 1 — WHAT IS PRESUMPTION?

Read

- Psalm 19:12–14
- Proverbs 14:12
- James 4:13–17
- John 5:19, 30

Three Different Responses to God

Unbelief	Faith	Presumption
Refuses to act when God has spoken	Acts because God has spoken	Acts without sufficient reason to conclude God has spoken
“God won't do it.”	“God said it; I will obey.”	“I'll do it and expect God to bless it.”
Fear controls	Trust controls	Self-will or assumption controls

Key Thought

Presumption often begins when:

“I think this is a good idea”

quietly becomes:

“Therefore, this must be what God wants.”

Discussion

1. How would you define biblical faith?
2. How is presumption different from faith?
3. Can a person be sincere and still act presumptuously?
4. Can something be morally good but still not be God's direction for you at that particular time?

Personal Reflection

Think of an important decision you have made.

Did you first ask:

“Lord, what do You want?”

Or did you primarily ask:

“Lord, will You bless what I have decided?”

Notes:

LESSON 2 — ISRAEL: WHEN OBEDIENCE COMES TOO LATE

Read

Numbers 14:39–45; Deuteronomy 1:41–45

Israel initially refused God's command to enter Canaan. After God announced judgment, they suddenly decided to go.

Moses warned:

“Go not up, for the LORD is not among you.”

— Numbers 14:42

Nevertheless:

“They presumed to go up.”

— Numbers 14:44

They were defeated.

Key Principle

Something can have been God's will previously and still not be God's direction now.

Think About It

Entering Canaan was God's plan.

So what made Israel's action presumptuous?

Discussion

1. Why did Israel refuse to go when God originally commanded them?
2. Why did they later decide to go?
3. What warning did Moses give them?
4. Why wasn't their willingness to go considered faith?
5. What does this teach about God's timing?

Application

Complete this statement:

Obedience is not simply doing the right thing. It is doing the right thing

_____.

LESSON 3 — ABRAHAM AND SARAH: TRYING TO HELP GOD

Read

Genesis 15:1–6; 16:1–4; 17:15–21; 18:10–14

God promised Abraham descendants.

But the promise seemed delayed.

Sarah proposed that Abraham have a child through Hagar.

They did not necessarily reject God's promise.

Instead, they attempted to **produce God's promised result through their own solution.**

Key Principle

We can believe God's promise while becoming impatient with God's method or timing.

God eventually said concerning Sarah:

“At the time appointed I will return unto thee.”

— Genesis 18:14

Discussion

1. What had God promised Abraham?
2. Why might Sarah's proposal have seemed reasonable?
3. What part did impatience play?
4. What consequences resulted?
5. Have you ever been tempted to “help God” accomplish something?

Complete the Sentence

Sometimes getting ahead of God means trying to accomplish:

God's _____

Through **our** _____ according to

our _____.

LESSON 4 — SAUL: WHEN PRESSURE BECOMES PERMISSION

Read

1 Samuel 13:5–14

Saul faced a genuine crisis.

The Philistines were gathering.

His soldiers were scattering.

Samuel had not arrived when Saul expected.

Saul therefore offered the sacrifice himself.

He explained:

“I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.”

— 1 Samuel 13:12

Samuel replied:

“Thou hast done foolishly.”

— 1 Samuel 13:13

Key Principle

Pressure does not necessarily mean permission.

Identify Saul's Pressures

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Discussion

1. Were Saul's circumstances genuinely difficult?
2. Why might his decision have seemed reasonable?
3. What should Saul have done?
4. How can pressure distort spiritual discernment?
5. What pressures tend to make us act too quickly?

Personal Application

When I feel pressured to make a decision, I should:

LESSON 5 — UZZAH: GOOD INTENTIONS ARE NOT ENOUGH

Read

2 Samuel 6:1–7; 1 Chronicles 15:11–15

When the oxen stumbled, Uzzah reached out and touched the Ark.

His apparent intention was good.

But God's instructions concerning the Ark had not been followed.

David later recognized:

“We sought him not after the due order.”

— 1 Chronicles 15:13

Key Principle

Good intentions do not replace obedience.

Discussion

1. What was Uzzah apparently trying to accomplish?
2. Why would his action seem reasonable?
3. What had God already revealed concerning the Ark?
4. What does this teach us about sincerity?
5. Can a good motive justify a method contrary to God's revealed will?

Finish the Statement

A good motive does not automatically make a particular method

LESSON 6 — NADAB AND ABIHU: WORSHIP GOD DID NOT AUTHORIZE

Read

Leviticus 10:1–3

Nadab and Abihu:

“offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.”

Key Principle

We should not assume divine approval merely because something appears spiritual or religious.

