

EXPERIENCING GOD

UNIT

9

VERSE TO MEMORIZE

Experiencing God Through Obedience

OBEDIENCE PROVIDED FUTURE BLESSING

We were still an extremely small church, and we were trying to staff and support three mission churches. We were asked to sponsor another mission in Winnipeg, Manitoba—510 miles from our church. Someone would have to drive this 1,020-mile round trip in order to meet with the people in the mission. At first glance this sounded like an impossible task for our little group.

I shared with our congregation that a faithful group of people had been meeting for more than two years and wanted to start a church. They had approached us to sponsor them. We had to determine whether this was God's work and whether He was revealing His work to us. Was this our invitation to join Him in what He was doing? The church agreed this was God's invitation, and we knew we had to obey. We agreed to sponsor the new mission. Then we asked God to show us how and to give us strength and resources to do it.

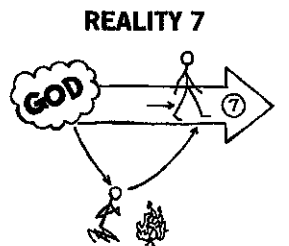
A number of times I drove to Winnipeg to preach and minister to the people. Sooner than for any of our other mission churches, God provided a pastor and a salary. However, the story of our obedience did not end there. That original church became the mother church to many other mission churches and started an entire association of churches.

When our oldest son, Richard, finished seminary, this church in Winnipeg called him to be its pastor. A year later the church called our second son, Tom, to be the associate pastor. Little did I know that this one act of obedience, which at first appeared impossible, held such potential for future blessing for my family.

DAY I

Obedience, Part I

YOU COME TO KNOW
GOD BY EXPERIENCE
AS YOU OBEY HIM,
AND HE ACCOM-
PLISHES HIS WORK
THROUGH YOU.



OBEY & EXPERIENCE

- Reality 1:** WORK
Reality 2: LOVE
RELATIONSHIP
Reality 3: INVITATION
Reality 4: SPEAKS
Reality 5: CRISIS
Reality 6: ADJUST
Reality 7: OBEY

John 14:15,24

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching."

God has always been at work in our world. He is now at work where you are. God always takes the initiative to come to you and reveal what He is doing or what He is about to do. When He does, this will be His invitation for you to join Him in His activity.

Joining Him will require you to make major adjustments in your life so He will accomplish His will through you. When you know what God has said and what He is about to do and when you have adjusted your life to Him, there is yet one remaining response to God that is necessary. To experience God at work in and through you, you must obey Him. When you obey Him, He will accomplish His work through you, and you will come to know Him by experience.

This unit focuses on the last of the seven realities: you come to know God by experience as you obey Him, and He accomplishes His work through you.

- 1** See if you can state the seven realities in your own words, using the hints in the margin. Check your answers on the inside back cover.
- 2** Below are three actions in reality 7. Number them in the order they occur as you follow God's will.
 - ___ a. You come to know God by experience.
 - ___ b. You obey Him.
 - ___ c. He accomplishes His work through you.

After God has taken the initiative to involve you in His work, you believe Him and adjust your life to Him. Only then do you reach a place of obedience. You must obey Him first. Then He accomplishes His work through you. When God does a God-sized work through your life, you come to know Him intimately by experience. The answer to activity 2 is a-3, b-1, c-2. In this unit you will more fully study each of these aspects of God's work.

If You Love Him, You Obey Him

In unit 4, day 3 (pp. 61-64) you studied the relationship between love and obedience. You learned that obedience is the outward expression of your love for God (see John 14:15,24). By way of review, here are some statements from that lesson.

- Obedience is the outward expression of your love for God.
- The reward for obedience and love is that God will reveal Himself to you.
- If you have an obedience problem, you have a love problem.
- God is love. His will is always best.
- God is all-knowing. His directions are always right.
- God is all-powerful. He can enable you to do His will.
- If you love God, you will obey Him!

- 3** If in the past few weeks one of the previous statements has influenced the way you love and obey God, briefly describe how in the margin.

- 4** Your memory verse for this unit speaks of love and obedience. Begin memorizing it. Write it here. _____
- _____
- _____

Jesus said someone who has an intimate relationship with Him ("brother," "sister," "mother") is the one who does the will of the Heavenly Father (see Matt. 12:50). Jesus clearly indicated a person's obedience reveals his or her love relationship with God (see John 14:15-21).

James, in his letter to believers, strongly emphasized that faith that does not result in actions is dead (see Jas. 2:26). When the disciples obeyed Jesus, they saw and experienced God's mighty power working in and around them. When they did not act in faith and do His will, they did not experience God's power.

In many ways obedience is your moment of truth. What you *do* will ...

- reveal what you believe about God;
- determine whether you will experience His mighty work in you and through you;
- decide whether you will come to know Him more intimately.

