

FALL 2018

MASTERWORK[®]

ESSENTIAL MESSAGES FROM GOD'S SERVANTS



Lessons from

I WILL **by** Thom S. Rainer

BORING **by** Michael Kelley

LifeWay | Adults

A STEP OF FAITH

In your opinion, what does it take for a person to get to heaven and have eternal life? The Bible answers this question in one word—**FAITH**.

F Is for Forgiveness

- Everyone has sinned and needs God's forgiveness: *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).
- God's forgiveness is in Jesus only: *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7).

A Is for Available

- God's forgiveness is available for all: *"God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).
- God's forgiveness is available but not automatic: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

I Is for Impossible

- It is impossible to get to heaven on our own: *"You are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

T Is for Turn

- Turn means repent. Turn away from sin and self and turn to Jesus alone as your Savior and Lord: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6); *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation"* (Romans 10:9-10).

H Is for Heaven

- Here . . . Eternal life begins now with Jesus: *"I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance"* (John 10:10).
- Hereafter . . . Heaven is a place where we will live with God forever: *"If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also"* (John 14:3).
- How . . . How can a person have God's forgiveness, eternal life, and heaven? By trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You can do this right now by praying and asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins and inviting Jesus into your heart.

Accepting Christ is just the beginning of a wonderful adventure with God! Follow Christ's command in baptism. Join a church where you can worship God and grow in your faith. Get involved in Sunday School and Bible study. Begin a daily personal worship time in which you study the Bible and pray.

MASTERWORK[®]

ESSENTIAL MESSAGES FROM GOD'S SERVANTS

Lessons from

BORING

by Michael Kelley

I WILL

by Thom Rainer

F A L L 2 0 1 8

 **LifeWay**
Biblical Solutions for Life

Lessons by Michael Kelley are condensed from
Boring. Copyright © 2013 by Michael Kelley.
Reprinted by permission of B&H Publishing Group.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Lessons by Thom Rainer are condensed from
I Will. Copyright © 2015 by Doulos.
Reprinted by permission of B&H Publishing Group.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture
quotations in the lessons from *Boring* and those
marked HCSB are taken from the Holman Christian
Standard Bible, copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003,
2009 by Holman Bible Publishers.
Used by permission.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in
the lessons from *I Will*, and those
marked HCSB are taken from the Holman Christian
Standard Bible, copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003,
2009 by Holman Bible Publishers.
Used by permission.

Scripture quotations in the “How to Become a
Christian” article, teaching plans, and those marked
CSB are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®,
Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used
by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB®
are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible
Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from
The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®,
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

MasterWork: Essential Messages from God's Servants
(ISSN 1542-703X, Item 005075042) is
published quarterly by LifeWay Christian
Resources, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville,
Tennessee 37234; Thom S. Rainer, President.
© Copyright 2017 LifeWay Christian Resources.

For ordering or inquiries, visit www.lifeway.com,
or write LifeWay Church Resources Customer
Service, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN
37234-0113. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to
one address, email orderentry@lifeway.com, fax
615.251.5933, or write to the above address.

Printed in the United States of America.
All rights reserved.

ERIC GEIGER
Senior Vice President, Church Resources

CURTIS HONTs
Content Editor

DWAYNE MCCRARY
Team Leader

KEN BRADDY
Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

MICHAEL KELLEY
Director, Groups Ministry

Send questions/comments to
Team Leader by email to Dwayne.McCrary@lifeway.com
or mail to
Team Leader, *MasterWork*,
One LifeWay Plaza
Nashville, TN 37234-0175
or make comments on the Web at lifeway.com

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for
its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter
and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review
LifeWay's doctrinal guidelines, please visit [www.lifeway.com/
docrinalguideline](http://www.lifeway.com/docrinalguideline).



