

EXPERIENCING GOD

UNIT

# III

VERSE TO MEMORIZE



# GOD'S WILL AND THE CHURCH

## SESSION 10

### DVD Message Notes

1. The church is a living organism.
2. God is the Author of the church, and He has placed His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the Head of the church.
3. God is the One who builds the church.
4. God has a specific assignment for each and every church.
5. God makes the body interconnected.

### Your Notes

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### Unit Review

In your own words write three concerns God has for the body of Christ (p. 214).

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Write your response to the following.

1. Why do you think God has added you to your present church body?

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2. What do you do in your church that most effectively helps build up the body of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

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Check your answers, using the pages cited in parentheses. The last two questions ask for your own viewpoint.

### Scriptures Referenced

- 1 Corinthians 12:18
- 1 Corinthians 12:26

### Testimony

John Thomas

### Sharing Time

- What you sense God is saying about the way our church makes decisions (activity 10, p. 209)
- Last two questions in the review at left
- Things that might help you function more effectively in the body (activity 4, p. 216)
- Activity 5, page 217
- Instructions from Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 for your church and for you (activity 1e, p. 210, and activity 2, p. 220)
- One of the most meaningful statements or Scriptures from this unit and your prayer response to God (pp. 204, 209, 212, 217, and 222).

### For Makeup or Review

Audio and video downloads are available at [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com).

# Kingdom People

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## A WORLD-MISSIONS STRATEGY CENTER

Gary Hillyard was the pastor of Beverly Park Church in Seattle, Washington. Church attendance ran about 110 on Sundays. Forty church members took training to learn to pray, and 8 committed themselves to pray daily for God to show them how He wanted to grow their church. Nineteen members began a study of *Experiencing God*.

When immigrants from the Ukraine began attending Beverly Park, members joined God in what He was doing. One day a new family arrived, and the man asked Gary if the church would like to have his father's house in Lugansk, a city of 650,000. Gary called me to ask to whom they should give the house. I responded that this sounded like God's invitation for the church to get involved in world missions.

Though behind in its budget, Beverly Park voted to accept the house, and members began praying. Within weeks Don English called Gary. "Do you remember our prayer time seven years ago [before the fall of Communism] when I sensed God would one day call me as a missionary to the Soviet Union? Well, God has told me that now is the time to go."

Gary replied, "I have good news for you. We have your house, and it's in Lugansk, Ukraine." Beverly Park voted to call Don and his family to be its missionaries. But Gary called me again and said the church had only \$21 in the bank. "Now what do we do?" he asked.

I suggested they clarify that this was indeed the Lord's leading. Then they needed to trust the Lord to provide for what He had called them to do. And I said, "Don't hesitate to allow God's people to give." They spent their Sunday-evening service in prayer for God's provision. Following the prayer time, they had \$2,400 on the front pew, including two pledges for \$1,000 and \$500. By the end of the week, they had \$4,000 to send Don and his family to Lugansk.

Once there, Don received invitations to lead Bible studies in homes, at the elementary and high schools, for university faculty, and even for five hundred people at the medical center. When the government heard about Don, they asked to have a ceremony to thank America for their city library, which had been partially funded by the Marshal Plan following World War II. Don agreed. The national television station that broadcast the ceremony asked Don to say a few words. Less than two months into his work, Don was on national television telling the Ukraine about Jesus. Later he was invited to speak to the parliament.

Don also worked with the local churches to hold evangelistic meetings, and between four hundred and five hundred people were saved in a week. They wanted to distribute Bibles in the Lugansk region, so Don called his home church to request prayer. One hour after Beverly Park's prayer meeting, a church in Texas called and said it wanted to buy Bibles for the Ukraine. The government asked for food and medical supplies for the elderly, handicapped, and children in the city. Again Don called his home church. The next day Bob Dixon called from Texas Baptist Men. They had been asked by the State Department to oversee the distribution of food in the former Soviet republics. He had three 40-foot shipping containers of food that could be sent immediately.

Workers also started a Bible college, provided medical equipment, planted churches, and worked with orphans. In one conversation Gary wept as he explained how their church at one time had struggled to pay the electric bill. But now significant financial and personnel resources were being funneled through the little church to touch the world.

# DAY I

YOU CANNOT BE IN  
RELATIONSHIP WITH  
JESUS AND NOT BE  
ON MISSION.

John 20:21

"As the Father has sent me,  
I am sending you."



Every con-  
gregation is a  
world-missions  
strategy center.

# On Mission to the World

When you respond to God's invitation to an intimate love relationship with Him, He brings you into a special partnership with Himself. God has added you to a local body of believers. Together you are the body of Christ in your community. As the Head of your church, Christ Himself is guiding and working through your congregation to accomplish the will of the Father.

