

SEVEN
REALITIES
FOR
EXPERIENCING
GOD

How to Know and Do the Will of God

HENRY & RICHARD BLACKABY

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Richard and his wife of 29 years, Lisa, live in Atlanta, Georgia. They have three children.

About This Study

Within the heart of every Christian is the innate desire to know God and to do His will.

God knows what your life can become. Only He understands your full potential as His child. He doesn't want you to miss out on anything He has for you.

Do you believe that? God wants you to know His will. He's not trying to hide it from you. But so often Christians genuinely wonder and even worry about how to know and do the will of God.

You may be immersed in Bible studies and books that provide an enormous amount of information about God. You may have sermon notes stuffed between the pages of your Bible. But do you live in the joy and satisfaction of fellowship with God?

To many people, He's simply a faraway God to be believed in, a doctrine to affirm, an invisible Deity to whom they recite prayers. We need to remember that God is a Person with whom Christians can enjoy an intimate, growing, loving relationship.

You may be frustrated as a Christian because you know God has a more abundant life for you than you're presently experiencing. Or you may earnestly desire God's directions for your life as you seek to serve Him. Perhaps you've recently experienced tragedy, and now you stand bewildered in the middle of a broken life, not knowing what to do next. Whatever your circumstances, my sincere prayer is that this study will help you do the following.

- Believe and experience daily God's infinite love for you.
- Hear when God is speaking to you.
- Identify God's unmistakable activity in your life.
- Believe God to be and do everything He promises.
- Adjust your beliefs, character, and behavior to God and His ways.
- Identify a direction God is taking in your life and recognize what He wants to do through you.
- Know clearly how to respond to what God shows you.
- Experience God doing through you what only He can do.

How to Use This Study

Seven Realities for Experiencing God is an eight-session Bible study. Most groups meet weekly, completing one session each week, but whenever your group decides to meet, it's important that participants commit to both parts of this Bible study: personal and group study.

The first group session is an introduction to the Seven Realities and the life of Moses, who will serve as the primary biblical example for experiencing God. Following this introductory group session, each week's study will focus on one of the Seven Realities, for a total of eight sessions.

Each reality provides content for **personal study**, including five short, daily readings with reflection questions to complete before gathering as a group. Optional journaling pages are also provided following the fifth day of study. These extra pages provide space to record any thoughts, questions, or experiences related to the week's study.

Each reality provides content for **group study**, structured in the following way.

START

This section includes prompts to start your group session with review and prayer.

READ & RESPOND

This section includes a passage of Scripture to read aloud and questions to lead a discussion of what the passage reveals about one of the Seven Realities.

REVIEW

This section includes questions for personal application of the Scripture studied, drawing from selected questions in the daily readings. This section ties together the personal and group content.

EXPERIENCING GOD STORIES

This section gives group members an opportunity to share stories about how they've experienced God in ways related to the reality they've studied.

WRAP UP

This section includes a statement that summarizes the group session, a statement giving instructions for and a preview of the next week's study, and a prompt to close in prayer.

Tips for Leading a Group

PRAYERFULLY PREPARE

Prepare for each session by—

- reviewing the weekly material and group questions ahead of time;
- praying for each person in the group.

Ask the Holy Spirit to work through you and the group discussion as you point to Jesus each week through God's Word.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

Create a comfortable environment. If group members are uncomfortable, they'll be distracted and therefore not engaged in the group experience. Plan ahead by taking into consideration—

- seating;
- temperature;
- lighting;
- food or drink;
- surrounding noise;
- general cleanliness (put pets away if meeting in a home).

At best, thoughtfulness and hospitality show guests and group members they're welcome and valued in whatever environment you choose to gather. At worst, people may never notice your effort, but they're also not distracted. Do everything in your ability to help people focus on what's most important: connecting with God, with the Bible, and with others.

INCLUDE OTHERS

Your goal is to foster a community in which people are welcome just as they are but encouraged to grow spiritually. Always be aware of opportunities to—

- invite new people to join your group;
- include any people who visit the group.