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCING BORING	5
SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF	
SEPTEMBER 2 Session 1: Chasing Donkeys	6
SEPTEMBER 9 Session 2: Below the Surface	19
SEPTEMBER 16 Session 3: The Divine Invasion	33
SEPTEMBER 23 Session 4: Early to Bed, Early to Rise	46
SEPTEMBER 30 Session 5: Nose to the Grindstone	59
OCTOBER 7 Session 6: Rise and Stand	72
 INTRODUCING I WILL	 85
OCTOBER 14 Session 7: I Will Move from “I Am” to “I Will”	86
OCTOBER 21 Session 8: I Will Worship with Others	97
OCTOBER 28 Session 9: I Will Grow and Serve	107
NOVEMBER 4 Session 10: I Will Go	122
NOVEMBER 11 Session 11: I Will Give Generously	133
NOVEMBER 18 Session 12: I Will Not Be a Church Dropout	143
NOVEMBER 25 Session 13: I Will Avoid the Traps of Churchianity	154



GETTING THE MOST OUT OF MASTERWORK

Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of this resource:

Group Members

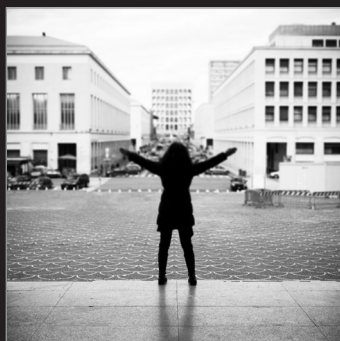
1. Read the daily assignments prior to attending the group time. Complete the personal learning activities in bold type. Record your notes and questions.
2. Review your notes and questions a few moments prior to the group time as a means of preparing to be an active part of the group.
3. In the margins of this book, record insights gained during the group time.

Group Leader

1. Complete step 1 above.
2. Identify the one main idea and goal for the lesson. The main point of the lesson and the goal are printed on the teaching plan pages at the end of each lesson. (See p. 17.) Focus on the session goal as you lead the session.
3. Read and study the key Bible passages listed in the margin of the teaching plan. Supplemental Bible commentary and Bible background articles are available in the MasterWork Leader Supplement. (See below.)
4. Develop a group time plan. Two options are offered in this book. One option is to follow the teaching plan at the end of each lesson. A second option is to use the discussion questions in the margins of the lessons. Some group leaders use a combination of both group time plans.
5. Customize the electronic versions of the suggested teaching plans, available on the Internet at <https://masterworkbylifeway.wordpress.com>, to fit your group.
6. Review and refine your teaching notes as you move toward the group time.
7. Arrive early, praying for the group time.

MASTERWORK LEADER SUPPLEMENT

Bible commentary on key passages used in *MasterWork* lessons and related *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available for download at lifeway.com/masterwork. Look for “MasterWork Leader Supplement - Fall 2018”



Boring

Finding an Extraordinary God in an Ordinary Life

The truth is that we will all spend 90 percent of our time here on earth just doing life. Just being ordinary. Being boring. If this were a self-help book, I might follow that realistic, slightly demotivating statement up with something like: “Break out of the ordinary.” The same motivation, in Christian terms, might read: “God’s will is that you have a life of adventure. Get out there and make an eternal difference. Do something big for God.”

However, implicit in an exhortation like “do something big for God” is the notion that we are currently not doing stuff that matters, and we have to abandon that insignificant stuff to break out of the rut.

The problem is in our definition of significance.

People tend to believe the pathway to significance is paved with the big, the showy, and the grand. The people who are most often lauded as influential are the ones doing the big, impressive things with their lives. Consequently, those same people cannot involve themselves in these mundane details of life. Indeed, the mundane details are like anchors that weigh a person down from the bigger and the better. So moving toward a life that matters involves moving past the details that don’t.

But what if we’re wrong? What if “bigness” is not an accurate measure of significance? What if the whole idea of “ordinary” is a myth? What if a life of great importance isn’t found by escaping the details but embracing them? What if God actually doesn’t want you to escape the ordinary, but to find significance and meaning inside of it?