The Spirit who bonds you to other believers in a local church also connects you to *all* believers around the world. God's people from every local body of Christ are part of God's kingdom. Christians are kingdom people, and Christ Himself is the eternal King over His kingdom. He "has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father" (Rev. 1:6). In this relationship with Christ as King, you become involved in His mission to reconcile a lost world to God. To be related to Christ is to be on mission with Him. You cannot be in relationship with Jesus and not be on mission. Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

## God Has the World on His Heart!

"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). God fashioned Christ's first body by the Holy Spirit and placed Him in Mary. Christ became flesh and dwelled among us (see John 1:14). Jesus provided for our salvation through His death and resurrection. When Jesus returned to heaven, God fashioned a new body of Christ through the Holy Spirit. This body is the believers God has added to the church.

Jesus now functions as the Head of His body, the local church, to guide it in carrying out the will of the Father. God established each church as a body of Christ so He could continue His redemptive work in the world. When Christ functions as the Head of His church, God will use that body to carry out His will in every part of the earth.

- 1 Reflect on the following questions. Check yes or no for each.**
- Did Christ know the Father's will while He was on earth?  Yes  No
  - Did Christ ever misunderstand the Father's purposes?  Yes  No
  - Did Christ ever fail to do the Father's will?  Yes  No
  - If Christ is allowed to be the Head of a local congregation, will He ever misunderstand what the Father wants to achieve through that body of believers?  Yes  No
  - Can Christ reveal to the members of His body how they are to be involved in the Father's purposes?  Yes  No

A church is a living organism, a body with Christ as its Head. Each part of that body is related to Christ and to one another. Anytime God guides His people, He can impact a world through that congregation. Jesus gave us a commission to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). As they obey that command, every congregation is a world-missions strategy center. God can impact the world through one church if it adjusts itself to God's activity.

## Impacting the World

**2** Read the account of Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-39. Then answer the following questions.

- Who guided Philip to become involved in what God was going to do for the Ethiopian (vv. 26,29)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- At the beginning how much information did Philip have about what to do (v. 26)? \_\_\_\_\_
- When Philip saw the Ethiopian, he was watching to see what the Father was doing. What do you think he saw of God's activity (vv. 27-28)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What did the Spirit tell Philip to do next (v. 29)? \_\_\_\_\_
- How did Philip find out what God was doing in this man's life (v. 30)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What did God do in this Ethiopian's life through Philip (vv. 35-39)?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Based on what we know of the Ethiopian (v. 27), what impact do you think this encounter could have had on the spread of the gospel?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Answers: a. An angel of the Lord—the Spirit—guided Philip. b. He knew only that he was to travel south on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. c. He saw a God-fearing man who had been to Jerusalem to worship. Because the Ethiopian was reading from Isaiah, Philip saw a man who was seeking God, a man interested in spiritual matters. Philip knew that only God could draw a person to Himself like that. d. The Spirit told Philip to approach the chariot. From that place Philip could then find out what he needed to do to join God in His activity. e. Philip asked a probing question. f. God used Philip to tell the good news about Jesus Christ. The Ethiopian believed the gospel message, was saved, and was baptized. g. God evidently had a plan for getting the gospel message to Ethiopia. He chose a key leader in the government and used Philip to lead him to Christ. God used Philip's obedience on a single day to carry the gospel to a strategic kingdom in Africa.

One Sunday while preaching in a church in Florida, I spoke about the woman at the well in John 4:1-41. I stated that when the woman faithfully shared with her countrymen what Christ had done in her life, she saw her entire region come to faith in Christ. Then I asked, "Who will be the woman at the well for those places who still do not know Jesus?" The altar call elicited a tremendous response as many people wept in prayer. One man approached me and said, "God told me I am to be the woman at the well for my people in Pakistan. A woman approached and said, "God told me I am to be the woman at the well for my country, Ghana." People from all over the world lined up to tell me God had convicted them that they were to return to their native countries to share with their people what Christ had done in their lives.

### Acts 8:26-39

<sup>26</sup> "Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' <sup>27</sup> So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, <sup>28</sup> and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. <sup>29</sup> The Spirit told Philip, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it.'

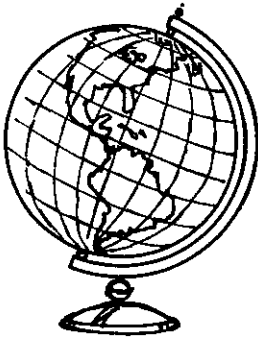
<sup>30</sup> "Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked.

<sup>31</sup> " 'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

<sup>32</sup> "The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: 'He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. <sup>33</sup> In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.'

<sup>34</sup> "The eunuch asked Philip, 'Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?' <sup>35</sup> Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

<sup>36</sup> "As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?' <sup>38</sup> And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup> When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing."



### SUMMARY STATEMENTS

I am a Kingdom person,  
and Christ is my King.

To be related to Christ is  
to be on mission with Him.

Every congregation is a  
world-missions strategy  
center.

Anytime God has access  
to our church, He can touch  
the world through us.