- 5** Read 1 John 2:3-6 in the margin. Circle the word *know* each time it occurs. Underline the words *obey* and *obeys*. Draw a box around the word *love*. Then answer these questions:

a. How can you be sure you have come to know God in Jesus Christ?

b. What is one clear indication that a person does not know God?

c. What does God do in the life of anyone who obeys His Word?

- 6** As a review of unit 4, fill in each blank in the following statements with the correct word from the following list.

force enable right true best

- a. Because God is love, His will is always _____.
- b. Because God is all-knowing, His directives are always _____.
- c. Because God is all-powerful, He can _____ me to do His will.

When you come to a moment of truth when you must choose whether to obey God, you will not obey Him unless you believe Him. You cannot trust Him unless you love Him. You will not love Him unless you know Him. Answers: a—best, b—right, c—enable.

The previous level of your walk with God will not be adequate for the new work God wants to do through you. Each new command of Jesus will require a fresh knowledge and understanding of Him. The Holy Spirit will teach you about Jesus so you can trust Him and obey Him. Then you will experience Him in new ways. This is how you grow in Him. As 1 John 2:3-6 says that when you come to know Him, you will obey Him. If you do not obey Him, that indicates you do not know Him.

Jesus stated it differently when He said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father

Matthew 12:50

"Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

James 2:26

"Faith without works is dead" (KJV).

1 John 2:3-6

"We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."



When He gives you a command, you are to obey it.

Psalm 119:33-35

“Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end.

Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.

Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.”

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

I come to know God by experience as I obey Him, and He accomplishes His work through me.

who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matt. 7:21-23). Obedience is crucial.

The Importance of Obedience

If you know God loves you, you should never question a directive from Him. It will always be right and best. When He gives you a command, you are not just to observe it, discuss it, or debate it. You are to obey it.

7 Read the following Scriptures and circle the word *obey* in each. Answer the question that follows.

“If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. The Lord will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to” (Deut. 28:1,8).

“If you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, ... the Lord will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking him” (Deut. 28:15-20).

How important is obedience? _____

8 List benefits of obedience found in the following Scriptures.

“Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you” (Jer. 7:23).
Benefit of obedience: _____

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete” (Luke 6:46-49).
Benefit of obedience: _____

“Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God’” (John 7:16-17).
Benefit of obedience: _____

God blesses those who obey Him (see Deut. 28:1-14). The benefits of obedience are beyond our imagination, but they include being God’s people (see Jer. 7:23), having

a solid foundation when the storms of life come against you (see Luke 6:46-49), and knowing spiritual truth (see John 7:16-17).

Rebellion against God is the opposite of obedience. Disobedience is a serious rejection of God's will. Deuteronomy 28:15-68 names some costs of disobedience. For further study on the results of obedience and disobedience, see Deut. 30; 32.)

If I love God, I will obey Him.

Obedience is the outward expression of my love for God.

Faith that does not obey in actions is dead.

Obedience is my moment of truth.

God blesses those who are obedient to Him.

9 How do you think God would describe your level of obedience to Him? _____

10 What (if anything) do you know God wants you to do that you are not presently doing? _____

11 Consider praying Psalm 119:33-35 (in the left margin) for your life.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

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?

Obedience, Part 2

DAY
2

Servants of God do what He commands. They obey Him. Servants do not have the option to decide what or when or how they will obey. Choosing not to obey in His way and on His timetable is rebellion, and such disobedience brings serious consequences. Delayed obedience is still disobedience.

What Is Obedience?

Many people today are self-centered. They want to do their own thing. They do not consider what obedience could mean in their lives. Jesus told a parable about obedience: "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go" (Matt. 21:28-30).

OBEDIENCE MEANS JOY AND UNINTERRUPTED FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

1 Which son did his father's will? Circle one: first son second son

2 What is the meaning of obedience? Check one.
 Saying you will do what is commanded Doing what is commanded

3 At the end of each day's lesson, you are asked this question: What does God want you to do in response to today's study? Look back at your response to that question for each lesson. Pray before you begin this review, asking God to help you see your overall pattern of obedience or disobedience. Then review your response to the last question at the end of each day. Keeping in mind some of the things you have listed may be long-term commitments, mentally answer these two questions about each day's response:

- Do I believe God clearly guided me to respond to the study that way?
 - Have I done all God has asked me to do up to this time?
- Do not proceed until you have completed your review.

