

SEVEN REALITIES FOR EXPERIENCING GOD

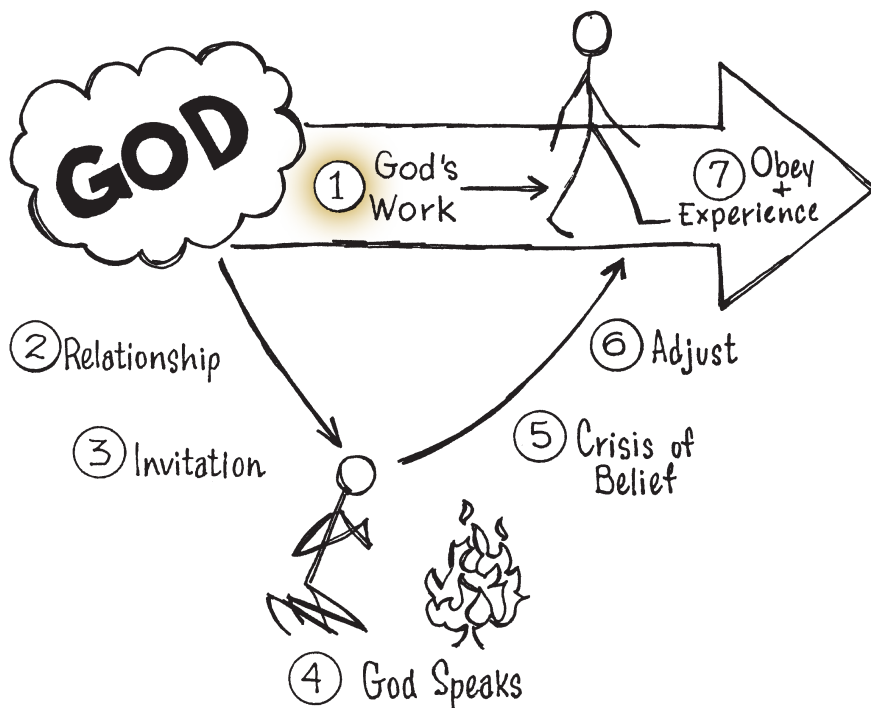
How to Know and Do the Will of God

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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.

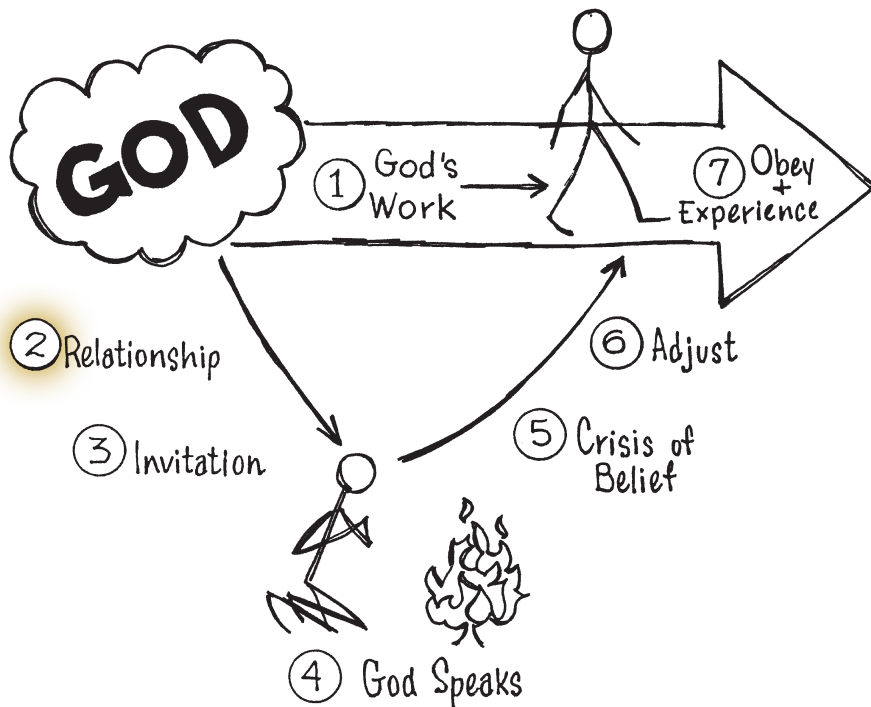
The first reality for experiencing God is that God is always at work around you. God's work may go unnoticed at first, but His purpose is to move people into the mainstream of His activity. He's on mission to save people by His grace. Ultimately, this mission is even bigger than Moses and the Israelites 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.

REALITY 2

RELATIONSHIP

God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.



Real Christianity isn't merely a religion; it's a relationship with a Person. God created humanity for a love relationship with Him. More than anything else, God wants us to love Him with our total being (see Mark 12:30). He's the One who pursues a love relationship with us. We don't naturally seek God on our own initiative. Everything we're experiencing from God comes in response to His invitation. In fact, He dramatically reached out to us by sending His Son, Jesus (see John 3:16). God clearly demonstrated how valuable a love relationship is to Him when He permitted Jesus to die an excruciating death on a cross in order to make a relationship with us possible (see Rom. 5:8).