Discussion

1. What was wrong with their offering?
2. Why is the phrase “which he commanded them not” significant?
3. Can religious enthusiasm become presumptuous?
4. How should Scripture govern worship and ministry?
5. What's the difference between asking, “Is this effective?” and “Is this faithful?”

Reflection

In ministry, which question should come first?

Will this work?

or

Is this faithful to God's revealed will?

Why?

LESSON 7 — DAVID AND NATHAN: WHEN A GOOD IDEA ISN'T GOD'S ASSIGNMENT

Read

2 Samuel 7:1–13

David wanted to build a house for God.

Nathan initially told him:

“Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee.”

It sounded like an excellent idea.

But God subsequently revealed that David would not build the Temple.

Key Principle

A good idea is not necessarily God's assignment for me.

David had:

- a good desire,
- a good objective,
- favorable circumstances,
- spiritual counsel,
- resources,
- and apparent opportunity.

Yet God had another plan.

Discussion

1. What was wrong with David's desire?
2. Why did Nathan initially approve it?
3. What changed Nathan's counsel?
4. What does this teach us about human advice?
5. Can mature spiritual people mistakenly assume something is God's will?
6. What should we do when circumstances and counsel seem favorable?

Important Distinction

God's work does not automatically mean **my assignment**.

Write an example:

LESSON 8 — JOSHUA: WHEN WE DON'T ASK

Read

Joshua 9:3–15

The Gibeonites presented convincing evidence.

Their clothing looked old.

Their provisions looked old.

Their bread appeared old.

Everything seemed obvious.

But Scripture says:

“And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.”
— Joshua 9:14

Key Principle

What appears obvious may still need prayer.

The Problem

Joshua's mistake was not simply that he received bad information.

He made a significant decision **without seeking God**.

Discussion

1. What evidence did Joshua examine?
2. Why was the evidence convincing?
3. What did Joshua fail to do?

4. Why do obvious decisions sometimes receive the least prayer?
5. What decisions in your life are easiest to make without seeking God?

Personal Inventory

Do I consistently seek God concerning:

- Family decisions
 - Financial decisions
 - Ministry opportunities
 - Relationships
 - Major purchases
 - Commitments of my time
 - Career or work
 - Church responsibilities
 - Opportunities to serve
 - Major changes in direction
-

LESSON 9 — MOSES: SUCCESS DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN APPROVAL

Read

Numbers 20:7–12

God told Moses to speak to the rock.

Moses struck it.

And something surprising happened:

Water still came out.

The people received what they needed, but God still disciplined Moses.

Key Principle

Successful results do not necessarily prove divine approval.

Discussion

1. What did God command Moses to do?
2. What did Moses actually do?
3. Did his method produce a visible result?
4. Did the result mean God approved his action?

5. Why is this important for evaluating ministries?
6. Why is this important for evaluating our personal decisions?

Complete the Statement

Results should never become a substitute for _____.

LESSON 10 — PETER: ZEAL WITHOUT DISCERNMENT

Read

Matthew 26:47–54; John 18:10–11

Peter drew his sword to defend Jesus.

His action demonstrated courage and loyalty.

But Jesus stopped him.

Peter was attempting to prevent something Jesus had already explained was necessary.

Key Principle

Zeal for God's cause can still interfere with God's purpose.

Discussion

1. What was Peter trying to accomplish?
2. Was Peter's motive completely bad?
3. Why was his action nevertheless wrong?
4. How can passion make spiritual discernment difficult?
5. Have you ever acted quickly because you felt strongly about something?

Reflection

Intensity of conviction is not necessarily evidence of divine direction.

Why?

LESSON 11 — JAMES AND JOHN: PRESUMPTUOUS PRAYER

Read

Luke 9:51–56

A Samaritan village rejected Jesus.

James and John asked:

“Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven...?”

There was even biblical precedent for calling down fire.

Yet Jesus rebuked them.

Key Principle

A biblical precedent does not necessarily mean God wants the same action in every circumstance.

Discussion

1. Why were James and John angry?
2. What did they want God to do?
3. Why might they have thought their request was justified?
4. Why did Jesus reject their request?
5. Can we pray for something strongly and still misunderstand God's will?

Prayer Reflection

Which prayer demonstrates greater spiritual maturity?

“God, please do what I believe needs to happen.”

or

“God, show me what You desire and align my desires with Yours.”

Explain:

LESSON 12 — JESUS: THE MODEL OF DEPENDENT ACTION

Read

- John 5:19
- John 5:30
- John 6:38
- John 8:28–29
- Matthew 26:36–44

Jesus said:

“The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.”
— John 5:19

And:

“I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”
— John 5:30

Jesus demonstrates the opposite of presumption.

He lived in **dependence upon the Father**.

Key Principle

The alternative to presumption is not inactivity.