That’s what this study is about.



ABOUT THE WRITERS

MICHAEL KELLEY wrote *Boring*. He is director of Groups Ministry at LifeWay Christian Resources. Kelley holds the Master of Divinity degree from Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama. He and his wife have three children and live in Nashville, Tennessee. Kelley has also authored *Holy Vocabulary*, *The Tough Sayings of Jesus*, and *Wednesdays Were Pretty Normal*.

AMY SUMMERS wrote the activities, discussion questions, and teaching plan for this study. Amy is a graduate of Baylor University with a degree in social work, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with a master’s degree in religious education. She and her husband have three adult children.

Chasing Donkeys



DAY ONE

The Fear of the Ordinary

Discussion Question

What words come to mind when you hear the word *ordinary*?

I am afraid.

There, I said it, and now it's out there. But I need to clarify the statement. My biggest fear in life is not of sickness, financial hardship, public speaking, heights, or even spiders.

1. What are some of your biggest fears?

My biggest fear is being ordinary. I am deathly afraid of being just another guy who blended into the crowd—someone who never did anything important or significant with his life. I am terrified of “eking” my way through life, so caught up in the rut of the mundane that I pass from this Earth as just another inconsequential guy who had a job, raised some kids, and tried to get enough fiber in his diet.

Oh, I don't always feel this way. Every once in a while something exciting rolls into the schedule. But most days are pretty much the same. It's on those days, as I stare at the computer screen or pay the bills, as I have the same wrestling match with my kids or eat the same dinner with my wife—those are the days when I find myself wondering if I'm really doing anything that matters. If I'm really doing anything important at all.

And where does God fit into this equation? During those days, the days of the rut and the treadmill, I find myself wondering if He does at all. Surely this couldn't be what God wants for me, this God who says that He put on flesh to come and give regular folks like me not only life, but life in abundance (John 10:10). So where is it? In my Google Calendar? In my morning commute? In the pancakes I flip every Saturday morning?

**2. Read John 10:9-10 in your Bible and complete this statement:
Abundant life is ...**

I want to propose an idea to you. It's one that's so very simple that we can often miss it. It's an idea that can, I believe, dramatically change the way we view life as a whole:

What if there is no such thing as ordinary?

What if we are looking so hard for these grandiose experiences of significance that we are missing the opportunities for significance right in front of us? What if there is no such thing as ordinary when you follow an extraordinary God?

But don't just take my word for it. Let me tell you a story—a story that actually involves political intrigue, espionage, and matters of national importance. Be warned though—it's a story that also involves donkeys.



DAY TWO

The Curious Case of the Missing Donkeys

"Give us a king like the other nations have!" That was the demand of the elders of Israel in 1 Samuel 8, a demand that had been a long time in the making.

What if there is no such thing as ordinary? What if we are looking so hard for these grandiose experiences of significance that we are missing the opportunities for significance right in front of us?

Discussion Questions

What percentage of believers do you think really live in the promise of John 10:10? Why do you think that is?

Israel had never had a king. They had leaders, for sure. Moses guided them out of Egypt and through the desert wanderings. Joshua led them into the promised land and through the years of conquest. The judges were empowered by God to deliver the Israelites from the hands of their oppressors. Read through the Book of Judges, and you can see why the elders would make their request for a king. This is how that period of time is described: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever he wanted” (Judg. 21:25).

These were days of spiritual anarchy with each one determining what was right and wrong for themselves. Perhaps it was a situation not that far from the culture in which we find ourselves today, when truth is relative to a given situation and there is no accepted universal standard of right and wrong.

But the Lord had a plan.

That plan came to fruition in the life of a young boy named Samuel. Samuel was a true prophet; as it says in 1 Samuel, he heard the voice of the Lord and none of His words fell to the ground. Under the leadership of Samuel, Israel enjoyed a period of relative peace and prosperity.