This intimate love relationship with God is both extremely personal and practical. This is probably the most important factor in knowing and doing the will of God. If your love relationship with God isn't as it should be, nothing else will be in order.

God took the lead in inviting Moses into a personal, dynamic relationship with Him. Moses had led the sheep he was tending to Horeb, the mountain of God. He was in the middle of his day, but God interrupted Moses' plans by encountering him at the burning bush.

Time and time again, God invited Moses to talk with Him and to be with Him. God initiated and maintained a growing relationship with Moses. The fellowship was based on love, and God daily fulfilled His purposes through Moses. This relationship with God was extremely practical as God guided and provided for His people under Moses' leadership.

day 1

MORE THAN RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

JOHN 5:39-40

Bible study won't give you eternal life. You could memorize the entire Bible and be able to discuss minute issues of biblical scholarship and yet fail to experience the truths found in its pages. It's a subtle temptation to prefer the book to the Author, but a book won't confront you about your sin; the Author will. Books can be ignored; it's much harder to avoid the Author when He's seeking a relationship with you.

The Pharisees in Jesus' day thought God would be pleased with their knowledge of His Word. They could quote long, complicated passages of Scripture. They loved to recite and study God's law for hours on end. Yet Jesus condemned them because although they knew the Scriptures, they didn't know God. They were proud of their Bible knowledge, but they rejected the invitation to know God's Son.

Can you imagine knowing all God has promised to do in your life but then turning to something else instead? You may be tempted to turn to substitutes for a relationship with God. These substitutes aren't necessarily bad things in themselves. They might include serving in the church, doing good deeds, or reading Christian books.

Yet no amount of Christian activity will ever replace your relationship with Jesus. The apostle Paul considered everything he had ever done to be "garbage" when compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ (Phil. 3:8). Never become satisfied with religious activity rather than a personal, vibrant, growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

Have you been reading the words of Jesus in your Bible without experiencing His word that transforms everything around you? Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they assumed that knowledge of the written Scriptures would give them life. They were satisfied with having the words instead of experiencing the person who spoke the words.

As you study your Bible, you may sense that God has something to say directly to you through the verses you're reading. Take a moment to consider the awesome reality that the God who spoke and created the universe is now speaking to you. If Jesus could speak and raise the dead, calm a storm, cast out demons, and heal the incurable, then what effect might a word from Him have on your life? The next time you open God's Word, do so with a sense of holy expectation.

On a scale of I to IO (I = dead or nonexistent; IO = vibrant and growing), how would you describe your relationship with God?

What religious activity tends to become a focus of your spiritual life rather than strengthen your relationship with God? Why do you find yourself distracted by that particular discipline or activity?

What reminders can you use to approach religious (and seemingly ordinary) activities with a sense of holy expectation in order to experience God and strengthen your relationship with Him?

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 2

THE JOY OF CHRIST

I am coming to you now, but I say these things
while I am still in the world, so that they may
have the full measure of my joy within them.

JOHN 17:13

If anything ought to characterize the life of a Christian, it's joy. Jesus spoke many times to His disciples about His joy being complete and full in them. His disciples were filled with joy as they realized who they were: children of God and joint heirs with Christ (see Rom. 8:16-17). They had been dead in their sins but were now made alive in Christ (see Rom. 6:4). They had once been helpless victims of death, but now death had no hold over them (see 1 Cor. 15:55-57). With such a marvelous salvation experience with Christ, how could the disciples be anything less than joyful?

It's not surprising that of all those who followed Jesus, Mary was the one to anoint His feet. The disciples would have opportunities to show the same love, but pride would prevent them (see John 13:1-17).

Martha too was prone toward acts of service, but she had developed a different kind of relationship with Jesus than Mary had. While Martha had labored on Jesus' behalf in the kitchen, Mary had joyfully sat at Jesus' feet and listened to Him teach (see Luke 10:38-42). Because Mary had come to know and love Jesus in this way, she was ready to humble herself and offer this poignant expression of love to Him. Such depth and sincerity of love come only by spending time in close fellowship with Jesus.

The way we express our love for Jesus depends on the kind of relationship we've developed with Him. Our love for Him won't grow unless we spend time with Him, listen to His voice, and experience His love for us. If we find that our love for Jesus has waned or that we struggle to serve Him, it's a clear sign that we must take time to sit at His feet. We may have been involved in Christian activity on His behalf and yet neglected our relationship with Him. After we've spent time in intimate fellowship with our Lord, heard His voice, and received His love, we'll be prepared to serve Him, even laying down our life for Him if that's what He asks.

