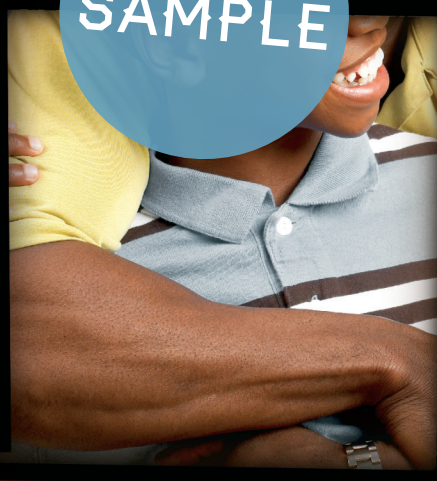


# EXPERIENCING GOD

## AT HOME



A BIBLE STUDY *for* PARENTS

TOM & RICHARD  
BLACKABY

EXPERIENCING  
GOD  
AT HOME

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A BIBLE STUDY *for* PARENTS

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TOM & RICHARD  
BLACKABY

*foreword by*

HENRY BLACKABY

# CONTENTS

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About the Authors . . . . .	4
Group Session 1 . . . . .	8

## *week 1*

Family Foundations . . . . .	10
Group Session 2 . . . . .	26

## *week 2*

God Is Always at Work around You . . . . .	28
Group Session 3 . . . . .	44

## *week 3*

God Calls You into a Love Relationship . . . . .	46
Group Session 4 . . . . .	64

## *week 4*

God Invites You to Become Involved in His Work . . . . .	66
Group Session 5 . . . . .	84

## *week 5*

God Reveals Himself, His Purposes, and His Ways . . . . .	86
Group Session 6 . . . . .	102

## *week 6*

God's Invitation to Work with Him Always Leads to a Crisis of Belief. . . . .	104
Group Session 7 . . . . .	122

## *week 7*

You Must Be Willing to Make Changes to Follow God's Plan. . . . .	124
Group Session 8 . . . . .	142

## *week 8*

Experiencing God through Obedience . . . . .	144
Group Session 9 (optional) . . . . .	160

Leader Guide . . . . .	161
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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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### *Richard Blackaby*

Richard is president of Blackaby Ministries International ([www.blackaby.org](http://www.blackaby.org)) and lives in Atlanta, Georgia. He frequently speaks on the Christian life, spiritual leadership, and revival. Earning B.A., M.Div, and Ph.D degrees, Richard was awarded an honorary doctorate from Dallas Baptist University. Dr. Blackaby served as senior pastor of Friendship Baptist Church, Winnipeg, and was president of the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary, Cochrane, Alberta, for 13 years.

A prolific author, Richard has authored or coauthored *Experiencing God: Revised Edition*; *Experiencing God: Day by Day*; *Fresh Encounter: God's Pattern for Spiritual Awakening*; *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, *The Blackaby Study Bible*, *The Seasons of God*, and *God in the Marketplace*, among others. Richard regularly ministers to CEOs and business leaders.

You can follow Dr. Blackaby at Twitter (@richardblackaby), on Facebook ([DrRichardBlackaby](https://www.facebook.com/DrRichardBlackaby)), or his blog ([www.richardblackaby.com](http://www.richardblackaby.com)).

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### *Tom Blackaby*

Associate pastor of music/youth/education in four churches in three countries, Tom was senior pastor of North Sea Baptist Church, Stavanger, Norway, for seven years. National Worship Consultant for the Canadian National Baptist Convention, Dr. Blackaby currently serves as International Director for Blackaby Ministries International.

Tom leads conferences on men's ministry, worship, prayer, revival, the God-centered family, and spiritual leadership. He holds B.Ed., M.Div., and D.Min. degrees. Tom's wife, Kim, has been instrumental in developing prayer and women's ministries in several countries.

In addition to resources in the Experiencing God at Home series, Tom has authored or coauthored *The Man God Uses*, *Anointed to Be God's Servants*, *The Blackaby Study Bible*, *Encounters with God Daily Bible*, *The Family God Uses*, *Experiencing God's Love in the Church*, and *The Commands of Christ*.