But when we join Samuel’s story in 1 Samuel 8, a problem was brewing. Samuel was getting old. What is more, his sons were wicked and not worthy of national leadership (1 Sam. 8:3). That set up the crisis of leadership that we find in 1 Samuel 8. And that’s the backdrop of the demand the elders of the land brought before Samuel.

“We’re tired of this. Give us a king like the other nations have.”

1. Read 1 Samuel 8:4-5,19-20 in your Bible. In your opinion, did Israel’s demand for a king indicate a desire to be ordinary or extraordinary? Explain.

Their request may not seem like a big deal, but at its core it was a wicked demand. By demanding a king, the nation was rejecting God. One of the ways God set the nation of Israel—His chosen people—apart from the other nations was that they were to have no earthly king. They would have leaders, but God was their king. This was one of their marks of distinction. But now they were discontent with their lot. They were tired of other

nations having a visible, national ruler. They were jealous of them. They wanted what they were never supposed to have.

We can sympathize with the elders, can't we? We long for good leadership in the workplace, in the family, or in the nation. We want to know we can trust those in leadership, trust that they're working for the good of the people or the family. Israel's elders were trying to make a plan for the future. They wanted to make sure the nation was strong for the future, but they knew that if the nation followed its current path, dangers were looming. They also wanted to provide for future generations. Understandable, yes; but just because we understand something doesn't mean it's right.

There was no doubt these were extraordinary times. They were times of national crisis. They were days of cultural definition. They were moments that charted the course of history. But flip the page to 1 Samuel 9, and you don't find the extraordinary. You don't find the political maneuvering or the Oval Office conversations. You know what you do find? A farm-raised country bumpkin, barely five miles away from where Israel's destiny-altering conversation was taking place, whose biggest concern at the moment was some missing donkeys:

There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bekorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. Kish had a son named Saul, as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else.

Now the donkeys belonging to Saul's father Kish were lost, and Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the servants with you and go and look for the donkeys." So he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and through the area around Shalisha, but they did not find them. They went on into the district of Shaalim, but the donkeys were not there. Then he passed through the territory of Benjamin, but they did not find them.

When they reached the district of Zuph, Saul said to the servant who was with them, "Come, let's go back, or my father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about us" (1 Sam. 9:1-5, NIV).

Discussion Question

Why did the elders of Israel demand a king?

B o r i n g

Talk about boring. It's hard to think of a more dramatic difference between the two chapters. We go from the heights of political intrigue and national crisis to a search for some lost livestock. While Saul was looking high and low for his animals, we start to get some clues from the text that something extraordinary is going on behind the scenes.

This young man was handsome. As handsome as any other man in the land. And he was *tall*. Interestingly, this is the only time that the adjective tall is applied to an Israelite. He had a commanding stature fit for a king. Heck, his name *Saul* actually means “asked for”!

So you've got a tall, good-looking, corn-fed stud named “asked for.” Sounds a lot like a king to me.

And yet he's not the sharpest knife in the drawer.

2. Read 1 Samuel 9:21 in your Bible. How did Saul view himself?

He, at this point, has no idea that anything beyond his own scope of vision was happening. He was, in his own mind, doing something completely ordinary. Something radically mundane. Something excruciatingly boring. He was chasing donkeys around the countryside. But his chase led him to an area of the land called Zuph, the domain of Samuel. Thus the stage was set for the collision of the ordinary with the extraordinary.

Discussion Question

Was Saul ordinary or extraordinary? Explain.



DAY THREE

An Extraordinary Series of Coincidences

What follows is a crazy series of events. Saul wanted to go home, but his servant happened to know about a man of God who lived around there and

Session 1

knew about stuff like lost donkeys. The servant also happened to have a quarter of a shekel to pay the man of God for information.