The pastor of the church was weeping. God had brought the world into his church, but his church had not necessarily had the world on its heart. Too often a church receives new members who are natives of other countries and merely adds them to its membership roll without asking God why He brought people from around the world to join their church body. God intends for every local church to be a world-missions strategy center. God will equip each church to carry out the Great Commission if it will be a careful steward of every person God sends to it.

### 3 Think about your community. How could God use a person in your community to impact world missions? Check persons below or list others you think of.

- International students at the local college or university
- International business personnel at local companies
- Tourists from foreign countries
- International seamen on ships in port
- Ethnic persons who have contact with their native countries
- Local individuals who do business in foreign countries
- Christian youth and college students whom God might call to be missionaries
- Laypersons who would be willing to serve as volunteers in short-term international mission projects (evangelism, medical and health care, disaster relief, agriculture, teaching English)

Others: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4 Pray and ask God if He wants you to become involved in some way with one of these groups.

When you adjust your life to God and become a Kingdom-oriented person, He will involve you in His work anywhere in the world He chooses. He is at work all over the world building His kingdom.

I was speaking at a conference in **Minneapolis-Saint Paul** about participating with God to touch a world. A pastor from an inner-city church said, "That's how God told me to function as a pastor! We began to look for what God was doing. Someone from Jamaica joined our church and asked, 'Would you come and preach in our country. We need the Lord so much.' I took some people with me, and we started three churches. The next month God added to our church someone from another Caribbean nation. We went there and started churches. Now we sponsor mission churches in three Caribbean nations." Then he smiled and said, "Last Sunday we had a man join our church from Ghana in west Africa. I don't know what God is up to, but we're ready to see!"

This congregation discovered they were Kingdom citizens. To experience God and to know and do God's will is to put your life alongside His activity and to let His Spirit show you why that happened in your church. Adjust your life to Him and let Him work through you to draw a world to Himself.

Isn't it tragic when we become so self-centered we enter God's presence and say, "O God, bless me. Bless my family. Bless my church"?

Then God says, "I've been trying to do that all along but in a completely different way than you anticipated. I want you to deny self. Pick up your cross and follow Me. I will lead you to places where I am working, and I'll include you in My activity. You will be an instrument in My hand so I use your life to touch a world. When I do that through you, you will truly experience My blessings."

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?

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

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

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## Koinonia

## DAY 2

In the mind and teaching of Jesus, a church was a vital, living, dynamic fellowship of believers. The Greek word *koinonia*, most frequently translated *fellowship*, is the best way to describe what a church ought to be. In this unit I will use the word *koinonia* to mean the fullest possible partnership and fellowship with God and with other believers.

- 1 Underline in the following paragraph words and phrases that help you understand the meaning of *koinonia*.**

*Koinonia*, or intimate fellowship, in the church is based on personal *koinonia* with God and individual believers. *Koinonia* with God comes only from a real, personal encounter with the living Christ and surrender to Him as the absolute Lord of your life. This is the intimate love relationship we have talked about. God pursues that kind of a relationship with you.

- 2 How would you define *koinonia*?** \_\_\_\_\_

- 3 Which of the following words can you use to describe your relationship with God? Check all that apply.**

alive     close     cold     distant     growing     intimate  
 personal     removed     stagnant     real     uneasy     vibrant

- 4 Read 1 John 1:1-7 below and circle the word *fellowship* (*koinonia*) each time it occurs. Then answer the questions that follow.**

<sup>1</sup>“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. <sup>2</sup>The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the

YOU CANNOT BE IN  
TRUE FELLOWSHIP  
WITH GOD AND  
OUT OF FELLOWSHIP  
WITH OTHER  
BELIEVERS.

eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. <sup>3</sup>We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>We write this to make our joy complete.

<sup>5</sup>“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup>If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. <sup>7</sup>But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:1-7).

- a. What are some words in verses 1-3 indicating that John had a personal, dynamic relationship with the living Lord Jesus Christ? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. Why did John write about what he had seen and heard of Jesus (v. 3)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. What are two benefits to believers because of their fellowship with God and one another (vv. 4,7)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d. What is indicated when a person says he has fellowship (*koinonia*) with God, but he walks in sin and darkness (v. 6)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- e. What is true of a person who walks in the light as God is in the light (v. 7)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Answers: a. John said he had seen, heard, and touched Jesus. John had an experiential knowledge of Jesus. He had come to know Him as the “eternal life” (v. 2). John also recorded Jesus’ words “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). Eternal life means knowing God by experience in a real, personal way. This is *koinonia*—fellowship with God. b. John proclaimed Jesus so others would believe in Him and have fellowship with John and other believers. c. When we fellowship with God and when others come into fellowship with Him and with us, our joy is made complete, and we experience the cleansing work of Jesus’ blood. d. Such a person is a liar. His or her life is a lie. e. If a person walks in the light as God is in the light, he or she has fellowship with other believers and experiences forgiveness and the cleansing of sin.