An inexpensive way to make first-time guests feel welcome or to invite people to get involved is to give them their own copies of this Bible-study book.

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION

A good small group has the following characteristics.

- Everyone participates. Encourage everyone to ask questions, share responses, or read aloud.
- No one dominates—not even the leader. Be sure what you say takes up less than half of your time together as a group. Politely redirect discussion if anyone dominates.
- Nobody is rushed through questions. Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People often need time to think about their responses to questions they've just heard or to gain courage to share what God is stirring in their hearts.
- Input is affirmed and followed up. Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don't just move on. Build personal connections with follow-up questions, asking how other people have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you're studying. People are less likely to speak up if they fear that you don't actually want to hear their answers or that you're looking for only a certain answer.
- God and His Word are central. Opinions and experiences can be helpful, but God has given us the truth. Trust Scripture to be the authority and God's Spirit to work in people's lives. You can't change anyone, but God can. Continually point people to the Word and to active steps of faith.

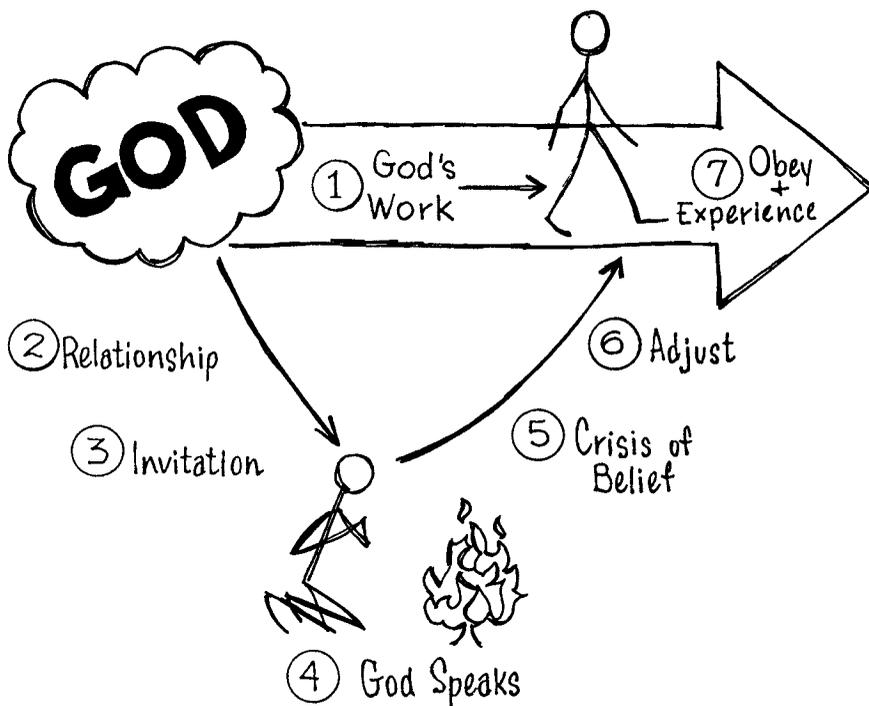
KEEP CONNECTING

Think of ways to connect with group members during the week. Participation during the group session is always improved when members spend time connecting with one another away from the session. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they'll look forward to being together. Encourage group members with thoughts, commitments, or questions from the session by connecting through emails, texts, and social media.

When possible, build deeper friendships by planning or spontaneously inviting group members to join you outside your regularly scheduled group time for meals; fun activities; and projects around your home, church, or community.

INTRODUCTORY SESSION

A GOD-CENTERED LIFE



The Bible is God-centered. Never forget that every time you open the Scriptures, you're face-to-face with the Author. The Bible is more than just a Book. It's God's Word. In it the Creator of the universe is speaking to you. Do you believe that? It's true. But the Bible isn't about you. It's about God and how you can truly know Him.