# ABOUT THE STUDY

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We don't need to convince you that the Internet, smartphones, Wi-Fi, and other cultural influences are dramatically altering the parenting playing field. Society has grown from being secular to becoming increasingly anti-Christian. Modern society does not obtain its views of the family, morality, or sexuality from the Bible; rather, many people think they are free to do whatever they want.

In the midst of rapid secularization of society, many Christian parents yearn for their children to grow up experiencing God's blessing upon their lives. God is just as interested in working through families today to extend His kingdom as He was with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jesse, Mary, and Joseph.

The fact that you are engaging in this study suggests you want to be a great parent or grandparent. One benefit of a group is *mutual support* from other parents walking the same journey. You're in a *safe place* to open up and listen to and express opinions. Your leader likely is a mature Christian, capable and committed to lead and to learn. Your experiences are different—and therefore, valuable—as you relate to single parents, adoptive parents, spouses doing this study together, and parents at different ages and stages. Commit to *confidentiality*, knowing that what is said in the group stays in the group. *Prayer and openness to God's leading* should characterize how you relate and seek God's best for your family.

Each week you'll gather to share, delve into biblical principles, talk about what worked as your family responds to God's leading, and make personal commitments. Weekly readings help you unpack what God is saying to you. Interactive Bible study, personal commitments, journaling, and practical applications affect the total experience to the extent that you are open to God. For small groups and parents in any setting, this study is especially beneficial when children are attending their own *Experiencing God at Home* kids' study.

If you've ever been a part of an *Experiencing God* study, you are dramatically aware of the impact of the Seven Realities of Experiencing God. Prepare, then, to be amazed by God and how He wants to use you and your home.

## FOREWORD

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When you look at the family, it is clear why God put it together. Through it, God accomplishes His purposes to mold and shape family members by having them support and encourage one another, correct and guide one another, and affirm God's activity in each of their lives as they grow in their understanding of God's ways and purposes for them. Just as Christ is the Head of the church, so He is also the Head of the family, helping its members to grow in their relationship and service to Him.

My father was a godly businessman, but he was also a church planter and a deacon in our church. We children got to see how God uses families both in the community and in the church. When we moved to a city where there was no evangelical church, we sensed God giving that assignment to us. For many months we held services in a rented dance hall with only our family attending. Over time, others joined us until a thriving, growing church was established. God uses families for His purposes all the time.

As parents, my wife, Marilyn, and I watched to see what God was doing in the lives of each of our five children. It was our job to help them know what God was saying to them through His Word, through their prayer times, and through the church family who was also affirming God's activity in their lives. When one family member struggled, we all walked with him to encourage him and to help him come through the difficult time.

As a family we partnered with God in what He was doing in and through our home as well as what He was doing in our community. Our home was always open to being a place of refuge to those in need, a place of encouragement to those who struggled, a place of laughter for those needing to see the positive side of things, and a place of love where God was present.

Just as in a church where each member is interdependent with one another, so too in the family, each member is interdependent, working together, dreaming together, praying together, and serving God together. There were times when our family had to make major adjustments in our home or in our schedules to follow what we believed God was asking us to do. Several times our family relocated to a new city where I pastored or ministered. Sometimes we took people into our home for a time. Other times we used our vacations to serve in communities offering summer Bible schools.

Character building was a priority in our home, as having good character is a prerequisite to being used by God and is essential for building a strong reputation in the community. We often discussed real-life situations and everyday circumstances to help family members see where God was at work and where He might be inviting us to join him in what He was doing.

Each family should also endeavor to have a time of Bible devotions together. Exposure to the Scripture is exposure to the nature, will, and purposes of God. As you discuss Scripture together, the Spirit of God has a chance to impact each person's life. God typically speaks to the family during prayer times. A family wholly committed to hearing from and obeying God's Word is a powerful instrument in the hands of God!

Together, a mother and father will work under the guidance of the Spirit of God to mold and shape their children's lives, to discipline, to guide, to challenge, and to direct them in the ways they should go. It is my heart's desire that this book will provide the tools you need to help your children enter into the presence of God together as a family and to know Him, to serve Him, and to love Him as He reveals Himself and His purposes to you for your home.