Don't deny yourself your birthright as a child of God. Don't be satisfied with a joyless life. There ought to be in every Christian a deep, settled fullness of the joy of Christ that no circumstance of life can dispel. This kind of joy comes as you allow the Holy Spirit to express Himself in your life. One fruit of the Spirit is joy (see Gal. 5:22). This joy is unlike any happiness produced by the world. It fills you and permeates everything you do.

Jesus didn't pray that you'd merely be happy or even that you'd escape grief. He prayed that you'd have the same joy the Father had given Him: a divine joy that comes from a deep, unwavering relationship with the Father.

This joy is grounded so firmly in a relationship with God that no change in circumstances could ever shake it. This is the kind of joy that Christ is praying will be in you.

Before reading today's devotion, what word would you have used to describe the Christian life? Why?

Describe a time when you were filled with the joy of Christ.

How will you intentionally spend time developing your relationship with God?

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

YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

This is why I told you that no one can come
to me unless the Father has enabled them.

JOHN 6:65

Jesus often referred to God as Father. The word *father* conjures up different images for everyone. To some it brings a picture of love, laughter, respect, and acceptance. Unfortunately, others associate the term *father* with fear, rejection, and disappointment. These variations reveal why it's so important not to take your understanding of your Heavenly Father from your experience. Take it from Scripture. You undoubtedly had an imperfect earthly father, perhaps even one who harmed you. However, as in every dimension of your Christian life, the goal isn't to understand the Bible based on your experience but to understand your experience in light of the Bible. God is your model of a father in the truest sense of the word.

Your Heavenly Father was willing to pay any price in order to save you (see Rom. 8:32). Your Heavenly Father is always ready to meet your needs (see Luke 11:11-13). Your Heavenly Father loves you so much that He's willing to discipline you to bring you to Christian maturity (see Prov. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:5-10). Even when you rebel against Him and reject His love, your Father continues to do what's best for you (see Rom. 5:8). He doesn't make His love for you conditioned on your love for Him. He loves you even when you aren't loving Him (see 1 John 4:19). He has made you His heir and reserves a home for you in heaven (see John 14:2-3; Rom. 8:15-17).

These truths give a biblical picture of what a father is like. If this hasn't been your experience, it can be now. There's One who has adopted you and who wants to love you in a way you've never experienced.

Throughout Jesus' ministry on earth, He looked into the multitudes and focused on those whom His Father was sending to Him. Jesus knew that because of sin, no one naturally seeks God. Sinful man's inclination is to hide from God rather than to come to Him (see Gen. 3:8; Ps. 14:1-3). Therefore, whenever Jesus saw that the Father was drawing a person to Himself, Jesus immediately began relating to that person.

Jesus observed the great lengths to which the despised tax collector Zacchaeus had gone in order to see Him pass by. In response, Jesus immediately left the crowd and spent time with this man in whom the Father was obviously working (see Luke 19:1-10). Likewise, every time the disciples experienced a new insight into the truths of God, Jesus recognized that it was the Father who had been at work in their lives (see Matt. 16:17).

As the multitudes gathered around Jesus, He spoke some truths that were difficult for the people to grasp (see John 6:60). So challenging were His words that many of His listeners departed, but Jesus didn't become discouraged. He saw that the Father was working in the lives of His disciples, and that's where Jesus invested His time. When you want to spend time alone with Jesus, recognize that this desire is the Father drawing you to His Son. You don't seek quiet times with God in order to experience Him but because you already sense His activity in your heart and life. As you read the Scriptures and pray, trust that God will honor your response to His leading by teaching you more about Himself.

How does the word *father* help you better understand the character of God and what it means to be in a relationship with Him?

How have you experienced the Heavenly Father drawing your heart toward Jesus?

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

GOD'S RELENTLESS LOVE

We know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.
Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

1 JOHN 4:16

The greatest truth in all Scripture is this: God is love. Understanding this truth in its full dimensions will set you free to enjoy all that's yours as a Christian. But you must accept that God loves you. If you grew up experiencing unconditional love in your family, this may not be difficult for you. However, if your early years were void of love, this truth may be hard to accept. God loves you, not because you deserve His love but because His nature is love. The only way He will ever relate to you is in love. His love for you gives you an inherent worth that nothing can diminish.

No human can comprehend God's love for His children. Our limited experience of human love hinders us from understanding God's unconditional love for us. We can see a picture of this love in the life of Hosea.

Hosea was a righteous man, but God told him to marry a sinful woman. Hosea obeyed and took Gomer as his wife. He cherished her and treated her with dignity and respect. Never before had Gomer experienced this kind of love, but she soon grew dissatisfied. She began giving her affections to other men.

Gomer became so involved in adulterous pursuits that she finally abandoned Hosea altogether. Other men used her until she had nothing left to give. Then they sold her into slavery. After this, God gave Hosea an amazing command: "Go and buy her back" (author's paraphrase; see Hos. 3:1-2). Despite the intense pain and hurt that Gomer had inflicted on Hosea, God told him to forgive her and to pay any price to bring her back home.