The ancient Hebrew idea of knowing is one of experience; you can't really know something without experiencing it. So the only way to know God is to experience Him. The more you experience Him, the more you know Him. So every time you read His Word, He's making Himself known.

Fortunately, God has assigned the Holy Spirit to be your Teacher. You can't come to know God in your own wisdom. The Holy Spirit points you toward the Father and toward the Lord Jesus. He opens your mind and your heart to Him. When your life starts to become God-oriented, you see that God has an agenda you knew nothing about. He has a mission.

When you open the Scriptures, you begin to see what He's doing in you and all around you. The Bible is designed to help you understand the ways of God. Then, when God starts to use your life in the same way He worked in Scripture, you'll recognize that it's God who's at work in you and through you. Moses' experience at the burning bush clearly illustrates the way God invites ordinary people to experience Him in extraordinary ways. Throughout Scripture a common pattern surfaces that I call the Seven Realities for experiencing God. The Seven Realities identify ways God works to involve people in His activity.

1. God is always at work around you.
2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.
3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.
4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.
5. God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.
6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.
7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him, and He accomplishes His work through you.

These Seven Realities describe the ongoing experience of a God-centered life.

INTRODUCTORY GROUP SESSION

A GOD-CENTERED LIFE

START

If people don't already have their Bible-study books, start by distributing *Seven Realities for Experiencing God*.

Take a few minutes for group members to introduce themselves and to share their hopes for this eight-week study.

Always be sure to pray before beginning your time in God's Word. Ask God to make His will known and to change each person's life over the next eight weeks together.

READ & RESPOND

Read the following statement aloud.

The Bible is designed to help you understand the ways of God. Then, when God starts to use your life in the same way He worked in Scripture, you'll recognize that it's God who's at work.

Use the following questions to discuss Hebrews 11 and a God-centered life. (Refer to p. 11 for an overview of a God-centered life, if needed.)

Read Hebrews 11:1-2.

How did the writer of Hebrews define *faith* in verse 1?

How would you explain that statement in your own words?

Read Hebrews 11:6.

According to verses 2 and 6, what's the relationship between faith and experiencing God?

Verses 2 and 6 mention God's approval or commendation, God's pleasure, and God's reward. How do faith and seeking nearness to God relate to these ideas?

How would you explain the difference between merely believing God exists and seeking to draw near to Him by faith?

Read Hebrews 11:23-29.

What common factor do these verses emphasize in the ways Moses experienced God?

Read the following statement aloud.

These verses include just some of the events in Moses' life and the exodus of God's people from slavery in Egypt. This summary doesn't even mention the miraculous encounters with God, provision in the wilderness, receiving the Ten Commandments, the plagues in Egypt, or the burning bush where the Lord called Moses to join His work.

What does Hebrews 11 teach us about a God-centered life?

Read the following statement aloud.

The life of Moses is one of many that could be used to demonstrate how believers can experience God. We'll look closely at Moses' life each week as a model of the Seven Realities for experiencing God.

REFLECT

In the following sessions the group will review Bible-study material that group members read during the week and will relate it to your group study. For this introductory session, further reflect on what you've read in Hebrews.

How does your life demonstrate faith in God?

By what ways other than faith have you tried to earn God's approval?

How have those pursuits affected your relationship with God?

Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." What's your response to that verse?

One way to better understand Scripture is to reword negative statements as positive or positive statements as negative. How would you restate the truth of Hebrews 11:6 in positive terms?

One of the most common questions asked by people who are seeking to please God and live by faith is "How do I know and do the will of God?" When have you wanted to know God's will? What did you do?

How are you currently seeking to draw near to God and know His will?

EXPERIENCING GOD STORIES

Each week you'll have an opportunity to share how you've experienced God.

Would anyone like to share a story of how you've experienced God as He rewarded your faith or as He drew near when you sought Him?

How have you experienced confidence and assurance of faith, as described in Hebrews 11:1?

WRAP UP

Conclude the session by reading this final thought and then closing in prayer.