## Fellowship Among Believers

Our *koinonia* as believers is with God and His Son, Jesus Christ. This fellowship is an intimate partnership. It is the sharing of all God is with us and all we are with God. To me, *koinonia* is the most complete expression of a love relationship with God. When you live in this kind of love relationship with God, you will have the same quality of loving fellowship with other believers.



First John clearly states that your relationships with your Christian brothers and sisters are an expression of your relationship with God. You cannot be in true fellowship with God and out of fellowship with other believers.

**5 Read each of the following Scriptures. Circle the words *brother* and *brothers*. Underline the words *love* and *loves*.**

“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness” (1 John 2:9-11).

“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:10).

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him” (1 John 3:14-15).

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (1 John 3:16-17).

“Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:7-8).

“Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (1 John 4:11-12).

“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:20-21).

“Everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands” (1 John 5:1-2).

**6 How is your relationship with God reflected in your relationship with your “brother”?** \_\_\_\_\_

**7 If you are in a right relationship with God, how will you treat your Christian brothers and sisters?** \_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

“Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.”

**SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

A church is a vital, living, dynamic fellowship of believers.

*Koinonia* is the fullest possible partnership and fellowship with God and with others.

I cannot be in true fellowship with God and out of fellowship with other believers.

**8** Suppose a person claimed to be a Christian and to love Jesus; yet he treated his Christian brothers and sisters harshly. He was unkind and unforgiving toward them and regularly argumentative. He publicly ridiculed them or slandered their name or reputation. He was unwilling to help them when they were in need. In light of 1 John, what would you say about this person’s relationship with God? Check one or more responses that you agree with or write your own response.

- I would take this person’s word that he is a Christian who really loves Jesus.
- I would question whether this person really knows and loves God.
- I would think this person has a serious problem in his relationship with God.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**9** Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (in the margin) and write in the columns below words and phrases that describe what Christian love is and is not. I have written one for you.

Love Is ...	Love is not ...
<i>patient</i>	

If you love God, your love for your fellow Christians will be obvious. You will be patient and kind. You will not be envious, boastful, proud, rude, self-seeking, or easily angered. You will not hold grudges. You will rejoice in truth and righteousness, not in evil. You will protect and trust your Christian brothers and sisters. You will hope for the best in others, and you will persevere in your love. This Godlike love grows from an intimate love relationship with God. In John 13:35 Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

**10** Take time to pray, asking God to reveal the truth to you about your fellowship (love relationship) with Him and with your Christian brothers and sisters. Remember that anyone who is in Christ is a brother or sister in the Lord.

a. What do you sense God is saying about your fellowship with other Christians?

\_\_\_\_\_

b. What do you sense God is saying about your fellowship with Him?

\_\_\_\_\_

These two evaluations of your fellowship ought to be similar. If you say your fellowship with the Lord is good, but your fellowship with other Christians is poor, something is wrong. If you walk in intimate fellowship with God, you will enjoy warm fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

**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?

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### A Laotian Refugee

In Vancouver I served as the interim pastor of a small church. A Laotian refugee family had joined the church the week before I came. I knew God never adds to the body by accident. My responsibility as the pastor was to learn what God was doing when He added this family to our church.

Thomas, the father, had been saved in a refugee camp in Thailand. His life was so gloriously transformed he wanted all the Laotian people to know Jesus. He went all over our community trying to find his Laotian brothers and lead them to Christ. The first week Thomas led 15 adults to the Lord. The next week he led 11 to the Lord, and he wept because he felt he was unfaithful to the Lord.

In our next church business meeting I said, "We need to start a Laotian mission church." I shared all I knew of what God was doing. "I believe God is leading those people to the Lord so we can start a Laotian mission," I explained. Then I asked the church to decide how they sensed God wanted us to respond. They voted to start a Laotian mission church.

Then I said, "We ought to call Thomas as the pastor." I told them what God was doing in Thomas's life. God had given him a pastor's heart. He had a burden for evangelism. He had just enrolled in a local Baptist theological college to train for anything God wanted to do through him. The church voted to call Thomas as the pastor of the new mission.

Two months later, Thomas was invited to a meeting for ethnic pastors in Saint Louis. Thomas asked, "Can I take some friends with me?" I didn't know what that meant until he said he wanted to take 18 friends with him. Then he said, "Henry, would you mind if I came back through all the major cities of Canada? My relatives are in all of these cities. God wants me to go and lead some of them to the Lord. If God will help me, I'll find a pastor for them. Then they can have a church in every major city of Canada."

Then I knew God was doing something special. I said, "Oh, Thomas, please go!" He did. Later that year at Christmas, Laotian people from all across Canada came to celebrate the new life in Christ they had found.