God's message is clear: when we reject Him and turn our devotion elsewhere, our rejection carries the same pain as an adulterous betrayal. After all God has done for us, it's incomprehensible that we should reject Him. It's even harder to fathom that God could love us even after we've rejected, ignored, and disobeyed Him. Yet God's love is completely different from ours. His love follows us to the depths of our sinfulness until He's reclaimed us. His love is undaunted when we run from Him, and He continues to pursue us. What incredible love He's demonstrated to us!

If you can't accept the truth that God loves you, you'll be limited in the way you can relate to Him. When He disciplines you, you won't take it as an expression of His love. Rather, you may resent Him. When God says no to a request that's less than His best for you, you'll conclude that He doesn't care about you. Without a clear understanding and acceptance of God's love for you, you'll be disoriented to Him and to what He wants to do in your life. If you accept God's love, however, you'll be able to return love to God as well as to others (see 1 John 4:19).

Are you experiencing the profound sense of joy and security that comes from knowing that God dearly loves you? Being assured of God's love for you sets you free to enjoy the numerous expressions of love He showers on you each day.

When do you have the hardest time accepting the fact that God loves you? Why is it hard to feel loved by God? When is it easiest to believe that He loves you?

Describe a season in your life that resembles the unfaithful, ungrateful wandering of Gomer.

How does Hosea's example of God's relentless, loving pursuit of you change your view of God? Of yourself? Of a relationship with Him?

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

UNIQUELY PERSONAL

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”

LUKE 19:5

In our large world it's easy to feel we're nothing more than an insignificant speck in the midst of a multitude. We may wonder whether God notices us or whether we can really know Him. Our world tends to depersonalize us, seeking to make us like everyone else, but God loves us in specific ways that are particular to us.

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to fulfill His assignment on the cross. The multitudes thronged around Him in such numbers that the diminutive Zacchaeus couldn't see Him unless he climbed a tree. Zacchaeus would have been satisfied simply to catch a glimpse of the great Teacher. But Jesus stopped, turned, and looked directly at him. In that moment Zacchaeus was oblivious to the crowd around him. Thus began a special time with Jesus that radically changed his life (see Luke 19:1-10).

Jesus relates to you in ways that are unique to you. He knows your past; He knows what you'll face in the future. Because He knows everything about you, His word to you will perfectly fit the circumstances of your life. He knows you, and He wants you to know Him.

Therefore, you don't have to wonder what Jesus wants. If you're walking with the Lord daily, you won't have to find God's will; you'll already be in it. If you're walking with Him in obedience day by day, you'll always be in His will. The Holy Spirit's role is to guide you step by step to do God's will. Walking closely with God each day guarantees that you'll be exactly where He wants you to be. You'd have to reject all of the Holy Spirit's activity in your life to get out of the will of God.

The disciples never had to ask Jesus where they should go next. They simply looked to see where Jesus was going and stayed close to Him. Jesus was their Way (see John 14:6). They didn't need a map as long as they had Jesus. Too often we'd prefer a road map of our future rather than a relationship with the Way. It often seems easier to follow a plan than to cultivate a relationship.

We can become more concerned with our future than we are with walking intimately with God today. But Jesus will never give you a substitute for Himself. He's the only Way to the Father. That's why it's critical that you clearly know

when God is speaking to you (see Isa. 30:21). If you're disoriented to how God speaks, you won't understand when He's giving you a new revelation about what He's doing. If you want to know God's will, take time to cultivate your relationship with Jesus and learn to identify His voice. He's more than willing to show you the way.

What fear do you have that only Jesus could know?

Why is it important to know that God is all-knowing and all-powerful?
Why is it equally important to know that He cares for you personally?

Honestly, which do you desire more: to know what your future holds or to trust God more fully? How is knowing the Way (Jesus) better than having a road map for 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?

GROUP SESSION—REALITY 2
GOD PURSUES A CONTINUING
LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU
THAT IS REAL AND PERSONAL

START

Start with review and prayer. Ask volunteers to summarize the truths discussed last week in the study of Exodus 1–2.

Ask God to open everyone’s heart and mind to the real, personal nature of His love for each person in the group.

READ & RESPOND

Transition to a study of the biblical text and Reality 2. Read aloud Exodus 3:1–6.

Use the following questions to discuss examples of Reality 2 in Exodus 3:1–6. (Refer to p. 35 for an overview of Reality 2, if needed.)

Who was pursuing whom in this passage? Explain your answer.

What was Moses doing when the Lord appeared to him (see v. 1)? Why is this a significant detail in understanding a relationship with God?

How did God introduce Himself to Moses (see v. 6)?

How does the genealogy in verse 6 exemplify the continuing nature of a love relationship with God?

What other evidence in this text shows that God is both real and personal?

How did Moses respond to God's presence (note each action in vv. 3-6)?

How did Moses model a proper response in relating to God?