4 Respond to the following. If you do not have a response, go to the next item.

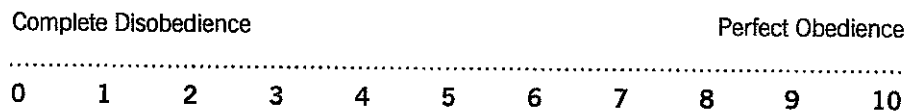
a. What is one command or instruction you have obeyed? _____

b. What is one long-term instruction to which you have only begun your obedience? _____

c. What is one response that was probably your idea and not God's directive? _____

d. What is one command you have not obeyed? _____

e. Below is a scale from 0, complete disobedience, to 10, perfect obedience (only Jesus would qualify for a 10!). Place an X on the line to indicate how you think God would rate your obedience since you began studying this course.



f. Why do you think He would rate you that way? _____

g. If there is a level of disobedience, what do you sense is the root cause? _____

If this activity has not been a positive experience, don't despair. Let God use this time of evaluation to draw you back to Himself—into a relationship of loving obedience. God is interested in moving you from where you are to where He wants you to be in His love relationship. From that point you can experience all of the joys He has to offer.

Obey What You Already Know to Be God's Will

Some people want God to give them an assignment to do for Him. They vow that they will do whatever He asks. But when God observes their lives, He notices that they have not obeyed what He has already told them to do.

- 5** Do you think God would give new assignments to a servant who had not obeyed what He previously commanded? Yes No Don't know

When God gives you Ten Commandments, are you obeying them? When Jesus tells you to love your enemies, are you doing that? When Jesus tells your church to make disciples of all nations, are you doing all you know to obey Him? When God tells you through Scripture to live in unity with your Christian brothers and sisters, are you doing it?

God doesn't give you His commands so you can choose the ones you want to obey and neglect the rest. He wants you to obey *all* His commands from your love relationship with Him. When He sees you are faithful and obedient in a little, He will give you more. The Holy Spirit will guide you daily to the specific commands God wants you to obey.

Second Chances

Recently, people ask me, "When a person disobeys God's will, does God give him a second chance?"

Read Jonah 1:1-17 and answer these questions:

- a. What did God ask Jonah to do (v. 2)? _____
- b. How did Jonah respond (v. 3)? _____
- c. How did God respond to Jonah (vv. 4-17)? _____

Read Jonah 2:9-3:10 and answer these questions:

- a. When God gave Jonah a second chance, how did Jonah respond (3:3)?


- b. When Jonah obeyed God, what did God do through Jonah's ministry (3:4-10)?

It is comforting to know God often gives a second chance. When God had a plan to bring Nineveh to repentance, He asked Jonah to join Him in His work. Jonah disobeyed because he was prejudiced against these "pagan enemies." Jonah would have rather seen God destroy the evil city. Disobeying God is extremely serious. Jonah went through the trauma of being thrown into a raging sea and spending three days in the belly of a big fish. After Jonah confessed and repented of His disobedience, God gave him a second chance to obey.

The second time Jonah obeyed (though reluctantly). On his first day Jonah preached a one-sentence message, and God used his sermon to call 120,000 people to repentance. Jonah said, "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity" (Jonah 4:2).



God often
gives a second
chance.



God is
interested in
developing
your character.

God's response to Jonah and Nineveh taught Jonah how deeply God cares for all peoples and wants them to experience salvation.

Some of the great people of God were broken by sin and disobedience; yet God did not give up on them. If God allowed people only one mistake, Moses would never have become the deliverer of his people. He made several mistakes (for example, see Ex. 2:11-15). Abraham began with a great walk of faith, but He made a side trip into Egypt and blew it—more than once (for example, see Gen. 12:10-20). David grievously sinned (for example, see 2 Sam. 11), and so did Peter (for example, see Matt. 26:69-75). Saul (Paul) began his mistaken "service for God" by persecuting Christians (see Acts 9:1-2).

Disobedience Is Costly

God doesn't take disobedience lightly. You read that Jonah's disobedience almost cost him his life. Moses' murder of the Egyptian consigned him to 40 years in the wilderness. David's sin with Bathsheba cost the life of his son. Paul's early ministry was greatly hindered because of his earlier murderous lifestyle: many people distrusted him because of his reputation as a persecutor of Christians.

Because God is interested in developing your character, at times He lets you proceed in your wrong direction, but He will never let you go far without disciplining you to bring you back to Him. In your relationship with God, He may let you make a wrong decision. Then the Spirit of God leads you to recognize it is not God's will, and He guides you back to the right path. He clarifies what He wants. He even takes the circumstance of your disobedience and works them together for good (see Rom. 8:28) as He corrects you and teaches you His ways.

Sometimes God does not give a second chance. Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, were disobedient in offering unholy incense to the Lord; and God instantly struck them dead (see Lev. 10). Moses stole God's glory in front of all Israel and struck the rock, saying, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10). Notice the word *we*. God was the One who would bring water from the rock. Moses took God's glory, and God refused to take away the consequences of that disobedience: He refused to allow Moses to go with Israel into the promised land.

8 Mark the following statements *T* (true) or *F* (false).

- a. God never gives second chances.
- b. When God forgives the sin of disobedience, He also removes the consequences of the sin.
- c. God can take the circumstances of disobedience and work them together for good for those who love Him.
- d. God wants to develop your character.
- e. Disobedience can be very costly.
- f. God does not always remove the consequences of sin.