Later the Laotian government granted permission to start churches. Thomas returned to Laos and preached the gospel, and 133 relatives and friends came to know the Lord. He started four mission churches. He linked the church in Vancouver with the Laotian churches with the desire to see all Laotian people come to know the Lord.

When Thomas joined our church, all we saw was one Laotian refugee. What did God see? He saw a people and a whole nation being drawn to Himself. When God honors your church by placing a new member in the body, ask God to show you what He is up to. He wants to touch your community and maybe even the world through your church.

# DAY 3

*KOINONIA* TAKES ON NEW DIMENSIONS, NEW POSSIBILITIES, AND NEW RICHNESS AS CHURCHES RELATE IN THE WIDER CIRCLES OF THE KINGDOM.

Daniel 3:17

"The God we serve is able ... and he will."

Ephesians 3:20-21

"To him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!"



We considered everything each of us possessed as belonging by love to one another.

## *Koinonia* in the Kingdom

Kingdom people are interrelated with other members and believers in the Kingdom worldwide. After serving 22 years as a pastor, I became the director of missions for an association of 11 churches and mission churches in the greater Vancouver area of British Columbia, Canada. Guiding a church to walk with Christ as the Head of His body is one matter. Guiding an association of 11 congregations to walk together with God with one heart and one mind is quite different. I had to face some serious questions:

- Would God speak to the churches individually and then bring them to one mind as they functioned together as an association?
- Would the churches respond to God when He spoke?
- Would the churches have the same kind of *koinonia* (fellowship) with one another as believers have with other Christians in a local church?
- Would churches be willing to give freely of themselves in order to experience the fullest life God has to offer (see Luke 9:23-24)?
- Would godly fellowship be expressed by the free sharing of resources with churches that had needs?

I came to this new assignment with the conviction that "the God we serve is able ... and he will" (**Dan. 3:17**). Biblical principles of God's working with His people do not change. Helping a group of churches learn to walk with God in intimate *koinonia* with Him and with one another took time, but God is the One who does that kind of miraculous work. I was only a vessel through whom He chose to work.

Though we were a small band of congregations, God manifested His presence in the lives of the churches and the association. God led our churches to walk by faith as we witnessed to the people attending the World's Fair. God worked through our association to begin ministry to East Indians. In four years the number of churches and missions in our association doubled. Student work grew from one part-time student director to five full-time directors. Almost one hundred people expressed a sense of call into ministry or mission work. Once strained relationships with other church groups were healed and flourished into dynamic, cooperative efforts of fellowship and outreach. God did so much more than we could ever ask or think, according to the Holy Spirit's enabling power at work in His churches (see **Eph. 3:20-21**).

- 1** As you read the following paragraphs about the relationships among churches in our association, underline some things that indicate we had functioning *koinonia* among the churches.

While I served as a pastor in Saskatchewan, the Holy Spirit developed unique *koinonia* among the sister churches. Together our churches developed a network to reach the entire province for Christ. Much like the New Testament churches, we considered everything each of us possessed as belonging by love to one another (see Acts 4:34-35). A church's resources don't belong to the people themselves. The church is merely a steward of them. Everything a church has belongs to the Kingdom. Anything our church had was available to all the others. When one church called a student minister, he became a

resource for every other church for helping to develop their student ministry. When our church had a summer youth program, we invited small churches to participate with us. We also shared copy machines and other material resources. If one church needed financial help, we didn't hesitate to let God's people know. Then we took an offering. Once we even mortgaged our building to help a mission church purchase its own.

This kind of sharing developed a deep sense of *koinonia* among our churches. We belonged to one another. We needed one another. We went out of our way to help one another and meet each church's needs. We learned to love one another. We planned times to get together for fellowship and mutual encouragement. That is what Christ's kingdom ought to be like. The watching world should be able to say, "Look how they love one another." That unique quality of love can come only from God. When people see Godlike love, they will be drawn to Christ and to His church.

**2 What kinds of things indicate the churches had functioning *koinonia*? List them in the margin.**

When *koinonia* exists among churches, it is evident in their relationships. We cooperated in our commission to reach our world for Christ. We were able to do things together that no one church alone could have done effectively. We shared anything we had if it would meet the need of a sister church. We spent time together and loved one another.

Can that kind of *koinonia* exist among churches not only on an associational level but also on a state, provincial, national, or international level? Yes! Can Godlike *koinonia* exist among churches of different denominations as they cooperate to achieve greater Kingdom purposes? Yes! However, humans left to their own ways cannot achieve those kinds of relationships. Only God through His Holy Spirit can create and sustain *koinonia* among His people. He wants to be the King, Ruler, and Sovereign over all His kingdom. When He is allowed to rule, barriers erected by humans inevitably fall.

When we have *koinonia* with God, the same quality and nature of that *koinonia* will be reflected when we relate to—

- brothers and sisters in our local church;
- other churches in a local area;
- other churches in a state or province;
- other churches in a nation;
- other churches in the world;
- other Christian denominations.