REVIEW

Continue the discussion on a personal level by connecting themes from the daily reading with Reality 2. (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

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = dead or nonexistent; 10 = vibrant and growing), how would you describe your relationship with God?

What distracts your attention from a growing relationship with God?

How do you remind yourself to live with a sense of holy expectation in order to experience God and strengthen your relationship with Him?

Day 2

Before this week's study, what word would you have used to describe the Christian life?

How has your view of life in relationship with God changed after studying Reality 2 and the life of Moses?

Day 3

How does the word *father* help you better understand the character of God and what it means to be in a relationship with Him?

How have you experienced the Heavenly Father drawing your heart toward Jesus?

Day 4

When do you have the hardest time accepting the fact that God loves you? Why is it hard to feel loved by God? When is it easiest to believe that He loves you?

Day 5

Why is it important to know that God is all-knowing and all-powerful? Why is it equally important to know that He cares for you personally?

How have you been encouraged this week in regard to your personal relationship with God?

EXPERIENCING GOD STORIES

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

How have you experienced God this past week?

When and how did God interrupt your life in His pursuit of a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal?

WRAP UP

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

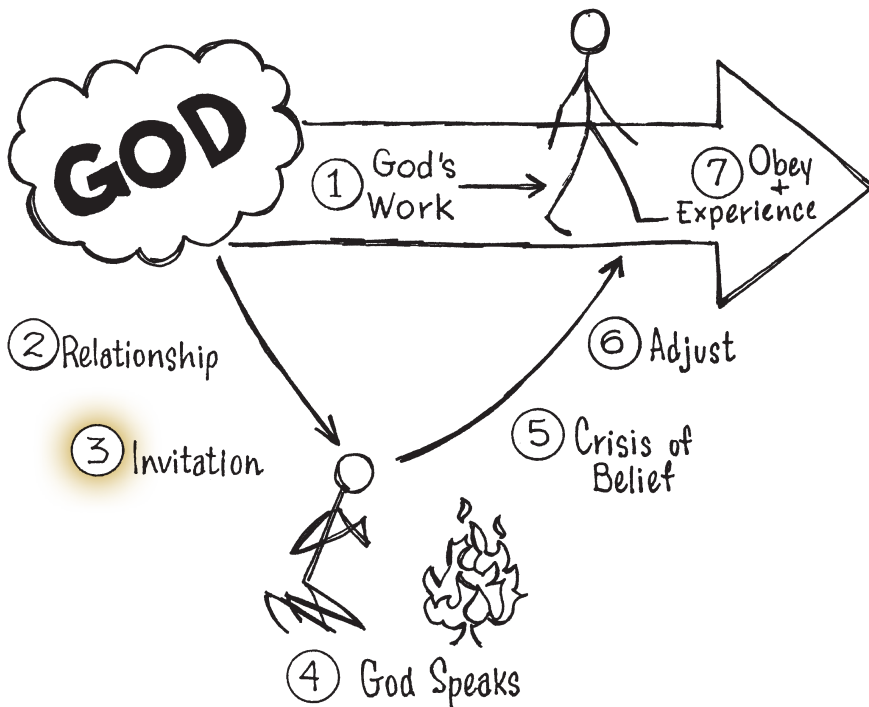
A love relationship with God is both extremely personal and practical. This is probably the most important factor in knowing and doing the will of God. If your love relationship with God isn't as it should be, nothing else will be in order. It's essential that you're in a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Next week we'll discuss Reality 3: God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.

REALITY 3

INVITATION

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



God is the sovereign Ruler of the universe. He's been working throughout history to accomplish His purposes. He doesn't ask you to dream your dreams for Him. He doesn't ask you to do your best or try your hardest for Him. He doesn't invite you to set magnificent goals and then pray He will help you achieve them.

God already has His own agenda when He approaches you. Let both of those truths sink in. God, the infinitely wise Lord of all creation, already has a plan. The almighty King of kings approaches you. He's chosen to personally interact with you, His creation, to participate in His work.

His desire is to get you from where you are to where He's working. He leads you from being self-centered to being God-centered. When God reveals to you where He's working, that becomes His invitation to join Him in His activity. When God reveals His work to you, that's the time to respond to Him.

In Moses' story God's purpose was to rescue the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and to establish them as a nation in their own land. Moses was the one through whom God intended to accomplish His plans. God invited Moses to become involved with Him in His work.

It would never have crossed Moses' mind to do something like this if God hadn't invited Him. Yet suddenly Moses was being summoned to join in a work that God had been preparing centuries for.

day 1

A PURE HEART

“Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.”

JEREMIAH 18:6

God knows how to bring salvation to your family, your friends, your community, and your world. Accordingly, He looks for people who will allow Him to shape them into the instruments He requires to do His divine work. Clay has no plans of its own, no aspirations for service, no reluctance to perform its given task. It's just clay—moldable, pliable, totally submissive to the will of its master.