—Dr. Henry T. Blackaby, author of *Experiencing God*

# GROUP SESSION 1

## Sharing Life

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In this study you'll consistently hear how God uses believers to share a message with you. We maintain close relationships with other Christians and open ourselves to sharing our needs, just as we pray and support each other. These goals are a priority as we begin our time together each week. Under the Holy Spirit's leadership, your group can help you forge new directions in parenting.

1. What is your most treasured souvenir from a favorite trip? Why?
  
2. Identify life lessons you learned from your parents—discipline, a strong work ethic, and so forth. Some lessons may be more specific—getting involved in a sport, learning to study the Bible, and more.
  
3. Which ones are you passing on to your children? Which ones do you hope your children will learn?

## Biblical Truth: God's Plan for Families

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The majority of our group time will be spent unpacking the scriptural basis for experiencing God as a family and how parents are spiritual leaders of the home. Sometimes we'll review previous week's insights as well.

## Family Time Last Week

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Week 1 begins a home study feature titled “Leading My Family at Home.” This feature will help you refocus on your spouse and children during the week. Be intentional about trying one or more activities on your own, with your spouse, or as a family. While you will want to keep personal information in confidence, be willing to share insights that might help other parents.

4. Look at pages 24-25 to examine the kinds of exercises that are offered each week. These can be done anytime. Choose activity 2 if you do only one next week and be ready to talk about your family’s values.

## Personal and Home Commitments

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This section allows you to write a personal spiritual goal, for you and your spouse to make commitments to God and your family, or to simply reflect. Occasionally you’ll close with a prayer to express to God. Growing in your relationship with Him is the starting point of any transformation within your family.

5. Complete this prayer:

Dear Lord, I am attending this study because . . .

For my spouse, help me to . . .

For my children, strengthen me in . . .

For myself, help me to hear You speak and then to obey You.

WEEK 1

# Family Foundations



Gerald R.S. Blackaby listening to radio broadcast (left); G.R.S. Blackaby with young Henry (center); Henry with younger brother Will (right)

*One of the amazing privileges of the Christian life is that Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, invites families to join Him in His work.*

## Welcome and Challenge

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Few callings in life are as noble and sacred as that of raising children. Each child is of infinite value, having been created in God's image. Christ died for each person in your home. It is sobering to consider that the ways your children respond to God, contribute to society, and parent their own offspring will be determined in large part by how you parent them. That is why we want to commend you for taking the time to do this study. You cannot imagine the impact you might make for generations to come because you committed to grow toward being the parent God called you to be. As in other areas of life, there is far more at stake than we realize when we obey what God tells us to do.

Over the next eight weeks, we are going to discuss life-changing Scriptures and truths. This material is not about getting "better" kids; it is about becoming God-honoring parents. We believe that if you fully engage in this process, read the material with an open mind, and evaluate your life and parenting with total honesty, then God will do a fresh work in your home. Let's get started by introducing you to a very special person.

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### *Meet Gerald Richard Sanders Blackaby*

Gerald Richard Sanders Blackaby grew up in a godly family. His uncle Frederick studied under Charles Haddon Spurgeon (a renowned pastor in London), starting new churches across England and writing a book about one of his churches. Gerald's uncle William, also a student of Spurgeon's, had his life cut short by illness. Even Gerald's father, Joseph, studied at Spurgeon's College before becoming a Christian businessman and opening a bakery on High Street, Stanstead Abbots, England.

Having such a rich Christian heritage left Gerald with important decisions to make. Would he enter the ministry like his uncles? Or pursue business to serve his Lord? He chose to enter business as his father had, but to do some things

differently. Instead of writing nonfiction like his uncle Frederick, Gerald had some of his poems published. And instead of finding work in England, he immigrated to Canada where he landed a position at the Bank of Montreal.

A promising career was interrupted by the outbreak of World War I. Gerald enlisted and served in many of the war's most infamous battles. His life was miraculously spared on several occasions. In one, Gerald's best friend, Jack Hale, lost his life while standing in for Gerald. Though he would suffer effects from a gas attack and shrapnel wounds for the rest of his life, Gerald returned home safely at war's end.

Gerald remained a bachelor until his forties. Then he married a teacher named Jenny and they had three sons. He landed a bank management post in the remote city of Prince Rupert, British Columbia. However, he could not find a nearby church that preached the gospel "properly." So he rented a dance hall and began leading services for his family. Eight months later, the church welcomed its first visitor—and is still going strong to this day.