God loves you, and He wants what is best for you. That is why He gives you His commands and instructions. His instructions are not to limit or restrict you but to free you to experience the most meaningful life possible. Answers: a and b are false; the others are true.

Obedience brings joy and uninterrupted fellowship with God. A hymn by John H. Sammis reminds us of the relationship between obedience and fellowship with God:

9 Read or sing the hymn and reflect on the benefits of obedience.

TRUST AND OBEY

When we walk with the Lord
 In the Light of His Word
 What a glory He sheds on our way!
 Let us do His good will;
 He abides with us still,
 And with all who will trust and obey.
 But we never can prove
 The delights of His love
 Until all on the altar we lay;
 For the favor He shows
 And the joy He bestows
 Are for them who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet
 We will sit at His feet
 Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
 What He says we will do,
 Where He sends we will go;
 Never fear, only trust and obey.

Refrain

Trust and obey,
 for there's no other way
 To be happy in Jesus,
 But to trust and obey.

Affirmation

When we hear God invite us to join Him, we often want Him to give us a sign: "Lord, prove to me this is You, and then I will obey." When Moses stood before the burning bush and received his invitation to join God, God told him he would receive a sign that God sent him. God told Moses, "This will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain" (Ex. 3:12). In other words, "Moses, obey Me. I will deliver Israel through you. You will come to know Me as your Deliverer, and you will stand on this mountain and worship Me." God's affirmation that He had sent Moses would come after Moses obeyed, not before. This is most frequently the case in Scripture. Affirmation comes after obedience.

God is love. Trust Him and believe Him. Because you love Him, obey Him. Then you will fellowship with Him so much that you will come to know Him intimately. That affirmation will be a joyous time for you!

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

Obedience is doing what is commanded.

I should obey what I already know to be God's will.

When God sees that I am faithful and obedient in a little, He will entrust me with more.

God often gives second chances.

Sometimes God does not give a second chance.

Disobedience is costly.

God wants to develop my character.

Affirmation comes after obedience.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

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

God Works Through You

**YOU TOO WILL BE
BLESSED WHEN GOD
DOES A SPECIAL,
GOD-SIZED WORK
THROUGH YOU.**

Reviewing Unit 7

1. When God calls you to join Him in a God-sized task, faith is always required.
2. When you face a crisis of belief, what you do next reveals what you believe about God.
3. Faith is in a Person.
4. Faith is confidence that what God has promised or said will come to pass.
5. When God speaks, He reveals what He is going to do—not what He wants you to do for Him.
6. If you have faith in the God who called you, you will obey Him, and He will bring to pass what He has purposed to do.
7. Obedience indicates your faith in God.
8. With faith you can confidently proceed to obey Him because you know He will accomplish what He purposes.

When you obey God, He will accomplish through you what He has purposed to do. When God does something through your life that only He can do, you will come to know Him more intimately. If you do not obey, you will miss some of the most exciting experiences of your life.

When God purposes to do something through you, the assignment will have God-sized dimensions. This is because God wants to reveal Himself to you and to those around you. If you can do the work in your own strength, people will not come to know God. However, if God works through you to do what only He can do, you and those around you will come to know Him.

The God-sized dimensions of an assignment from God create a crisis of belief. You must believe God is who He says He is and that He can and will do what He says He will do. When you obey Him, you must allow Him to do what He has said. He is the One who accomplishes the assignment, but He does it through you.

- 1 Read the review statements from unit 7 in the margin. Circle the numbers of the ones that have been especially meaningful to you.
- 2 Briefly describe one thing God has done to bring meaning to your life through a God-sized task, faith, and obedience. _____

Moses Obeyed and God Accomplished

Only in the act of obedience did Moses begin to experience the full nature of God. Moses could believe in God while living in the wilderness, but he began to dramatically experience God only when he went to Egypt as God had commanded. What he began to know about God grew from his obedience to God. In Moses' life we can see this pattern of God speaking, Moses obeying, and God accomplishing what He purposed to do.

- 3 Read Exodus 7:1-6 and answer these questions.
 - a. What was Moses commanded to do (v. 2)? _____
 - b. What did God say He was going to do (v. 4)? _____
 - c. What would be the result when Moses obeyed and God did what He said (v. 5)? _____
- 4 Read Exodus 8:16-19 and answer the questions.
 - a. What did God command Moses and Aaron to do (v. 16)? _____
 - b. How did Moses and Aaron respond (v. 17)? _____

c. Who turned the dust into gnats (v. 19)? Moses and Aaron God

We see this pattern throughout Moses' life:

- God invited Moses to join Him in what He was doing to deliver Israel.
- God told Moses what he was to do.
- Moses obeyed.
- God accomplished what He purposed to do.
- Moses and those around him came to know God more clearly and intimately.