“What is God’s will for my life?” isn’t the best question to ask. “What is God’s will, and how can I join Him in that?” is the better question. Too often we want to plan our own lives and call God in to make us successful. But when we’re living God-centered lives, we understand that God has better plans that He invites us to join.

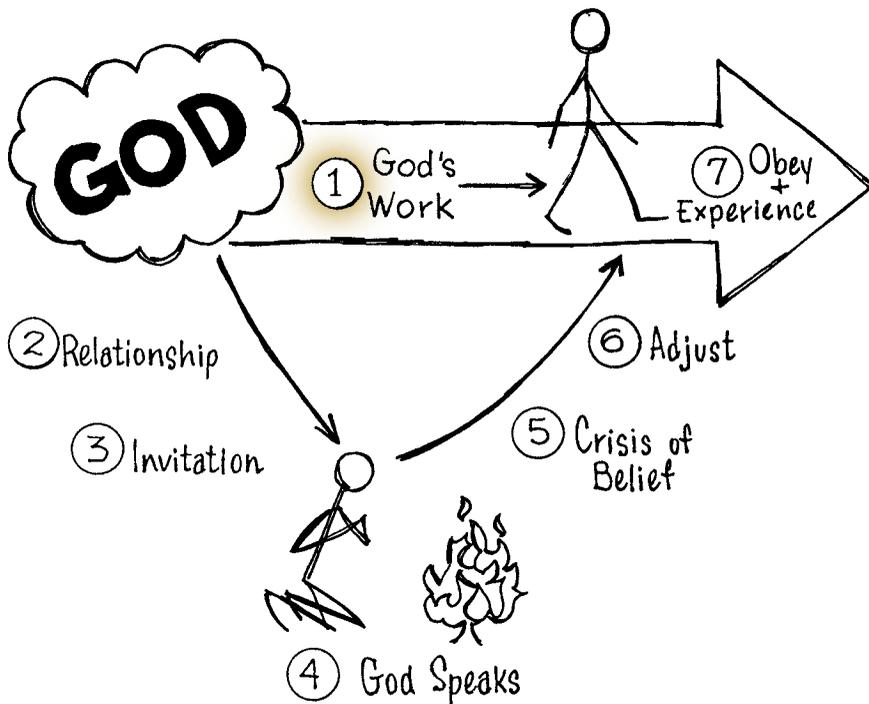
Remind members to read the daily devotions for Reality 1 before your next group session. In addition to the devotional readings and journaling pages that follow day 5, people may want to read Exodus 1–20 to have the full story of Moses fresh in mind before closely examining the Seven Realities for experiencing God.

Next week we'll discuss Reality 1:
God is always at work around you.

REALITY I

GOD'S WORK

God is always at work around you.



God didn't create the world and then abandon it to function on its own. He's been actively involved in human affairs throughout history. In fact, He's orchestrating history. Because of sin, humanity has been separated from a close relationship with God. God is working in His world to bring about the redemption of those who are alienated from Him and facing imminent judgment and destruction. The Father is working through Christ to reconcile the world to Himself. In God's sovereignty He's chosen to accomplish His work through His people. As He carries out His mission, He seeks to move people into the mainstream of His activity.

God was already at work around Moses' life when He encountered Moses at the burning bush. God had a purpose He was steadily working out in Moses' world. Even though Moses was an exile in the desert, he was right on God's schedule, in the fullness of God's timing, in the middle of God's will for that moment.

Years earlier God told Abraham that his descendants would be in bondage but that He would deliver them and give them the promised land. God was watching and waiting for the right time to carry out His purpose for Israel.

At the time God was about to deliver the children of Israel, the overriding concern was His will for Israel, not His will for Moses. God was at work with Israel, and He was preparing to bring Moses into the mainstream of His activity to redeem His people.

This truth also applies to your life. God is actively working in the lives of people around you, even when you don't recognize it. However, unless God opens your spiritual eyes to recognize what He's doing, you'll remain blind to His presence and His work.

day 1

MIRACULOUS ACTIVITY

Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me.