At times we excitedly announce to God, “I’ve discovered my strengths and gifts, and now I know how I can best serve You!” At other times we inform Him, “I’m aware of what my weaknesses are, so I know which tasks I’m not capable of doing for You.” Yet such conclusions aren’t characteristic of clay. God isn’t limited to working with our strengths (see 2 Cor. 12:9-10). He can mold us into whatever instrument He requires. When God’s assignment demands humility, he finds a servant willing to be humbled. When His work requires zeal, He looks for someone He can fill with His Spirit. God uses holy vessels, so He finds those who will allow Him to remove their impurities.

It takes a pure heart to see God (see Matt. 5:8). You can attend church services, read your Bible, and pray, but if sin fills your heart, you won’t see God. Take Isaiah, for instance. He was concerned with the death of King Uzziah, the king of Judah, but was disoriented to his Heavenly King. Then something happened that changed Isaiah’s life forever.

God, in all His awesome majesty, appeared to Isaiah in the temple, surrounded by heavenly creatures. Instantly, God’s presence made Isaiah aware of his sinfulness. One of the seraphim came to him with a burning coal and cleansed Isaiah of his sin. Immediately, Isaiah began to hear things he had never heard before. Now he became aware of a conversation in heaven about who might be worthy to be God’s messenger to the people. This prompted Isaiah’s eager response: “Here am I! Send me!” (Isa. 6:8).

Now that God had cleansed Isaiah, he was aware of heavenly concerns and was prepared to offer himself in God’s service. Whereas Isaiah had been preoccupied with earthly matters, now his only concern was the activity of God.

If you've become estranged from God and His activity, you need to experience His cleansing. Sanctification prepares you to see and hear God. It enables you to serve Him. Only God can purify your heart. Allow Him to remove any impurities that hinder your relationship with Him, and then your service to Him will have meaning as you offer your life as clay in His hands to do with as He pleases.

It's not a noble task being clay. There's no glamour to it, nothing worthy of boasting, except that it's exactly what Almighty God is looking for: compliant, moldable, yielded clay.

If your tendency is to tell the Father what you can and can't do for Him, submit to His agenda and allow Him to shape you into the person He wants you to be. Like clay.

How are you resisting God's hand as it works to shape you to look more like Jesus? What impurities need to be removed from your heart?

How do you desire to see God work in the lives of people around you?
How might He be shaping you as a tool for His divine work?

How is trusting God's plan for your life better than pursuing your own plan? How will you submit to His loving work in 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 2

MAY GOD RULE IN OUR MIDST

Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

MATTHEW 6:10

In heaven God's will is the only priority. A word from God brings angels to do His bidding, immediately and without question. Jesus instructed us to pray that God would accomplish His will in our world in the same way. This means God's purposes would be preeminent in our homes, our businesses, our schools, our churches, and our governments.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray that God's purposes would be carried out in the world around them. In modeling how they should pray, Jesus was teaching His disciples how to align their hearts with God's.

Jesus demonstrated this desire again at Gethsemane when He prayed, "Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39). As we seek God's kingdom on earth, not our own purposes, we gain the same mind as our Heavenly Father.

As you spend intimate time with God and allow Him to show you your situation from His perspective, you'll begin to see things as God sees them. As you adjust yourself to God, your heart will begin to desire the same things God's heart desires. When you pray, you'll find yourself asking for the very things God desires (see Ps. 37:4). Matters foremost on God's heart will be preeminent in yours. Your first request in prayer won't be for yourself but for God's name to be exalted and His kingdom to be extended (see Matt. 6:9-10).

Have you been asking God to give you the desires of your heart without first seeking to understand what's on His heart? God places this important requirement on the prayers of His children: that we seek His priorities and make them our own. This great qualifier prevents us from asking from selfishness. As we find joy in the Lord, we'll see what's truly important, and we'll long for these things as the Father does.

We become colaborers with God by faithfully praying in agreement with His desires. As you seek the Lord's will, He will guide your praying. He will invite you not only to pray but also to become involved in His activity as He answers your

prayer. If He places a burden on you to pray for an individual's salvation, that burden is also His invitation to join His activity in that person's life.

Prayer prepares you to be a servant through whom God can bring about His will on earth. Pray that the Lord's absolute rule on earth will begin in your life. Then watch to see how God uses you to extend His lordship to others.

If someone closely watched your life—your words; activities; reactions; and the ways you spend your time, energy, and resources—what would they determine is most important to you?

What dominates your thought life?

What do your priorities and thoughts reveal about your will in relation to God's will?

In what current situation do you need your perspective and desire to be realigned with God's heart?

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

TRUTH IS TO BE EXPERIENCED

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”

LUKE 5:4

When Christ teaches you something about Himself, He incorporates it into your life through experience. As the crowds gathered around, Jesus chose to board Peter’s boat and teach the people from there. All day long Peter sat in the boat listening to Jesus teach the multitudes. At the close of His discourse, Jesus allowed Peter to experience the reality of what He had just been teaching the crowd. The crowd had heard the truth, but Peter was to experience it.