When the people stood between the Red Sea and the oncoming Egyptian army, God told Moses to hold his staff over the sea. When Moses obeyed, God parted the sea, and the people crossed on dry ground (see Ex. 14:1-25). Then Miriam led the people in a hymn of praise describing their new understanding of God.

When the people were thirsty and had no water to drink, they complained to Moses. God told Moses to strike a rock with the staff. Moses obeyed, and God caused water to flow from the rock (see Ex. 17:1-7). We see this pattern in Moses' life again and again.

5 The stages in this pattern of God's working through Moses are in the wrong order below. Number them in the correct order from 1 to 5.

- ___ a. Moses and those around him came to know God more clearly and intimately.
- ___ b. Moses obeyed.
- ___ c. God told Moses what he was to do.
- ___ d. God accomplished what He purposed to do.
- ___ e. God invited Moses to join Him in what He was doing to deliver Israel.

When Noah obeyed, God preserved his family and repopulated the earth. When Abraham obeyed, God gave him a son and built a nation. When David obeyed, God made him a king. When Elijah obeyed, God sent down fire and consumed a sacrifice. Moses came to know God through experience as he obeyed Him. These people of faith came to know God by experience when they obeyed Him, and He accomplished His work through them. The correct order of stages in the pattern of God's working with Moses is e, c, b, d, a.

The Disciples Obeyed and God Accomplished

Luke recorded a beautiful experience of Jesus' disciples that follows this same pattern. Jesus invited 70 disciples (72, NIV) to join Him in the Father's work. They obeyed and experienced God doing through them something only God could do.

6 Read Luke 10:1-24 and answer the following questions.

- a. What did Jesus command the 70 followers to do—
- in verse 2? _____
 - in verses 5 and 7? _____
 - in verse 8? _____
 - in verse 9? _____

- b. What does verse 16 indicate about the relationship between servants and the Master, between the 70 and Jesus? _____
- _____
- _____

c. How do you think the 70 felt about their experience (v. 17)? _____

d. What do you think the 70 came to know about God through this experience? _____

Jesus gave these followers specific directions. They obeyed Him and experienced God working through them to heal people and cast out demons. Jesus told them their salvation should bring more joy than the submission of the spirits (see v. 20). Jesus praised God the Father for revealing Himself to these followers (see vv. 21-22). Then Jesus turned to His disciples and said, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it" (Luke 10:23-24).

These disciples had been especially chosen by God to be involved in His work. What they saw, heard, and came to know about God was something even prophets and kings wanted to experience but could not. These disciples were truly blessed!

You will be blessed when God does a special, God-sized work through you. You will come to know Him in a way that will bring joy to your life. When other people see you experiencing God that way, they will want to know how they can experience God that way too. Be prepared to point them to God.

7 Has God recently done something through you that caused you to rejoice? Yes No If so, briefly describe it. _____

If you are obedient, God will accomplish wonderful things through you. You will need to be careful that any testimony about what God has done gives glory only to Him. Pride may cause you to want to recount your experience because it makes you feel special. You will want to declare the wonderful deeds of the Lord, but you must avoid any sense of pride. Therefore, "let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31).

8 Practice quoting or writing your Scripture-memory verses.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

When I obey God, He will accomplish through me what He has purposed to do.

God wants to reveal Himself to me and to those around me.

I will be blessed when God does a special, God-sized work through me.

I need to be careful that any testimony about what God has done gives glory only to Him.

"Let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31).

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

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?

You Come to Know God

DAY 4

God reveals Himself to His people by what He does. When God works through you to accomplish His purposes, you come to know Him by experience. You also come to know God when He meets a need in your life. In unit 4 you learned that in Scripture God's names indicate ways He has revealed Himself to humanity.

GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE BY WHAT HE DOES.

- 1** As a review turn to page 70 and read "Knowing God by Experience." How does God reveal Himself to us? How do we come to know God?
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In Scripture when God did something through obedient people, they came to know Him in new and more intimate ways (for examples see Ex. 31:13; Judg. 6:24; Ps. 23:1; Jer. 23:6). God revealed His personal name to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex. 3:14). When God "became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14), Jesus expressed Himself to His disciples by saying "I am ..."

- 2** Read the list of I Am's of Jesus in the margin. Circle your favorite.

Jesus identified Himself with the I AM (the name of God revealed to Moses at the burning bush) of the Old Testament. Knowing and experiencing Jesus in these ways requires that you believe in Him (have faith in Him). For instance, when He says to you, "I am the way" (John 14:6), what you do next in your relationship with Him will determine whether you come to experience Him as the Way in your life. When you believe Him, adjust your life to Him, and obey what He says next, you come to know and experience Him as the Way. This is true about everything God reveals to you day by day.