ACTS 26:16

God was working in your life long before you began following Him. The Lord knew you before time began, and He knew what He wanted to do with your life (see Ps. 139:13; Jer. 1:5).

Before the apostle Paul's conversion experience on the road to Damascus, Jesus already knew Paul and had a specific assignment for him. But Jesus revealed this assignment only after Paul's conversion (see Acts 9:15). Paul was so misguided that in his sincere efforts to serve God, he had actually been waging war against Christians. Although God knew what He wanted for Paul, He waited to reveal it to him until He gained his attention and became his Lord.

Our Lord doesn't come to us to discover what we'd like to accomplish for Him. He encounters us in order to reveal His activity and invite us to become involved in His work. An encounter with God requires us to adjust ourselves to the activity of God that's been revealed. God never communicates with us merely to give us a warm devotional thought for the day. He never speaks to us simply to increase our biblical knowledge. Our Lord has far more significant things to reveal to us than that. When God shows us what He's doing, He invites us to join Him in His activity.

Do you want to experience God today? Don't seek to hear from God unless you're ready to ask, as Paul did, "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10).

As you read the accounts of God's miraculous work through men and women in the Bible, you may wonder whether God still performs such miracles today. Be assured that the same God who walked with Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Peter, James, John, and Paul now lives within you. No power can defeat the God who guides you. The God who blessed them is just as capable of working out His purposes through your life. The same God who gave them victory over seemingly invincible enemies, who provided for them when their own resources were insufficient, and who guided them in their decisions is prepared to work as powerfully in your life today.

Too often we acknowledge our belief that God can do whatever He wants; then we add a safety clause: “But I just don’t think God will do that with me.” We become practical atheists, believing God can perform miracles but never expecting a miracle in our own lives.

The heroes of the faith had one thing in common: they were all ordinary people with no power of their own. The difference was the mighty presence of God. Times may change, but the miraculous effect of God’s presence remains the same.

When did you first experience God?¹ Whom did He work through to bring you to faith through the gospel? Record as many details as you can remember about your conversion story. Consider what your life would be like if God hadn’t been at work to save you. How is your story a miracle?

In what specific area of your life do you struggle to believe that God is at work and has a plan?

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God.

What does God want you to do in response to today’s study?

1. If you haven’t experienced God by first responding in faith to the work of Jesus Christ, go to the back of this book to learn how to begin a personal relationship with God.

day 2

THE ONGOING WORK OF SALVATION

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,
for it is God who works in you to will and to
act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13

Salvation isn't just an event; it's also a process. Salvation is God's gift, for there's nothing we can do to save ourselves (see Eph. 2:8-9). Yet with salvation comes the responsibility to work out our salvation.

This is the great paradox of the Christian life. We're to work diligently on our faith yet always with the awareness that only God can bring about lasting change in our lives. As we see God at work in us, we're motivated to work even more diligently.

God won't force His changes on us; neither can we bring about lasting change in our lives apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. An examination of the fruit of the Spirit can be intimidating (see Gal. 5:22-23). Working all nine of these traits into your life seems impossible, and indeed it is. But the moment you became a Christian, the Holy Spirit began a divine work to produce Christ's character in you. And He's always faithful to complete the work He begins (see Phil. 1:6).

Regardless of who you are, the Spirit works from the same model, Jesus Christ. The Spirit looks to Christ to supply the blueprint for your character. The Spirit immediately begins helping you experience and practice the same love Jesus had when He laid down His life for you, His friend (see John 15:13). The same joy He experienced will now fill you. The identical peace that guarded the heart of Jesus, even as He was being beaten and mocked, will be the peace the Spirit works to instill in you. The patience Jesus had for His seemingly unteachable disciples will be the patience the Spirit now develops in you. The kindness Jesus showed toward children and sinners will soften your heart toward others. There will be a goodness about you that can be explained only by the presence of the Spirit of God. The Spirit will build the same faith in you that led Jesus to be entirely obedient to His Father. The Spirit will teach you self-control so that you'll have strength to do what's right and to resist temptation. Because the Spirit lives in you, all this will occur as naturally as the growth of fruit on a tree.