Now this man of God traveled a lot, but he happened to be in residence as Saul and the servant went walking up the road. And some women happened to be walking out of the town at the same time Saul and his servant were walking up. They happened to know that this man of God was not only in town, but was only a little ways ahead of them on that very road.

Keep in mind, though, that Saul had no idea who Samuel was—or perhaps who the Lord was, for that matter. But the work of God is not dependent on the knowledge or awareness of man. Just the day before, God had whispered to His servant Samuel that the man He would appoint as the leader over Israel was going to show up at just the right time:

Now the day before Saul's arrival, the Lord had informed Samuel, "At this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him ruler over My people Israel. He will save them from the hand of the Philistines because I have seen the affliction of My people, for their cry has come to Me." When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord told him, "Here is the man I told you about; he will rule over My people" (1 Sam. 9:15-17).

Pretty amazing series of coincidences, isn't it? It's a lot of things happening in just the right order at just the right time. It almost makes you believe that there actually is no such thing as coincidence at all. If that was true in Saul's life, then maybe it's true in your's and mine too. Can you entertain the notion that right now, the same God who whispered in the ear of Samuel is still working in ways you aren't aware of? Maybe even right in the middle of something that seems extremely ordinary? If you can accept that as a possibility, then it can change your perspective on virtually any circumstance in your life.

1. What was Saul looking for? What might have been his attitude as he looked?

What was Samuel looking for? What might have been his attitude as he looked?

If we stop to think about it, we can trace most anything in our lives back to seemingly coincidental circumstances. I met my wonderful wife, Jana, in 1997, when we were entering college. Up until a month earlier, I had planned to go to Texas Tech, but then I decided at the last minute to go to a different school. Some years before that, I had met Jana's sisters and brothers-in-law through our church. They, some years before that, decided to go to the same school where they had both met their spouses. Then they all got jobs and decided to stay in the town where they went to school instead of moving away.

You can do the same thing with something as simple as this book you're holding. Did you happen to just be reading this book right now? You might say yes. But if you believe in the sovereignty of God, you can start to trace a line of decisions and circumstances back and back and back and begin to see the remarkable events that came together for this very moment. Right now. Think about it. It will make your head spin.

The work of God wasn't dependent on Saul's awareness of that work. Neither is God's work dependent on ours. But if we do begin to reflect and look deeper into our circumstances, dusting for the divine fingerprints present in any given situation, it will reveal two important things to us about the nature of God's work and presence in our lives. These truths set the stage for us to understand that there is, in fact, no such thing as "ordinary."

Discussion Question

How would you respond to someone who thinks all of life is by chance?

2. Looking back, how can you see divine fingerprints over what seemed to be an ordinary situation in your life?



DAY FOUR

The Scope of God's Work

First of all, we see the great scope of God's work. The day before Saul would encounter Samuel on that road, God whispered in Samuel's ear. Look again at what God said to His prophet about this forthcoming encounter:

"At this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him ruler over My people Israel. He will save them from the hand of the Philistines because I have seen the affliction of My people, for their cry has come to Me."
(1 Sam. 9:16)

Do you see it? God didn't say, "A good-looking, albeit oblivious young man will come into town tomorrow." No, He claimed divine orchestration of this moment: "I will send you a man ..."

1. Review 1 Samuel 9:3-14 in your Bible. List events that occurred as part of God's process of sending Saul to Samuel. Write an E next to the events that were extraordinary and an O next to the events that were ordinary.

This encounter wasn't by chance; it wasn't an accident by any stretch of the imagination. God had been involved in Saul's life for days and weeks and months and years, though Saul had no idea. Consider the amazing scope of the work of God to engineer this encounter. Evidently, God was so intricately involved in Saul's life and circumstances that He knew the exact right moment for some careless servant in Kish's house to leave the donkey pen unlatched. Even further, He knew how to direct the steps of

The question isn't whether or not God is present and active; the question is just how aware we are of that presence and activity. Just because we consider the ordinary details of life to be small and insignificant, devoid of any real meaning, doesn't mean that they are.