- 3** Using "Names, Titles, and Descriptions of God" (p. 268), list names by which you have come to know God by experience.
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- 4** Which name of God is most precious or meaningful to you at this point in your life? _____

- 5** Spend an extended time in prayer and thanksgiving to God for what He has revealed to you about Himself. You may want to use the worship helps on page 74 to guide your time of adoration.

- 6** After your time of prayer and worship, write a note in the margin or in your journal describing how you have come to know God by experience during this study of *Experiencing God*.

The I Am's of Jesus

- "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).
- "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).
- "I am the gate" (John 10:9).
- "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11).
- "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).
- "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6).
- "I am the true vine" (John 15:1).

DAY 5

GOD WILL NEVER
GIVE ME AN AS-
SIGNMENT HE WILL
NOT ENABLE ME TO
COMPLETE.

Questions and Answers

Why Does God Seem to Work So Slowly in My Life?

Jesus had been with His disciples about three years when He said, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:12-13). Jesus had more He wanted to teach them, but they were not ready to receive it. Jesus understood, however, that the Holy Spirit would continue to guide them into truth according to God's timetable.

You may be saying, "God, hurry up and make me mature." And God is saying, "I'm moving just as fast in your life as you will allow Me. When you are ready for your next lesson, I will bring a new truth into your life."

1 Ask yourself these questions:

- Am I responding to all God is already leading me to do?
- Have I obeyed all I already know to be His will?
- Do I really believe He loves me and will always do what is best and right?
- Am I willing to patiently wait on His timing and to obey everything I know to do in the meantime?

2 Why do you think God sometimes works slowly in a person's life as He matures him or her? _____

Grass that is here today and gone tomorrow does not require much time to mature. A big oak tree that lives for generations requires much more time to develop. God is concerned about your life through eternity. Allow Him to take all the time He wants to shape you for His purposes. Larger assignments require longer periods of preparation.

3 Would you be willing for God to take all the time He requires to prepare you for the assignments He has purposed for your life? If so, write a prayer to Him in the margin.

Why Doesn't God Give Me a Big Assignment?

God might say to you, "You are asking Me to involve you in My great work, but I am trying to get you simply to understand how to believe Me. I can't give you that assignment yet." God has to lay some basic foundations in your life before you are ready for the larger tasks.

Have you ever said something like "Lord, if You just give me a great assignment, I will serve You for all I am worth"? God might respond, "I really want to, but I can't. If I gave you that kind of assignment, you would never be able to handle it. You are not ready."

Then you may argue, "Lord, I am able. I can handle it; just try me." Do you remember any of the disciples who thought they were able to handle a bigger assignment?

On the night before Jesus' crucifixion Peter said, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me" (Luke 22:33-34). Is it possible He also knows exactly what you would do? Trust Him. Do not insist that God give you something you think you are ready for. That could lead to your ruin.

God is far more interested in accomplishing His kingdom purposes than you are. He will move you into every assignment He knows you are ready for.

4 How do you think you should respond when God has not given you the kind of assignment you want? _____

Let God orient you to Himself. The servant does not tell the Master what kind of task he wants. The servant waits on his Master for the assignment. Be patient and wait. Waiting on the Lord should not be an idle time for you. Let God use times of waiting to mold and shape your character. Let God use those times to purify your life and to make you a clean vessel for His service.

As you obey Him, God will prepare you for the assignment that is suitable for you. Any task, however, that comes from the Maker of the universe is important. Don't use human standards to measure the importance or value of the task God gives.

What Is Happening When I Obey and the Doors Close?

Suppose you sense God's call to a task, a place, or an assignment. You set about to do it, but everything goes wrong. Often people say, "I guess that was not God's will."

God calls you into a relationship with Himself. Be careful how you interpret circumstances. Many times we jump to a conclusion too quickly. God is moving us in one direction to tell us what He is about to do. We immediately jump to our own conclusion about what He is doing because our reasoning sounds logical. We start following the logic of our own thinking, and then nothing seems to work out. We tend to ignore our relationship with God and take things into our own hands. Don't do that.

Most of the time when God calls you or gives you a direction, He is not calling you to do something for Him. He is telling you what He is about to do where you are. For instance, God told Paul He was going to reach the Gentiles through him. God, not Paul, was going to reach the Gentiles. Paul started to go in one direction, and the Spirit prevented him (see Acts 16:6-10). He started to go in another direction. Again, the Spirit stopped him. What was God's original plan? To reach the Gentiles. What was Paul's problem? He was trying to figure out what he ought to do, and the door of opportunity closed. Did the door close? No. God was saying, "Listen to Me, Paul. Go and sit in Troas until I tell you where you are supposed to go."

In Troas Paul received a vision to go to Macedonia. What was happening? God's plan was to turn the gospel to the west toward Greece and Rome. God was at work in Philippi and wanted Paul to join Him.