You can't orchestrate spiritual growth on your own. It automatically begins the moment you become a believer. How quickly it happens depends on how completely you yield yourself to the Holy Spirit's activity. When you sense God developing an area of your life, join Him in His activity so that His salvation will be fully demonstrated in you.

What does God want to do in you? Have you allowed Him to complete what He has begun? He won't force you to receive all He has for your life. If God's work hasn't been brought to fruition in you, it's not that Christ hasn't been diligently working toward that end. Rather, you may need to release areas of your life to Him and be as determined as Christ is to see God's work completed in you.

How have you experienced the ongoing work of salvation as you've grown spiritually?

Where is the Spirit most evident in your life, producing the fruit described in Galatians 5:22-23?

What areas do you most struggle with in working out your salvation?

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God.

What does God want you to do in response to today's study?

day 3

A GOD-CENTERED PERSPECTIVE

The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

ACTS 8:29

God is always at work. He’s on mission. What we call missions is simply God finding people whose hearts are spiritually prepared and placing them where they can make a difference for His kingdom. Some of the great missionaries in history didn’t live long lives, but their lives dramatically affected eternity.

For example, God had Philip’s attention, and the Book of Acts gives the exciting account of how He used Philip’s life to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Philip was powerfully preaching in the city of Samaria (see Acts 8:5-8). God used him so mightily that the entire city rejoiced at the miracles God was doing. This would be any evangelist’s fondest desire: to see an entire city responding to the gospel through his preaching. Yet Philip wasn’t activity-centered in his Christian life. He was God-centered. Philip wasn’t preoccupied with expanding his reputation as a great preacher or miracle worker. He was concerned that his life remain in the center of God’s activity.

When God instructed Philip to leave his fruitful ministry in Samaria, he didn’t hesitate (see vv. 26-40). He was prepared. He was attentive. He experienced God by joining the mainstream of God’s activity.

God continues to seek those as responsive as Philip to go on mission with Him. The reason God’s movement isn’t evident in more places today isn’t that He’s unable or unwilling to work. He first looks for those willing to have their lives radically adjusted away from their self-centered activities and placed in the center of God’s activity around the world.

A God-centered perspective is the key to being spiritually prepared for God’s work. If you’re spiritually prepared when a crisis comes, you won’t have to try to instantly develop the quality of relationship with Christ that can sustain you. If you have a God-centered focus and suddenly have an opportunity to share your faith with an unbeliever, you’ll be equipped to do so. If you enter a time of worship spiritually prepared, you won’t miss an encounter with God. If you’re spiritually filled when you meet a person in sorrow, you’ll have much to offer.

If you've established safeguards in your life in advance, you won't give in to temptation.

Christians lose many opportunities to experience God's activity because they haven't devoted enough time to their relationship with God. If you haven't yet developed the habit of daily prayer and Bible study, why not begin now so that you'll be spiritually equipped for whatever life brings?

How are you developing a God-centered perspective, spiritually preparing yourself to join God's work? Identify a time and a place in your daily routine that you can spend in prayer and Bible reading.

Identify an area of your life that's going well. What does it mean to have a God-centered perspective in that area of your life?

Identify an area of your life that's currently difficult. What does it mean to have a God-centered perspective in that area of your life?

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God.

What does God want you to do in response to today's study?

day 4

GOOD WORK OR GOD'S WORK

A Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

LUKE 10:33

If anyone could understand the temptation to let busyness distract Him from the Father's activity, Jesus certainly could.

In Luke 10 He told a parable that clearly illustrated this danger. A certain Jewish man was on his way to Jericho when he was brutally attacked by thieves and left to die by the road. First a Levite, then a priest passed by. These were religious leaders; surely they'd show compassion to a wounded person. But they had places to go and appointments to keep, so they passed him by.