Discussion Question

How can we be more aware of God's presence and activity in the midst of ordinary days?

those wandering donkeys to make sure that Saul and his servant followed them, without finding them, to the base of the hill in Zuph.

The question isn't whether or not God is present and active; the question is just how aware we are of that presence and activity. Just because we consider the ordinary details of life to be small and insignificant, devoid of any real meaning, doesn't mean that they are. And it certainly doesn't mean that God is uninvolved. In all those dirty diapers, bill payments, emails, and daily commutes, God is there. He is intimately involved in the small, seemingly insignificant areas of our lives. This leads us to the second point.

God's Work Through the Ordinary

God operates through, not in spite of, these seemingly ordinary circumstances. Unlike Saul, we have the benefit of knowing what's happening behind the scenes.

And isn't there part of you that wants to grab him by his big tall shoulders and shake him out of his stupor? "Would you forget about the stupid donkeys already? Don't you see that there is something bigger going on here?" Likewise, we might look at this story and see ourselves in Saul. We are living our lives chasing donkeys. Paying bills, going to work, parenting, going to church week after week—donkeys, donkeys, donkeys. So maybe what we need to do is break out of the monotony. Broaden our focus. Quit chasing the donkeys of life and realize there's something bigger going on around us.

Right? Wrong.

In this story, the donkeys aren't a distraction from the work of God; the donkeys are the mechanism that God used to awaken Saul to something deeper. Something he wasn't previously aware of. Something more than ordinary. Let me put it another way.

What if the pathway to significance isn't around the donkeys we find ourselves chasing day in and day out? What if it's *through* them? What if those ordinary details of life are actually the mechanism by which we get to see and experience God and His redemptive plan in a living and vibrant way?

2. Identify some events in your life that occur regularly. Write an E next to the ones that are extraordinary and an O next to the ones that are ordinary. Briefly give a reason for each response.



DAY FIVE

The Illusion of Ordinary

Unfortunately, most of us have bought into the illusion of the ordinary. We long for an escape from our regular lives—something to change our lives from what they currently are into lives with more excitement, adventure, and meaning. Millions of people every day go to great lengths to actualize this kind of dream.

Sometimes it turns out good. When people decide to move from spiritual mediocrity and into radical obedience, that's a good thing. They might sell all their stuff and move across the ocean. Or they might take on the challenge of fostering a houseful of children. Or they might decide to start a nonprofit. That's all good.

Sadly, though, that's not always the story. For every person who moves in good ways away from the ordinary, there are ten stories of those who move in the opposite direction. They are so terrified of the normal and ordinary in their work, marriages, finances, and parenting, that they flee into something—*anything*—that holds the promise of importance. Of significance. Of excitement. The result is an affair. Or an addiction to porn. Or a gambling debt. Or an abandonment of family. All because so many of us suffer from the same, crippling fear that I do—the fear of the ordinary.

1. Once again read John 10:10. What do attempts to attain an abundant, extraordinary life outside of believing in Jesus: Steal?

Kill?

Destroy?

Discussion Question

What are positive and negative ways to break out of what we perceive to be ordinary?

But there is no such thing as ordinary when you are following an extraordinary God. “Ordinary” is a myth.

But there is no such thing as ordinary when you are following an extraordinary God. “Ordinary” is a myth. The only reason we think of something as ordinary is because we fail to look for and then grasp the massive depth of the work and presence of God in our lives. In fact, as we look through Scripture, we find God not removing people from the ordinary, but instead transforming that ordinary into something wholly different. All of a sudden His people wake up to His presence and purpose that have been there all the time.

It’s true, we also find the miraculous, but more times than not, the miraculous is couched in a situation that to the people involved in it, would have been considered just a part of another day. Very boring. Boring, that is, until they began to more fully grasp the scope, power, and wisdom of God.