Of Gerald's three children, his oldest son never fully embraced his faith. His youngest, William, became a godly layman and leader in his church. His middle son, Henry, became our father. During an altar call at a rally one evening, Henry surrendered to God's call to Christian ministry. His father was a decision counselor that night and was able to pray with his son. Henry wrote numerous books, including *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* that would encourage millions in their Christian faith.

Between them, Henry Blackaby and William Blackaby produced six boys and three girls in their marriages. Those nine children had twenty-one children between them. Of those, four (so far) have sensed God's leading into ministry—two as pastors and three as authors.

## Family Trees: See How They Grow

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Sometimes generations pass on a blessing and at other times they dispense a curse. When we reflect on our ancestors, several facts stand out:

- When Great-Great Uncle Frederick wrote a Christian book, he could not have imagined beginning five generations of Christian authors.

- Gerald Richard Sanders Blackaby barely escaped death several times during World War I. God preserved his life for a reason.
- Being single until his forties, our grandfather might have assumed he would remain unmarried and childless. We're glad he didn't!
- The Blackaby family has a long history of being faithful churchgoers. Choices of church and denomination can be felt for generations to come.
- Gerald met only one of his grandchildren, but they all can tell you stories about him. His memory and influence live on.

Take a moment to reflect on your family tree.

Which of your relatives has exerted the greatest impact on you and your family? Why?

How has your family affected your view of God?

Read these verses for the role parents' actions have on their children and even on their grandchildren.

*I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*

**EXODUS 3:6**

*I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers' sin, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me.*

**EXODUS 20:5**

*I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.*

**DEUTERONOMY 30:19**

*For what great nation is there that has a god near to it as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call to Him? Only be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you don't forget the things your eyes have seen and so that they don't slip from your mind as long as you live. Teach them to your children and your grandchildren.*

**DEUTERONOMY 4:7,9**

What is God telling parents to do through Deuteronomy 4:7,9?

## Meet Our Families

---

The first thing we always want to know when we read a parenting book is more about the author's family. We don't expect them to be perfect, but we do assume that the writer has experienced some success! Let me assure you, we are not ideal parents nor do we have perfect children.

Being a parent is one of the most challenging tasks we have ever undertaken. However, we have always believed that if there was one thing we wanted to get right, it is to be a good parent.

We use illustrations from our families because our homes were the laboratories God used to teach us how to be parents (sometimes our kids would have preferred we use mice). The key is not so much what we did, but the biblical principles we learned and began to practice.

Every family is unique so we encourage you to seek how God would have you customize His eternal principles to your specific situation. We'll tell you what we did, but you'll need to ask God what you should do.

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### *Richard Blackaby's Family*

Richard is the oldest son of Henry and Marilyn Blackaby. He met his wife, Lisa, while they were attending his father's church in Saskatoon, Canada. They have been married 30 years and have three children. Mike, age 28, always wanted to be a rock star, but currently is a single adult pastor in Jonesboro, Georgia. He

is working on a Ph.D. in apologetics and has written two books with his brother. Daniel, age 26, is married to Sarah and also wanted to be a rock star. He recently graduated from seminary and is looking at a Ph.D. program similar to his brother's. In addition to writing two books with Mike, he is writing a fantasy trilogy. Carrie, 22, is the princess of the family. She is working on two master's degrees and writing her first book.

### **Rich and Lisa's Family Principles**

1. Trust God throughout the process (godly parenting is impossible otherwise).
2. Keep the rules few but nonnegotiable.
3. Respect and support family members.
4. Skipping church is not an option (but make church fun).
5. Don't be too proud to get all the help you can; parenting is a team effort.
6. Focus on what matters. Don't sweat the stuff that doesn't.
7. Seek to create a home of joy (the Christian life can be a blast).

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### *Tom Blackaby's Family*

Tom and Kim also met at church and have been married 22 years. They have three children. Erin, age 20, is a thoughtful, kind young lady who is always willing to help her friends. A good musician, she loves studying corporate communications at university. Matt, 19, is a natural leader and athlete, excelling in soccer and basketball, public speaking, and making friends. Open to God's call to ministry, he is studying political science. Conor, 13, is a fearless young man who plays keyboard, sings in choir, and enjoys school.