When you begin to obey God and circumstances seem to close doors of opportunity, go back to the Lord and clarify what God said. Better yet, always try to make sure exactly what God is saying on the front end of a sense of call. Most often He is not calling you to a task but to a relationship with Him. Through that relationship He



God is far more interested in accomplishing His kingdom purposes than you are.

Acts 16:6-10

"Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

will do something through your life for His kingdom. If you start in a direction and then everything seems to come to a halt, go back and clarify what God said. Do not abandon what God said. Clarify what He said.

5 Read about a couple who sensed God's call to student work. Watch for instructions on what to do when you begin to move in the direction you sense God is leading, but circumstances close the door. Underline or circle the instructions. I have underlined one example for you.

I talked with a wonderful couple who said God was inviting them to go to Saskatoon to do student work. They started the process for assignment as missionaries, but the mission board said no. The couple then concluded they had made a mistake about God's call. I advised them not to jump to that conclusion and cancel God's whole plan because one detail did not work out as they thought it would. Instead, I asked them to go back and clarify what God had called them to do. Was He calling them to missions? Was He calling them to student work? Was He calling them to Canada?

The couple sensed God was calling them to Canada and student work, so I said, "Keep that sense of call in place. Because one door closed, don't assume the assignment is canceled. Watch to see how the God who called you is going to implement what He said. When God speaks a word of direction, He will bring it to pass but in a way you might not have anticipated. Be careful not to let circumstances nullify what God said." God may have had a different city in mind for them. He may have wanted them to have a different means of financial support. Or He may have needed more time to prepare them for the assignment.

When God calls you, let Him work out the details in His timing. In the meantime, do all you know to do; then wait for the next word of instruction.

6 What are some things you would do when faced with a circumstance that seemed to close the door on what you sensed God was telling you to do? After you make your list, read my suggestions in the margin.

When Things Seem to Go Wrong

- Clarify what God said and identify what may have been your additions to what He said.
- Keep obeying what God has told you.
- Let Him work out the details in His timing.
- Do all you know to do.
- Wait on the Lord until He tells you what to do next.

God's great task is to adjust His people to Himself. It takes time for Him to shape us to be exactly what He wants us to be. Suppose you sense God is going to do something great because of what He has said to you in His Word and in prayer. You sense He is going to do it because of the way circumstances are working out and other believers (the church) agree. Then six months pass, and you still haven't seen anything significant happening. Don't become negative, depressed, or discouraged. Watch to see what God is doing in you and in the people around you to prepare you for what He is going to do. The key is your relationship with God. The God who initiates His work in a relationship with you is the One who guarantees to complete it.

How Can I Know Whether the Word I Receive Is from God, My Selfish Desires, or Satan?

Some people go to much trouble studying Satan's ways so they can identify when something appears to be his deception. I don't do that. I have determined not to focus

on Satan. He is defeated. The One who is guiding me and is presently implementing His will through me is the Victor. The only way Satan can affect God's work through me is when I believe Satan and disbelieve God. Satan will always try to deceive you, but he cannot ultimately thwart what God purposes to do.

When Canadian Mounties train officers in anticounterfeiting work, they don't let a trainee see a counterfeit bill. Instead, trainees thoroughly study the genuine bill so they can readily identify anything that doesn't measure up to that standard.

- 7** When you sense that God is leading you in a particular direction, you may ask yourself, *Is this God, me, or Satan?* How can you prepare yourself to know clearly a word from God? _____
- _____
- _____

How should you approach spiritual warfare with Satan? Know the ways of God so thoroughly that if something doesn't measure up to God's ways, you will recognize it is not from Him and will turn away from it. That's what Jesus did when He was tempted. In essence Jesus said, "I understand what you are saying, Satan; but that is not the last word I had from My Father. The Scriptures say ..." (see Matt. 4:1-11.) Jesus never debated with Satan. He never analyzed it. He just kept doing the last thing His Father told Him to do until the Father told Him what to do next. Our greatest weapon in spiritual warfare is obedience to God's Word.

Does God Have One Plan for My Life for Eternity?

Does God plan your life for eternity and then turn you loose to work out His intentions? God's desire is for a relationship. We get in trouble when we try to get God to tell us if He wants us to be a Christian business person, a music director, a school-teacher, a preacher, or a missionary. We want to know if He wants us to serve in our home country or go to Japan or Canada. God doesn't usually give you a one-time assignment and leave you there forever. Yes, you may be placed in one job in one place for an extended period, but God's assignments come to you on a daily basis.

God calls you to a relationship in which He is Lord—in which you are willing to do and be anything He chooses. If you respond to Him as Lord, He may lead you to do and be things you would never have dreamed of. If you don't follow Him as Lord, you may lock yourself into a job or an assignment and miss something God wants to do through you. I've heard people say things like "God called me to be a _____, so this other thing couldn't possibly be His will." Or "My spiritual gift is _____, so this ministry couldn't be God's will for me."