**3 Based on the relationships your church has with other churches and denominations in your local area and worldwide, what kind of *koinonia* would a watching world see? \_\_\_\_\_**

**4 What does your church do or fail to do that indicates a lack of *koinonia* with other churches or Christian groups? For instance, some church-league sports teams develop a poor reputation in the community because of their displays of anger, jealousy, rudeness, violence, and hatred. That reflects a deep fellowship problem.**

If your church has a *koinonia* problem with other Christian churches or groups, that indicates a deeper *koinonia* problem with the Lord. I am not suggesting that doctrinal differences ought to be compromised, but we can act like brothers and sisters who love one another. *Koinonia* takes on new dimensions, new possibilities, and new richness as churches relate in the wider circles of the Kingdom. This is the same way love works.



Sharing  
developed  
a deep sense  
of *koinonia*  
among our  
churches.

## Loving on a New Level

Suppose, on a scale of 1 to 10, you are loving at level 2—you love your parents and family who love you, and you love your friends who care about you. Suppose God enables you to love your archenemy, as Jesus commanded in Matthew 5:43-48. If you can love your enemy at level 10, your capacity to love other persons will increase. All others you have been loving will receive a greater dimension of concern than you have previously been able to give them.

### 5 Evaluate your Christian love life. Check statements that are true of your Christian love.

- I don't genuinely love anybody.
- I love my family.
- I love those who love me.
- I love those I trust.
- God has helped me love those around me who are irritable and unfriendly.
- God has taught me to love those in my community who are unlovely—people who are different from me.
- God has taught me to show love for people who are openly living in sin.
- God has given me grace to love my enemies.

You and I usually do not try to improve our capacity to love by loving those who are difficult to love. Often when we try to love our enemy, frustration and anger result instead of a new kind of love. Then we respond, "Lord, I didn't want You to bring anger into my life. I wanted You to bring love into my life." But God can deepen our capacity to love as He enables us to care for the unlovely. When we learn to love on a deeper level, our capacity to love others grows.

While I was leading an association of churches, we made a commitment to love everyone and to help every person in our city know the Lord. Isn't that what Jesus commanded us in the Great Commission (see Matt. 28:18-20)? God placed me in a relationship with a person who had a deep **love for anarchists**—young adults who were angry at everybody and wanted to destroy established order and authority. This man said, "Henry, go with me to the anarchists' restaurant. I want you to listen to this group of people express their anger and bitterness. I want you to see how God can bring the gospel to them."

That was a life-changing experience for me. I sat in that restaurant for three hours listening to an outpouring of hatred and bitterness. By the aid of the Spirit of God, with my heart, mind, and life I came to love those people. Consequently, I was able to pour out greater love on the next Christian I met. By teaching me to love anarchists, God brought me to a deeper capacity to love.

### 6 Is God impressing you to demonstrate your love to a specific individual, a particular group of people or perhaps people who are different from you? Ask Him. If God is impressing you to demonstrate your love at a deeper level, write the name of the one or ones He wants you to love. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Cooperative Relationships Among Churches

The churches of the New Testament were interdependent. Each was independent before the Lord; yet they needed one another. They helped and encouraged one another. They had cooperative relationships that enhanced their experience of God.

**7** As you read about each of the following relationships, underline or write in the margin examples that clearly indicate the New Testament churches had *koinonia* with one another. I've given you one example.

**The young church in Jerusalem.** On the day of Pentecost three thousand people came to trust in Christ. We do not know how many of these remained in Jerusalem after the Jewish feast was over. We know, however, the Jerusalem church had many members. Early on, they met in the temple courts and in many smaller groups in individual homes. They met daily for teaching, fellowship, meals, and prayer. They shared their material resources with any believer who had a need (see Acts 2:42-47). These many small congregations were interdependent. Because of *koinonia* they were "one in heart and mind" (Acts 4:32).

**Jerusalem shares with Antioch.** When the gospel began to bear fruit among the Greeks in Antioch, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to investigate and help the young church. When Barnabas saw God's activity there, he enlisted Saul (Paul) to come and help. Together they remained in Antioch teaching the new converts (see Acts 11:19-26).

**Antioch provides for needs in Jerusalem.** Word came to the church in Antioch that their Christian brothers and sisters in Judea were suffering from a famine. Because of *koinonia* "the disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:29-30). These churches were not totally independent. They were bound together by their common *koinonia* with Christ. They cared for one another's needs from their love for one another.

**Antioch sends out Barnabas and Saul.** The church at Antioch was missions-minded, sharing Christ's heart for a lost world. One day "while they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:2-3). The church at Antioch had freely received leaders, and they freely gave them for the advancement of the Kingdom.

Notice Barnabas and Saul (Paul) had already been called to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Saul's conversion and call had occurred several years before (see Acts 9:1-19; Gal. 1:16-24). Only in the midst of the body of Christ did they come to know the right timing for their missionary work. God spoke to them by the Holy Spirit and through the church. Don't be afraid to trust God and your church to help you know God's will and His timing for your Kingdom assignments.