### **Expectations in Tom and Kim's Home**

1. Show respect for one another.
2. Family takes priority.
3. God is the center of our home.
4. Home is a safe place.
5. Dinnertime is important. Be there!
6. Strive for good character (good actions will follow).
7. We're a family; everyone helps out.
8. Clear communication is important.
9. Try to make a difference in other people's lives.

Every family operates based on its values. Observe your family for a few days to get an idea of what your family believes is important.

List the rules (official or unofficial) by which your family operates.

Together with your spouse, review this list. What would the two of you add, drop, or tweak?

## The Trek North and Experiencing God

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In April 1970, Henry and Marilyn Blackaby loaded their four sons into a Volkswagen van and headed north from Los Angeles to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Some people thought they were crazy. They were leaving a church in which God was working powerfully in one of America's most influential cities. They were moving to a church with ten people, located in the middle of the vast prairies of western Canada.

The church building was, to put it kindly, dilapidated. The roof over the front entrance sagged, and a jagged crack ran down the side of the unattractive white stucco. A "For Sale" sign had been hurriedly removed before our arrival. The ten members had grown so discouraged that they had agreed to disband if our father refused the job. The month before our family of six (with a seventh on the way) arrived, the church's total income was \$90. The future of the church (and our mealtimes) was in serious doubt.

The day we arrived at our new post, a carload of people arrived from Prince Albert, ninety miles away, asking our father to be their pastor too. We realized God wanted our family not only to restore our new church to health, but also to plant other churches. We had no idea God was going to do something through us that would encourage and challenge people for decades to come. Twelve years later, not only was our church thriving, but thirty-eight mission churches had been launched, including one as far as 500 miles away.

How did that happen? God! He was not merely a doctrine to believe, but a God to follow. He didn't want us to just believe in Him; He wanted us to experience Him.

As my father shared what God had taught him, the response was electrifying. Ultimately a publisher asked if he would put what he had learned into a book, which became known as *Experiencing God*. Its teachings are summarized in the Seven Realities. In this study, we'll unpack those realities for their impact on families.

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## *Reality 1*

### **God is always at work around you.**

This has been the most revolutionary of the seven realities. God's people struggle with self-centeredness, so our goals, responsibilities, and efforts consume our attention. But the most important reality of our busy lives is not what we are doing, but what God is doing.

Scripture indicates that God is constantly working to accomplish His redemptive purposes in our world. He declared through the prophet Isaiah: "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and no one is like Me. I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: My plan will take place, and I will do all My will. ...Yes, I have spoken; so I will also bring it about. I have planned it; I will also do it" (Isa. 46:9-11).

Whether you are aware of it or not, God is continually working around you to accomplish His will. The key is to learn to recognize His activity so you don't miss it when He works in your family.

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## *Reality 2*

### **God invites you into a love relationship with Himself.**

God's nature is love. He created you to enjoy fellowship with Him. When Jesus was asked what God wanted most from people, He immediately declared: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30).

Despite being invited into a growing, loving, personal relationship with God Himself, His people inevitably turn their affections elsewhere (Jer. 13:17). God never treats this lightly; He is “jealous” (Ex. 20:5) and sees our disloyalty to Him as spiritual adultery. But because God’s fundamental nature is love, He invariably pursues His disloyal people to draw them back to Himself (Hos. 11:1-11). If you are a Christian, you are either enjoying a love relationship with Christ or He is drawing you back to Himself.

Christianity at its core is not a religion; it is a relationship. Unless you can honestly say that you love Jesus with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength, you are missing the essence of the Christian life.

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### *Reality 3*

#### **God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.**

God has myriads of angelic beings ready to accomplish His wishes. Yet when it comes to carrying out His redemptive mission on earth, God often chooses to work through ordinary people like us. One of the amazing privileges of the Christian life is that Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, invites us to join Him in His work.