If indeed that’s true—that there is no such thing as ordinary—then we need to rethink the way we are approaching our everyday lives. We need to reconsider what the pathway to significance looks like. And we need to rediscover a God who doesn’t call us out of the ordinary, but transforms the ordinary by His very presence. It will change the way we pay our bills, go to work, parent our children, and have ordinary conversations.

Everything will start to have meaning. Everything.

We need to rediscover a God who doesn’t call us out of the ordinary, but transforms the ordinary by His very presence.

2. Read 1 Samuel 10:17-27 in your Bible. When it comes to God working the extraordinary through the ordinariness of your life, do you most often:

- ☐ Seek and embrace it like Samuel?
- ☐ Hide from it like Saul?
- ☐ Despise it like the worthless scoundrels?
- ☐ Other?

Explain.

Discussion Question

Now that we’ve studied this episode from the life of Saul, what comes to mind when you hear the word *ordinary*?

So again I ask: What if a life of significance isn’t found apart from the donkeys, but right in the middle of them? What if there is a way to live a normal, ordinary life in an extraordinary way? What if there is a way to keep one eye on the donkeys and one eye on the God who opened the pen?

I think there is.

LEADER GUIDE



During the Session

1. Name several phobias and invite adults to indicate whether they have that fear—such as aerophobia (air travel); claustrophobia (enclosed spaces); gephyrophobia (bridges); technophobia (technology); eisophobia (mirrors); ophidiophobia (snakes); ergophobia (work). Ask if anyone knows what koinophobia or FOBO is (fear of being ordinary). Ask: *Why might people fear being ordinary?* Read from the Introduction (p. 5): “The truth is that we will all spend 90 percent of our time here on earth just doing life. Just being ordinary. Being boring.” Ask: *Do you think that’s accurate? Why? Do you find that depressing or freeing? Explain.* Read or summarize the last two paragraphs of the Introduction.
2. Invite responses to Day One, activity 2 (p. 7). Emphasize abundant life is available only through a relationship with Jesus. Ask: *Are an abundant life and an ordinary life mutually exclusive? Explain.* Explore whether Jesus described those who believe in Him doing extraordinary or ordinary things in John 10:9. Explain shepherds would sometimes sleep across the entrance to the sheep-pen, being both the shepherd and the door. Coming in and going out were covenant terms indicating freedom, security, and provision in obeying God. Invite someone to read the pull quote in Day One (p. 7). State: *There are opportunities for significance as we follow Jesus, coming and going in the seemingly ordinary events of our days. An account of an ordinary guy and some missing donkeys reminds us the work and presence of God is most often found in ordinary life, not extraordinary circumstances.*
3. Read or summarize 1 Samuel 8:1-6. Discuss Day Two, activity 1 (p. 8). Evaluate how a person’s desire to be extraordinary may result in striving to be like everyone else. Invite a volunteer to read verses 7-9. Discuss: *Why did Samuel consider their request sinful? Is seeking abundant life in anything other than God idolatry? Explain.* Summarize verses 10-18. Invite a volunteer to read verses 19-22. Note this was a pivotal moment for the nation of Israel. They would have been excited, waiting for

The main point of this

lesson is: There is no such thing as ordinary when you are following an extraordinary God.

Focus on this goal:

To help adults recognize that the abundant life Jesus offers is found in the work and presence of God in ordinary life, not in extraordinary circumstances

Key Bible Passage:

1 Samuel 9:1-17

To the Leader

Be sensitive towards people with phobias. If you feel this activity would in any way offend or hurt a participant, skip the listing activity and pick up Step 1 by asking if anyone knows what FOBO is.

their king. But they probably would not have been impressed by how God was going to reveal His choice of a king. Invite a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 9:1-5. Ask: *What are some clues that something extraordinary is going on behind the scenes? Do you think Saul felt like life was anything but boring and ordinary? What leads you to that conclusion?*