**Jerusalem helps maintain sound doctrine.** When a dispute arose about the nature of salvation, Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem for consultation. The apostles, elders, and church in Jerusalem helped settle the dispute. Then they sent two of their own members to the church in Antioch to instruct, encourage, and strengthen the Gentile Christians.

**Other churches cooperate for Kingdom purposes.** Throughout Paul's letters we read about ways the churches cooperated with other Christians for the Kingdom's sake.

- The faith of the Roman Christians encouraged others all over the Christian world (see Rom. 1:8-12). Paul planned to receive assistance from this church for a journey to Spain that he was planning (see Rom. 15:24).

- Churches in Macedonia and Achaia sent contributions to the poor Christians in Jerusalem (see Rom. 15:26-27).
- The church in Philippi frequently provided financial support for Paul so he could preach the gospel and start churches in other cities (see Phil. 4:14-16).
- The churches at Colosse and Laodicea shared workers (Epaphras) and letters from Paul (see Col. 4:12-16).
- The believers in the church at Thessalonica inspired and became models to all of the believers in Macedonia and Achaia (see 1 Thess. 1:6-10).

**8 Which of the following best describes the relationship among churches in the New Testament? Check your response.**

- a. The churches were isolated and independent. They each focused their ministries solely on their own communities.
- b. The churches were interdependent. They cared about one another, and they encouraged and helped one another.

**9 Describe one way your church has experienced *koinonia* because of a cooperative relationship with another church or Christian group.**

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A small group of Christians felt **burdened for the inner city** of a major city and did not know of any other evangelical church that was reaching that massive district. God led some of them to quit their jobs, raise their own financial support, and by faith start a new church in that area. After they had begun, it was announced that a megachurch was going to sponsor a new church in the same area and intended to invest massive financial and human resources in order to build the church quickly. When the small church heard the news, rather than fearing the “competition,” they rejoiced. News that God had motivated a second church to reach the same area confirmed God truly wanted to reach that vast population for Christ. The little church raised funds to fully equip the second church’s nursery. They even asked to place the second church in its budget, even though it was not in their denomination and had far more resources at its disposal than the original church did. The small church’s burden to reach the people of that community led them to invest in the ministry of the second church. Every time someone came to Christ in the second church, the people of the first church could celebrate that another person had been added to the kingdom of God.

**SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

Everything each church possessed belonged by love to one another.

Everything a church has belongs to the Kingdom.

When *koinonia* exists among churches, it is evident in their relationships.

## Experiencing More of God

A believer cannot experience God in all the dimensions God intends for him or her apart from the body of Christ—a local church. As the body goes on mission together to the ends of the earth, Christians begin to experience the fuller dimensions of life in God’s kingdom. As you experience *koinonia* with other groups of God’s people, you experience greater dimensions of God’s presence at work in your world. God has created channels through which you and your church can touch the world for Him. Allow Him to break down any barriers that may prevent you from experiencing God through *koinonia* with others. Go to Him and watch for His initiative. He can show you how, with whom, and when He wants to use you.



**10** Fill in the blank in the following statement.  
 The churches of the New Testament were not independent. They were \_\_\_\_\_ . They needed fellowship with one another to experience the greater dimensions of God and the *koinonia* He creates.

**11** Write your Scripture-memory verse, 1 John 1:7. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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

When Christ is allowed to rule, barriers erected by humans inevitably fall.

The churches of the New Testament were interdependent.

As my church experiences *koinonia* with other groups of God's people, we experience greater dimensions of God's presence at work in our world.

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?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
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# Essentials of *Koinonia*, Part I

DAY  
 4

*Koinonia* with God is the basic element of salvation and eternal life (see John 17:3). God takes the initiative to invite you into a love relationship. He places His Holy Spirit in you to enable you to live in right relationship with Him. No human method or list of steps to follow can maintain fellowship with God. *Koinonia* with God is an experience of His presence. Although God takes the initiative, you must respond to Him in order to fully experience His presence.

**KOINONIA WITH  
 GOD IS AN  
 EXPERIENCE OF  
 HIS PRESENCE.**

**1** The seven realities of experiencing God identify the way you come to know God by experience. I have personalized the statements for you below. Check your memory and fill in the blanks. Then check your work on the inside back cover.

Reality 1: \_\_\_\_\_ is always at work around you.

**Reality 2:** God pursues a continuing love \_\_\_\_\_ with you that is real and \_\_\_\_\_.

**Reality 3:** God invites you to become \_\_\_\_\_ with Him in His \_\_\_\_\_.

**Reality 4:** God speaks by the Holy \_\_\_\_\_ through the Bible, \_\_\_\_\_, circumstances, and the \_\_\_\_\_ to reveal Himself, His \_\_\_\_\_, and His ways.