God knows what is at stake for people who never hear about Him or who choose not to follow Him (see John 3:16). Therefore, He works with a sense of urgency to redeem those who are living apart from Him. As you love God and spend time with Him through His Word, He will share what is on His heart with you (see John 15:15). If you keep your spiritual senses alert, you might be surprised at where God is working in your world and how He wants you to become involved.

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### *Reality 4*

#### **God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.**

Many Christians have never learned to recognize God’s voice when the Holy Spirit is speaking to their heart during a worship service, guiding them through Scripture, or answering their prayers. The result is that many sincere believers

have never heard God speak, even though they claim to have a personal relationship with Him.

Any meaningful relationship between two people requires two-way communication. God is not a mute observer, sitting passively in the backseat of our lives while we take the wheel. He will relate to us in the same manner in which Jesus related to His disciples. Just as Jesus guided His disciples to know what to do and believe, so the Holy Spirit guides believers today to experience the fullness of the Christian life (see John 10:27; 14:16; 16:7).

The Holy Spirit uses four primary ways to speak: the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and other believers.

### **GOD'S SPIRIT SPEAKS TO YOU THROUGH THE PAGES OF THE BIBLE.**

God's Word is alive and active (Heb. 4:12). The Holy Spirit uses it to provide guidance, convict of sin, reveal truth, and address the needs of the heart. Since the Bible is God's primary means of communicating with you, it is imperative that you spend time reading and meditating on it. It is essential for Christians to regularly submit their lives to God's Word so He can address any area of life that is not in alignment with Him (Eph. 5:26). Allow God's Word to wash over your heart and mind to transform your thinking and behavior. Every time you open your Bible, be prepared for God to speak directly into your life.

**GOD SPEAKS TO YOU AS YOU PRAY.** We approach God in prayer just as children speak to their father (Matt. 6:9). Through prayer we share our concerns, joys, love, fears, and questions with Him. Sometimes we simply bask in His presence (Ps. 63:1). Prayer is also a conversation between God and people. No one likes to have friends who do all the talking. God's invitation is "Call to Me, and I will answer you" (Jer. 33:3). Prayer is a sacred moment when God impresses upon our hearts those things that are on His heart.

**GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE.** A job offer and a chance encounter with a friend are circumstances. So is being downsized at work or being diagnosed with a tumor. Apart from hearing from God, these situations can seem either wonderful or devastating. However, only as we hear from God can we truly understand our life circumstances.

For example, to lose a job is usually negative: *How will I make my house payment or find employment?* God may intend to use that experience to build your

humility and faith to a degree you never knew before. Perhaps God wants to demonstrate practical ways He can provide for your needs. Losing your job could be one of the greatest things to ever happen to you (Gen. 50:20). When you live with your spiritual eyes wide open, you will see the mighty hand of God at work all around you.

**GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE CHURCH BODY.** We are individuals but we are not designed to live in isolation. God intends every Christian to join a body of believers called the Church (1 Cor. 12:12-31). If you were designed to be an eye, then share what you see with the other members of the body. If you were made to be an ear, then heed what the eye tells you. You cannot know fully God's will for your life if you are not relating closely to other believers.

Since Christ resides within every believer, you could receive a message from Him every time you talk to another Christian. Maintain close relationships with other believers through whom God can send you a clear, timely message.

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### *Reality 5*

**God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.**

When Almighty God shares His heart with a creature of dust, it will cause a crisis. However, a crisis of belief is not identical to a crisis. We typically view crises as negative—difficult moments everyone encounters, whether they are Christians or not. A crisis of belief, however, is a moment when you must decide whether you will trust God and obey what He says. When God invites us to join His activity, it will naturally stretch us in our human frailty and weakness.

He will ask us to do things that require faith (Heb. 11:6). As Christians, our faith is based on what we know to be true about God. Each step of faith we take builds on the foundation of previous steps we have taken. As we experience more of God, we will be able to trust Him with increasingly difficult circumstances.

---

## *Reality 6*

### **You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.**

We cannot stay where we are and go with God at the same time. When God asks us to follow Him, we must get up from where we are and move to where He is going. We also need to adjust whatever in our life prevents us from obeying God. That could mean changing our schedule, moving to a new city, giving up a job, becoming involved in a new ministry, adjusting our finances to support a mission cause, adopting a child, or doing a thousand other things.