It is **dependent action**.

Dependent Action Means

Seek → Listen → Discern → Wait when necessary → Act in faith

Discussion

1. How did Jesus approach the Father's will?
2. What can we learn from Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane?
3. Does submission mean passivity?
4. How can we become more dependent upon God without becoming indecisive?
5. When is waiting an act of faith?
6. When is acting an expression of faith?

LESSON 13 — A PRACTICAL TEST FOR DISCERNING GOD'S DIRECTION

Before making an important decision, ask:

1. SCRIPTURE

Has God already spoken about this in Scripture?

What biblical principles apply?

2. PRAYER

Have I actually asked God for direction?

Or have I primarily asked Him to bless my decision?

3. MOTIVE

Why do I want to do this?

4. TIMING

Could this be right but premature?

5. METHOD

Am I using a method consistent with God's character and Word?

6. PRESSURE

Am I acting because circumstances are pressuring me?

7. COUNSEL

Have mature believers helped me evaluate this?

8. ASSUMPTIONS

What am I assuming that God has never actually promised?

9. RESULTS

Am I interpreting apparent success as proof of God's approval?

10. SURRENDER

Am I genuinely willing for God to say “No,” “Wait,” or “Do it differently”?

THE PRESUMPTION CYCLE

Presumption frequently follows this progression:

DESIRE

“I want something good.”

↓

ASSUMPTION

“Surely God must want this too.”

↓

HUMAN PLAN

“This seems like the best way to accomplish it.”

↓

ACTION

“I'm going to move forward.”

↓

EXPECTATION

“God will bless this because my objective is good.”

The critical danger often occurs between **desire and assumption**.

The Better Pattern

DESIRE



SCRIPTURE



PRAYER



SURRENDER



DISCERNMENT



GODLY COUNSEL



DECISION



FAITHFUL ACTION



TRUST GOD WITH THE RESULTS

CASE-STUDY REVIEW

Match each person with the primary lesson.

Abraham and Sarah

Israel at Canaan

Saul

Uzzah

Nadab and Abihu
David and Nathan
Joshua
Moses
Peter
James and John

Which example best illustrates:

Getting God's timing wrong?

Trying to accomplish God's promise through human means?

Allowing pressure to determine action?

Having good intentions but using the wrong method?

Assuming a spiritual activity has God's approval?

Having a good idea that isn't your assignment?

Making a decision without asking God?

Mistaking success for approval?

Allowing zeal to outrun discernment?

Asking God to endorse our reaction?

PERSONAL DECISION WORKSHEET

The decision I am considering:

Why do I want this?

What does Scripture clearly say that applies?

What have I specifically prayed?

What assumptions am I making?

Am I under pressure to act quickly?

Yes / No

If yes, what is creating the pressure?

Is there any reason God might be saying “wait”?

Have I confused opportunity with direction?

Have I confused desire with calling?

Have I confused success with approval?

What have wise Christian counselors said?

Am I willing to accept any of these answers?

- Yes
- No
- Wait
- Not this way
- Not now
- Someone else
- Something different

FINAL PERSONAL REFLECTION

Complete each statement.

I tend to get ahead of God when:

The pressure most likely to make me act prematurely is:

I sometimes assume God wants:

One area where I need greater patience is:

One decision I need to pray about rather than simply act upon is:

One way I can improve my practice of seeking God's counsel is:

A PRAYER AGAINST PRESUMPTION

Father,

Teach me to distinguish faith from presumption.

Keep me from refusing to act when You have made Your will clear, but also keep me from running ahead of You.

Help me not to confuse my desires with Your direction, opportunity with calling, pressure with permission, good intentions with obedience, or success with Your approval.

Give me wisdom to seek You before important decisions, patience when Your answer requires waiting, humility to receive counsel, and courage to act when Your direction becomes clear.

Make the desire of my heart the desire of Jesus:

“I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father.”

Keep Your servant from presumptuous sins.

Amen.

SUMMARY: TEN LESSONS ABOUT GETTING AHEAD OF GOD

1. **Israel:** God's timing matters.
2. **Abraham and Sarah:** Don't manufacture God's promises.
3. **Saul:** Pressure is not permission.
4. **Uzzah:** Good intentions don't replace obedience.
5. **Nadab and Abihu:** Don't assume divine authorization.
6. **David and Nathan:** A good idea isn't necessarily your assignment.
7. **Joshua:** Don't make important decisions without seeking God.
8. **Moses:** Success doesn't necessarily prove approval.
9. **Peter:** Zeal must be governed by discernment.
10. **James and John:** Prayer should seek God's will rather than enlist God in ours.

The Central Question

Before asking:

“Will God bless what I am doing?”

learn first to ask:

“Father, what are You doing, and how do You want me to participate?”