Jesus put His teaching into language a fisherman could understand. He told Peter to put out his nets into deep water. Peter hesitated: “Master, we have worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything” (Luke 5:5). He was tired. He probably wasn’t expecting a dramatic encounter with God at a time like that. Yet as Peter obeyed Jesus, he pulled in such a miraculous catch of fish that his boat almost sank. Filled with amazement, Peter recognized that he had just experienced the power of God (see v. 8). He learned that with a command from Jesus, he could do anything. In this way Jesus reordered Peter’s priorities from catching fish to catching men (see v. 10). Peter’s obedience led to a dramatic new insight into the person of Jesus. This experience was an invitation for Peter to walk with Jesus in an even more intimate and powerful way.

Walking with Jesus is essential. Nowhere does the Bible teach that God gives you a life plan and then abandons you to work it out. Rather, the pattern and emphasis in Scripture is a daily walk with Him in which He gives new assignments and then works through you to accomplish them.

That’s what a spiritual gift is: a supernatural empowering to accomplish the assignment God gives you. Fishing was a natural skill Peter had developed. Fishing for men was a spiritual gift Jesus gave to him. Jesus was teaching Peter about God’s activity and was equipping him to join the work.

So while the Lord teaches in language you can understand, don’t focus on your talents, abilities, and interests to determine God’s will. Instead, seek God’s will and watch Him equip you for whatever assignment He gives. Pay attention

to what He's teaching you through experience. He's showing you that you can join Him in His work.

God doesn't want you to merely gain intellectual knowledge of truth. He wants you to experience His truth. There are things about Jesus you'll learn only as you obey Him. Your obedience will then lead to greater revelation and opportunities for service.

What important truth about God or living in relationship with Him could you articulate by using a metaphor or an example from a favorite hobby or a common activity in your daily life?

When have you thought you understood something until you tried to do it? Similarly, when have you better understood God after experiencing something, even through mistakes or hard lessons?

What has Jesus been teaching you through experience lately? If the answer isn't immediately obvious, consider great joys or frustrations and what those reveal about Jesus, yourself, and your relationship with God.

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

GOD'S REVELATION IS HIS INVITATION

*Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without
revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.*

AMOS 3:7

Christians spend much time talking about seeking God's will, as though it were hidden and difficult to find. God doesn't hide His will, so it isn't difficult to discover. We don't have to plead with God to reveal His will to us. He's more eager to reveal His will than we're willing to receive it. We sometimes ask God to do things He's already done.

The people in Amos's day became disoriented to God and His desires. God had revealed His will; the problem was that they hadn't recognized it or obeyed it. Amos declared that God does nothing in the affairs of humanity without seeking one of His servants to whom He will reveal His activity. Tragically, there are times when no one's walking closely enough with Him to be receptive to His word (see Isa. 59:16; 63:5; Ezek. 22:30-31).

Jesus walked so intimately with His Father that He was always aware of what the Father was doing around Him (see John 5:19-20). Jesus said if our eyes are pure, they'll see God and recognize His activity (see Matt. 6:22). If we aren't seeing God's activity, the problem isn't a lack of revelation. The problem is that our sin prevents us from noticing it.

When God's working in someone's life, He may reveal His activity to you. That revelation is His invitation for you to join Him in His redemptive work. Be alert to God's activity around you. He will reveal His activity to His servants. If your spiritual eyes are pure, you'll be overwhelmed by all you see God doing around you.

The world operates by vision. God's people live by revelation. The world seeks grand, noble purposes and goals to achieve. People dream up the greatest and most satisfying things in which they can invest their lives. Institutions establish goals and objectives and then organize themselves to achieve them. God's people function in a radically different way. Christians arrange their lives based on the revelation of God, regardless of whether it makes sense to them.

God doesn't ask for our opinions about what's best for our future, our family, our church, or our country. He already knows. God wants to get the attention of His people and reveal to us what is on His heart and what is His will, for God's ways are not our ways (see Isa. 55:8-9).

When people don't base their lives on God's revelation, they "cast off restraint" (Prov. 29:18). That is, they do what's right in their own eyes. They set their goals, arrange their agendas, and then pray for God's blessings. Some Christians are living far outside the will of God, yet they have the audacity to pray and ask God to bless their efforts.

The only way you can know God's will is for Him to reveal it to you. You'll never discover it on your own. When you hear from the Father, you have an immediate agenda for your life: obedience. As the writer of Proverbs observed, "Blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction" (29:18).

When have you worried about knowing God's will? What were you actually doing to discern His will? What was the result?

What sin is clouding your spiritual vision?

In what areas are you currently living according to your own agenda—even asking God to bless your efforts—instead of seeking to join Him?

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

NOW IS THE ACCEPTABLE TIME

Another disciple said to him, “Lord,
first let me go and bury my father.”