Then a Samaritan, despised by the Jews, came along. Of all people, this man had reason to look the other way since the wounded man was his enemy. But wherever he was going could wait, for someone needed his help.

It's easy to become so busy that you're oblivious to people in need. Your schedule can become so full of accomplishing good things that you're no help to the people around you.

God is at work in the lives of your friends, your neighbors, and your family members. He may ask you to interrupt your day long enough to join Him as He ministers to them. Nothing on your agenda, no matter how pressing, is reason enough to ignore the voice of God when He tells you to stop and help. If you've become too busy to minister to those around you, ask God to reestablish your priorities so that you don't miss opportunities to serve Him.

Even Jesus realized that His role was that of a servant (see Matt. 20:28). He never sought to initiate activity for the Father. A servant never sets the agenda; the master does. The servant must be so alert to what the master is doing that whenever the master begins to move in a direction, the servant quickly joins him. Jesus knew His Father so well that He was keenly sensitive to divine activity around Him, immediately recognizing His Father at work.

It's possible for us to be so busy trying to bring God into our activity that we don't notice Him at work around us. God seeks to redirect our attention so that we can join Him, but we tend to be self-centered, evaluating everything by the

way it affects us. We must learn to view events around us from God's perspective. Then we'll see our world very differently. When God brings someone across our path, we'll look to see whether God is convicting that person of the need for salvation. Perhaps God is comforting someone in sorrow. God might be encouraging one of your friends as he or she faces a challenge. We should then adjust our lives to join God as He works in that person's life. We ought to live each day with tremendous anticipation as we look to see where God is working around us. As our eyes are opened to His activity, we'll marvel at His great works.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = overwhelmingly full schedule; 10 = wide open), how much room do you have in your daily routine?

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = definitely wouldn't; 10 = definitely would), how likely would you be to notice if God wanted to interrupt your plans?

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = definitely wouldn't; 10 = definitely would), how likely would you be to change your plans if God made you aware of an opportunity to join His work?

Honestly, which best describes your life in relation to God's will?

- I never think about God's will.
- I try to live a good life and hope God's pleased with it.
- I make plans and ask for God's help to accomplish my daily activities.
- I seek to know God's will and then change my life to join the work He's doing.

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God.

What does God want you to do in response to today's study?

day 5

PLACE AND PURPOSE

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.

PHILIPPIANS 1:12

There are two ways to look at every situation: how it will affect you and how it will affect God's kingdom. The apostle Paul was always concerned with how his circumstances could aid the spread of the gospel. When he was unjustly imprisoned, he immediately looked to see how his imprisonment could bring God's salvation to others (see Acts 16:19-34; Phil. 1:13). When he was assailed by an angry mob, he used the opportunity to preach the gospel (see Acts 22:1-21). When Paul's criminal proceedings took him before King Agrippa, his thoughts were on sharing his faith with the king (see Acts 26). Even when Paul was shipwrecked on an island, he used that circumstance to join God's activity (see Acts 28:7-9). Regardless of his circumstance, Paul's concern was using his current situation to tell others of God's good news of salvation.

Often when we encounter a new situation, our first thoughts aren't about God's kingdom. When we face a crisis, we can become angry or fearful for our own well-being rather than looking to see what God intends to do through our circumstances. If we remain self-centered, we miss much of what God could do through our experiences, both for us and for those around us.

Will you dare to believe that God, who called you to Himself and equipped you with His Spirit, could work mightily through you? Have you made the connection between the time and place in which you live and God's call on you? He placed you precisely where you are for a purpose.

World events never catch God by surprise. History is replete with examples of Christian men and women who believed God would work through them to make a significant difference for His kingdom. God strategically placed Joseph to become the most powerful adviser to the pharaoh in Egypt and to save Jacob and his family from a devastating drought (see Gen. 41:39-40; 45:5-7). God strategically placed Esther in the king's court at a crucial time when she could save the lives of God's people (see Esth. 4:14).