God will never give you an assignment He will not enable you to complete. That is what a spiritual gift is—a supernatural empowering to accomplish the assignment God gives you. Don't focus on your talents, abilities, and interests in determining God's will. I have heard many people say, "I would really like to do that; therefore, it must be God's will." That kind of response is self-centered. Instead, become God-centered. When God is Lord, your response should be something like this: "Lord, I will do anything Your kingdom requires of me. Wherever You want me to go, I'll go. Whatever the circumstances, I'm willing to follow. If You want to meet a need through my life, I am Your servant, and I will do whatever is required."



God's desire
is for a
relationship.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

I will allow God to take all the time He needs to shape me for His purposes.

Any assignment that comes from the Maker of the universe is an important responsibility.

I won't ignore the relationship and take things into my own hands.

God calls me to a relationship.

Let God work out the details in His timing.

I must know the ways of God so thoroughly that if something doesn't measure up to God's ways, I will know it is not from Him and will turn away from it.

God will never give me an assignment He will not enable me to complete.

8 Suppose a teenager in your church came to you for counsel, saying, "I think God may be calling me to the ministry. Can you tell me how to know whether I should be a pastor, a missionary, or a youth minister? I want to be careful. I don't want to miss God's plan for my life." Outline what you would say.

Did you point him to God's plan as a relationship, not just a job description? Did you help him see his need to submit to Christ's lordship on a daily basis? I trust you would have helped him adopt a God-centered approach to knowing and doing God's will.

9 Review your Scripture-memory verses and be prepared to recite them to a partner in your small-group session this week.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

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?

Experiencing God: A Legacy of Life Change

My schedule was absolutely full! I was asked if I could now take on a role with two other major agencies, working with the presidents to counsel toward revival and spiritual awakening. One responsibility would be to travel extensively overseas. So I began to pray for God's guidance to know how to clear my calendar to take on added responsibilities. I began to cancel many assignments. But I came to one, Howard Payne University. I was about to cancel it when the Spirit of God put a clear check in my spirit. I was not to forgo this one. It didn't make sense to me, but the command to obey God's leading persisted. It was difficult even to get there, and so much went wrong on the way, but obedience kept ringing in my heart. I was to speak at Coggin Avenue Baptist Church on Sunday and be on campus Monday through Wednesday. It was soon obvious why God had commanded me to go: revival was breaking out! People were praying everywhere, especially the students.

On Sunday and during the days on campus, hundreds of lives were touched and radically changed. Every service, including an open luncheon for business people, was crowded. Open confession of sin broke out, testimonies were given spontaneously, people were saved, and many Christians had their faith renewed. This deep moving of God spread to other churches across Texas, then on to as many as three hundred college campuses. Lives touched during those weeks are still being greatly used by God today. When God speaks, obedience is crucial to His mighty work.



EXPERIENCING GOD THROUGH OBEDIENCE

SESSION 9

DVD Message Notes

1. There is a difference between having Jesus as your Friend and you being a friend of Jesus.
2. Jesus clearly says, "When I look to see who's a friend of mine, there is one thing I look for, and that's obedience.
3. There is no substitute for obedience. Worship is not a substitute for obedience. Doctrine and right belief are not a substitute for obedience. Prayer is not a substitute for obedience.
4. There comes a point where you don't need to pray anymore; you just need to obey.
5. How do you experience the joy of your Master? You obey Him.
6. When God speaks, you need to obey and leave the results, the consequences to Him.
7. Obedience is always the avenue through which you find greater fellowship and intimacy with God.
8. The greatest single way you can engage in spiritual warfare is to obey whatever God tells you to do.
9. Don't ever blame anyone else for your disobedience.
10. You have all the power of heaven available to you to obey anything God tells you to do.

Your Notes

Unit Review

Now you have studied all seven realities of experiencing God. Using the hints below, write the seven statements in your own words.

1. God's work: _____
2. Love relationship: _____
3. God invites: _____
4. God speaks: _____
5. Crisis of belief: _____
6. Major adjustments: _____
7. Obey Him: _____

Scriptures Referenced

- John 15:14
- Luke 6:46
- Isaiah 1:10-17
- Matthew 25:21
- Exodus 3-5

Testimony

Angela Temples

Sharing Time

- Statements that have influenced the way you love and obey God (activity 3, p. 180)
- Activity 4, page 184
- Statements that have been meaningful to you (activity 1, p. 188)
- Names by which you have come to know God by experience (activity 3, p. 191)
- One of the most meaningful statements or Scriptures from this unit's lessons and your prayer response to God. Choose one from pages 183, 187, 190, and 196.

For Makeup or Review

Audio and video downloads are available at www.lifeway.com.

Check your answers, using the inside back cover of your book.