Every time we join God in His activity, we must set aside our ways and adopt God's. He will align our thinking, methods, and finances to do His work His way for His glory.

---

## *Reality 7*

### **You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you.**

Knowing God experientially was the apostle Paul's driving ambition (Phil. 3:7-10). His wish for Christians was that they "may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the glorious riches of His inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His vast strength" (Eph. 1:18-19). Anything less than knowing Christ in this way shortchanges the Christian life.

The key to experiencing God this way is obedience. Some people claim to believe God, but they don't obey Him. This is impossible. Jesus asked: "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do the things I say" (Luke 6:46). Every time you do what God tells you, you move into a deeper walk with Him. Each time you disobey, your Christian walk stagnates. If you are faithful in the little God asks of you, He will give you more (Matt. 25:14-30). You can experience as much of God as you want. You just have to obey Him.

God loves you and your children. He wants you to experience His blessing. Over these next few weeks, open your heart to all God wants to say to you. If God is preparing to bless your children, He may well begin with their parents.

## ASK AND ANSWER

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Your group and study experiences are part of how God will do His work in you. Each week set aside time to record your thoughts, feelings, and impressions as you encounter God during the week. Record those moments, even seemingly insignificant ones, and look back to see how God is growing you, your spouse, and your entire family in experiencing God in and through your home.

In your spiritual journey, has Christianity primarily been a *relationship* or *religious activity*? How has that perspective affected how you live? How does it influence your family of origin and your family now?

How comfortable are you with the idea of God speaking directly to you? Why do you think this is the case?

Is there something God wants you to do for which you are struggling to trust Him? Record your thoughts or share them with your spouse.

Which of the Seven Realities have you personally experienced? Which ones are not yet a part of your personal spiritual growth?

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### *The Seven Realities at a Glance*

REALITY 1. God is always at work around you.

REALITY 2. God invites you into a love relationship with Himself.

REALITY 3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.

REALITY 4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.

REALITY 5. God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.

REALITY 6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.

REALITY 7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you.

# LEADING MY FAMILY AT HOME THIS WEEK

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Each week allow the group interactions, chapter concepts, and biblical truths to take root and grow in your family. Ask God to help you discern how He is leading you and your family.

This section includes activities to nurture concepts that can be harvested now and in generations to come. Some are designed for individual reflection, while others may be done by spouses or as a family. Try one or all as you choose, but intentionally do something each week. Sometimes you can help your group by discussing insights that grew out of these activities.

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## *1. Create a family tree of faith.*

On a separate piece of paper, list relatives on both sides of your family who are Christians. Draw a family tree of faith with you in the middle, leaving space beneath for your children, their spouses, and their children. Pray, thanking God for the faithful people who have gone before you and asking that those who come after you will be faithful to God.

If your children are not married, begin praying now that God would provide them with a Christian spouse and godly children.

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## *2. Talk about family values and lessons.*

As a couple, talk about family principles or values. (If you are a single parent, share with a relative or trusted friend.) Record and prioritize values and discuss ways to communicate them to your children. Start that conversation now and be prepared to let your group know how this dialog went.

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### *3. Read this story and discuss with your spouse or family.*

I (Tom) attended the funeral for my friend Janice, whose hard life had been cut short by cancer at age 48. She had divorced her abusive husband. Having beaten cancer once, Janice determined to make the most of her remaining years, constantly encouraging her daughters to seek God.

She lived out her faith with a positive attitude. She found a man who loved her no matter what and they married 16 months before cancer took her life. At the funeral, everyone who spoke—her sister, cousin, pastor, and daughters—shared about her incredible, unwavering faith. They painted a picture of someone who had run the race for the prize.

Her daughters could have been angry at God for taking their mother or for their troubled home life. But they weren't. Their mother had shown them a God of love who was taking care of her in the midst of her pain, treatments, and disappointments. Even in tragedy, God was revered, celebrated, and praised.

Janice's main priority was not to see her daughters graduate or get married or get a good job; it was to help her daughters love the God she knew. Her life made me wonder if I had my priorities right with my kids.

What about you? What legacy do you hope to leave for your children?

What do you most want them to remember about you?

Ask your children to identify the most valuable legacy you could leave them.  
Were you surprised by their responses?