The same God who was at work in and through the lives of biblical heroes is still at work today. Reading those stories, we may forget that real men and women had to trust God to work in incredibly difficult situations. We know the end of the story. But they were living in the middle of it.

You're a part of the same adventure—the narrative of God's kingdom. Wherever you are, the story's about Him. It's not about you. And because it's God's story, you can be sure He has a plan for where you are right now. He's doing something in you or through you for His purposes. God is always at work around you. Even if you don't understand, trust the One who says:

*As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

ISAIAH 55:9

There are two ways to look at every situation: how it will affect you and how it will affect God's kingdom. Which best describes your perspective?

How are you allowing your current situation to determine the way you invest your life?

How are you letting God use you to make a difference in your generation?

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God.

What does God want you to do in response to today's study?

GROUP SESSION—REALITY 1
GOD IS ALWAYS AT WORK AROUND YOU

START

Start with review and prayer. Ask volunteers to summarize the truths discussed last week in the study of Hebrews 11:1-6,23-29.

Ask God to open your hearts and minds to the work He wants to do in and through your lives.

READ & RESPOND

Transition to a study of the biblical text and Reality 1. Read aloud Exodus 1–2.

Knowing that God would use Moses to confront Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of slavery, discuss examples of Reality 1 in Exodus 1–2. (Refer to p. 17 for an overview of Reality 1, if needed.)

How was God at work during the birth of Moses (see 1:15–2:2)?

How was God at work during the childhood of Moses (see 2:1-10)?

How was God at work when Moses was a young man (see 2:15-25)?

In what way was God's work much bigger than just saving Moses' life (see 2:23-25)?

When we can't see God at work, what comfort comes from 2:24-25?

REVIEW

Continue the discussion on a personal level by connecting themes from the daily reading with Reality 1. (Allow these questions to serve as a guide, but feel free to discuss any meaningful statements from or actions taken in response to the daily reading.)

Day 1

In what specific area of your life do you struggle to believe that God is at work and has a plan?

What encouragement (and/or conviction) do you receive in knowing that the same God is at work in your life as in the lives of biblical heroes like Moses?

Day 2

In John 5:17 Jesus said, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” In what ways is God at work to shape your character for His purposes?

Day 3

What routines have you established in your life to keep you alert to God’s work around you?

Day 4

In Exodus 2:11-15 Moses took matters into his own hands instead of looking to see how God was at work. When have you made a mess doing things through your own efforts or focusing too much on your own desires, thereby missing an opportunity to join God’s work?

When have you experienced God by recognizing an opportunity to join His work?

Honestly, which of the following best describes your life in relation to God's will?

- I never think about God's will.
- I try to live a good life and hope God's pleased with it.
- I make plans and ask for God's help to accomplish my daily activities.
- I seek to know God's will and then change my life to join the work He's doing.

Day 5

God wasn't focused only on Moses' life. He was at work in and through Moses for the sake of a much bigger plan. You're not where you are in life by mistake or coincidence. How has God worked in your life through people or events you would otherwise consider to have been coincidental?

There are two ways to look at every situation: how it will affect you and how it will affect God's kingdom. Which best describes your perspective?

How could God use your present circumstances to bless others and make a difference in this generation?

How have you been challenged this week in regard to knowing and doing the will of God?

EXPERIENCING GOD STORIES

Use this opportunity to share ways you've experienced God.

Would anyone like to share a story about a time when you've experienced God's work in your life?

When have you felt that God might not care or know about your situation? Looking back, how did you experience God and see that He was always at work around you?

How might God's work in your life be for more than just your benefit?

WRAP UP

Conclude the session by reading this final thought and then closing in prayer.

The first reality for experiencing God is that God is always at work around you. God's work may go unnoticed at first, but His purpose is to move people into the mainstream of His activity. He's on mission to save people by His grace. Ultimately, this mission is even bigger than Moses and the Israelites in Egypt. God's mission is to save people through Jesus Christ. His Spirit is still at work in our lives today so that we too can know and do His will.

Next week we'll discuss Reality 2: God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.