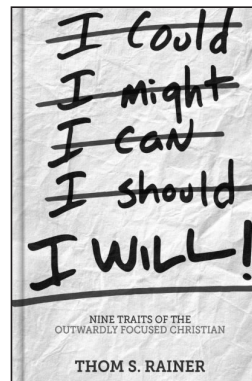
4. Invite a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 9:6-17. Discuss Day Three, activity 1 (pp. 11-12). Ask: *How did what Saul and Samuel were looking for influence their perspective of a seemingly ordinary day? Is any day ordinary when we're actively looking for how God is working and fulfilling His promises? Explain.* Ask if fans of the TV drama NCIS can identify Gibbs' Rule #39 (there's no such thing as coincidence). Ask participants if they agree and why. Consider ordinary events from 1 Samuel 9 that seemed coincidental but were not. Invite responses to Day Three, activity 2 (p. 12).
5. Invite a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 9:16. Analyze the significance of God's statement, "I will send you a man." Explore how that indicates the great scope of God's work. Read and discuss the pull quote in Day Four (p. 14). Invite a volunteer to read verses 18-21. Discuss: *Do you think Saul was beginning to get the idea something extraordinary was happening or was he still clueless? Explain your reasoning. Are you more likely to identify with or get frustrated with Saul? Why? What are some "donkeys" we may chase? Rather than chasing those donkeys, what should we do with our "donkeys" instead?* Read the last paragraph of Day Four (p. 14).
6. Declare: *Don't discount donkeys. Israel's first king was anointed because he went looking for donkeys. King Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. Jesus makes the ordinary extraordinary.* Discuss Day Five, activity 1 (p. 15). Note that people allow into their lives the thief who steals, kills, and destroys when they buy into the illusion of the ordinary and seek to escape it. Read and discuss the Day Five pull quotes (p. 16). Urge adults to prayerfully consider Day Five, activity 2 (p. 16).
7. Remind participants this study is about finding meaning and significance in the ordinary. Invite them to share how this session helped them begin to do that. Close with this challenge: *This week if/when you find yourself getting bored with it all, tell yourself, "I'm not just chasing donkeys. I'm walking in the path of an extraordinary God." Then look for how God is working in and through you in the ordinary events of your life.* Close with prayer, thanking God for working through the ordinary.

*Further in-depth Bible studies by
the authors presented this quarter in
MASTERWORK® are available in
their full-length books.*



Boring

B&H Publishing Group
ISBN: 978-1-4336-8135-6
Michael Kelley



I Will

B&H Publishing Group
ISBN: 978-1-4336-8729-7
Thom Rainer

*To purchase your own copies to read and study,
visit the LifeWay Christian Store serving you.
Or you can order a copy by calling 1-800-458-2772
or by visiting our web site www.lifeway.com.*

MASTERWORK

ESSENTIAL MESSAGES FROM GOD'S SERVANTS

Ever noticed how God works in the lives of various believers? Realizing that God is at work in the world, some of God's servants determine to join Him in sharing deeper spiritual insights into God's message as it works in and through their lives.

MASTERWORK seeks to identify key biblically based messages that have come out of the heart of God's servants. These renowned Christian authors draw learners to a deeper level of involvement through daily personal study, weekly group interaction, and key life messages.

MASTERWORK is easy to use. Both leader and learner read the same Scripture, study the same lesson, and answer the same discussion questions. When they come together, the teacher functions as a group facilitator, setting the pace and guiding students through a lively and spirited in-class session. This resource features:

- Short daily studies that help both leader and learner prepare for each week's session
- Interactive learning activities that help draw points of application to reader's lives
- A two-page teaching plan that follows each week's lesson

NEW: *MasterWork* eBook available

MasterWork is now available as an eBook.

To purchase, visit www.lifeway.com/masterwork.

COMING NEXT QUARTER

Don't miss the exciting Bible study lessons next quarter from *Unscripted* by Jeff Iorg and *Knowledge of the Holy* by A. W. Tozer.