MATTHEW 8:21

Often our struggle as Christians isn't in deciding whether we should obey Christ but in whether we'll obey immediately. God's timing is perfect. When He speaks, the time to respond in obedience is now. We often act as if we have all the time in the world to obey Him, but history doesn't wait on our commitments. There's no such thing as postponing a decision with God. Either we obey or we disobey. It's either faith or unbelief, obedience or disobedience. God's revelation of His will is His invitation to respond immediately.

Some would-be disciples pledged their willingness to follow Jesus, but they told Him they weren't ready yet. In Jesus' day a Jewish man was expected to care for his elderly parents until they died. One man wanted to wait until his father died before going with Jesus. This would be an honorable delay. The man had to choose between this important responsibility and heeding a call from the Lord. Yet God knew this man, and He knew the man's father. God would have taken care of the man's father if only he had followed Jesus. This was an opportunity to walk with the Son of God, yet the concerns of this life were competing for priority with obedience to God.

Timing our obedience is crucial. Invitations from God come with a limited opportunity to respond. Some opportunities to serve Him, if not accepted immediately, will be lost. Occasions to minister to others may pass us by. When God invites us to intercede for someone, it may be critical that we stop what we're doing and immediately adjust our lives to what God's doing.

Missing opportunities to serve the Lord can be tragic. When an invitation comes from God, the time to respond is now. That's why Scripture tells us God is concerned with our heart. If we don't keep our heart in love with Jesus, we'll be prone to disobey when God speaks to us. And our disobedience could affect the lives of others.

God's timing is always perfect. He knows you, and He's fully aware of your circumstances. He knows all He's built into your life until now, and He extends His invitation knowing His resources are more than adequate for any assignment He gives you.

When God speaks, it's always from the context of eternity. We don't have to know all the implications of what He's asking. We just have to know that it's a word from Almighty God. Now is always the acceptable time to respond to the Lord.

In what area of life have you been postponing a decision about an invitation from God? Why haven't you responded? What does this inaction reveal?

Because delayed obedience is choosing to be disobedient, how does your inaction affect your relationship with God?

Why is timing significant in obeying God? Identify as many factors, positive or negative, that may be affected by your obedience.

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?

How Am I Experiencing God?

Use this space to journal about your experience with God, in particular Reality 3: God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.

GROUP SESSION—REALITY 3
GOD INVITES YOU TO BECOME
INVOLVED WITH HIM IN HIS WORK

START

Start with review and prayer. Ask volunteers to summarize the truths discussed last week in the study of Exodus 3:1-6.

Thank God for pursuing a relationship with you. Ask God to make each person's heart responsive to His invitation to become involved with Him in His work.

READ & RESPOND

Transition to a study of the biblical text and Reality 3. Read aloud Exodus 3:7-10.

Use the following questions to discuss examples of Reality 3 in Exodus 3:7-10. (Refer to p. 53 for an overview of Reality 3, if needed.)

What need did God identify (see v. 7)?

What work was God doing (see v. 8)?

What were some of the details God didn't reveal to Moses at this time?

Why do you think God didn't give Moses all the details at the front end of the assignment (see vv. 9-10)?

How did God invite Moses to become involved with Him in His work?

Why is it significant that God phrased His invitation to join His work as an instruction rather than as a request?

How does God's use of a command deepen your understanding of what it means to be involved in His work?

REVIEW

Continue the discussion on a personal level by connecting themes from the daily reading with Reality 3. (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

How do you desire to see God work in the lives of people around you?

How might God be shaping you as a tool for His divine work?

How is trusting God's plan for your life better than pursuing your own plan? How will you submit to His loving work in your life?

Day 2

In what current situation do you need your perspective and desire to be realigned with God's heart?

Day 3

Moses experienced God in a brand-new way as God was inviting Moses to join His work. What has Jesus been teaching you through experience lately? If the answer isn't immediately obvious, consider great joys or frustrations and what those reveal about Jesus, yourself, and your relationship with God.

Day 4

When have you worried about knowing God's will? What were you actually doing to discern His will? What was the result?

In what areas are you currently living according to your own agenda—even asking God to bless your efforts—instead of seeking to join Him?

Day 5

In what area of life have you been postponing a decision about an invitation from God? Why haven't you responded? What does this inaction reveal?

Because delayed obedience is choosing to be disobedient, how does your inaction affect your relationship with God?

Why is timing significant in obeying God? Identify as many factors, positive or negative, that may be affected by your obedience.

EXPERIENCING GOD STORIES

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

How have you experienced God this past week?

When, where, or how has God invited you to join Him in His work?

Why is it important to remember that it's God's work, not yours alone?

WRAP UP

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

When God reveals to you where He's working,
that's His invitation to join Him in His activity.
The revelation is the invitation. If He's made
something known to you, it's time to respond.

Next week we'll discuss Reality 4: God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.