**Reality 5:** God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of \_\_\_\_\_ that requires \_\_\_\_\_ and action.

**Reality 6:** You must make major \_\_\_\_\_ in your life to join God in what He is doing.

**Reality 7:** You come to know God by \_\_\_\_\_ as you \_\_\_\_\_ Him and He accomplishes His work through you.

Notice that the last three realities identify your response to God's initiative: You must act on *faith* in Him. You must make major *adjustments* to Him. You must *obey* Him. When you respond to God's initiative, you come to know Him intimately by experience. Living in faithful obedience to Him allows you to experience His presence. This is *koinonia* with God. Continuing in fellowship with God does not happen by accident. This fellowship can be broken. Sometimes what seems to be a good intention can threaten fellowship with God and with Christian brothers and sisters. To guard against broken fellowship, we need to identify and understand some essentials of genuine *koinonia* with God.

**Essentials of Koinonia**

- 1 We must love God with our total being.
- 2 We must submit to God's sovereign rule.
- 3 We must experience God in a real and personal way.
- 4 We must completely trust in God.

**1. We must love God with our total being.**

"This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matt. 22:37-38). If you love God, you will obey Him (see John 14:21-24). If you love Him, you will also love your brother (see 1 John 4:21; 5:3). If your fellowship with God is right—if you love Him with your total being—you will even be able to love your enemies.

The threat to fellowship is anything that causes you to lose your first love for God. This was the problem with the church at Ephesus (see Rev. 2:1-7).

- 2** Read 1 John 2:15-16 in the margin and list things that can threaten or compete with your love for God. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 22:37-38

"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment."

1 John 2:15-16

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world."

Loving money or things more than God will break your fellowship with Him. Your sinful cravings and lust can capture your first love. You can even fall in love with what you have or what you are able to do. When your love is not pure toward God, fellowship with God is broken. Your fellowship with others will then reflect your broken fellowship with God.

Suppose a person begins to love things more than God. When fellowship with God is broken, love for others will suffer. A person who loves things more than God will become stingy and greedy. When he sees a brother in need, he will keep his possessions to use for himself. He will not give to help others. He may start using God's tithe (tenth) for himself. Greed is a dangerous threat to fellowship with God (see Eph. 5:5; 1 John 3:17).

Materialism is a terrible trap that robs many people of their love for God. Churches can also be selfish and greedy, primarily using God's resources to satisfy themselves rather than to help a lost and needy world.

**3** What is one essential of *koinonia*? \_\_\_\_\_

**4** Name at least two things that can threaten *koinonia* by interfering with your love for God. \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. We must submit to God's sovereign rule.

God is your Master. Because of His perfect love for you, He demands absolute obedience. As the Head of the church, Christ demands submission to Him and obedience to His will. Absolute surrender to His lordship is necessary for right fellowship with God.

When people become "a law to themselves" (Hab. 1:7) and do what is right in their own eyes (see Judg. 17:6), the experience of *koinonia* becomes impossible in their lives and in the life of a church. Yielding your loyalty or allegiance to anyone other than Christ is spiritual adultery. If a pastor, the deacons, influential business persons, or a committee tries to run or rule the church, *koinonia* is threatened.

The problem always starts with an individual's or a church's relationship with God. When a person refuses to deny self and follow Christ, fellowship with God is broken. When self is in control, all other authority relationships will be out of control. Asserting self in the body of Christ robs Christ of His rightful authority as the Head of the body.

Fellowship is broken not only when an individual tries to be the head of the church but also when the church expects its pastor or another individual or group to rule the church. No individual or group can function as the head of the body if that church is to be a healthy body. It may look healthy on the outside, but God sees the rebellion against His Son's rule and deplors it. Every member of the church must submit to Christ's lordship over his life and to Christ's headship over the church.

**5** In your opinion, to whom does your church look as the head of your church? \_\_\_\_\_

In 1 Corinthians 1-3 divisions (broken fellowship) existed in the church because some were following Paul, some were following Apollos, and some were following Peter (Cephas). Paul condemned this kind of rebellion and rebuked any attempt to follow anyone other than Christ. To follow him or Apollos would be childish, worldly, and ungodly (see 1 Cor. 3:1-4). The church must have the mind of Christ (see 1 Cor. 2:16) and must follow Christ alone.



Every member  
of the church  
must submit to  
Christ's lord-  
ship over his  
life and  
to Christ's  
headship over  
the church.

*Koinonia* is impossible if a church is made up of individuals who are unwilling to submit to the lordship of Christ in the body of Christ. The same impossibility exists in a larger body of fellowship, such as an association or a denomination, in which pastors and other participants refuse to submit to Christ's lordship and will not function in that body under Christ's rule. Anything or anyone who hinders or usurps God's lordship in your life, in the church, or in the larger bodies of the Kingdom causes broken fellowship with God. When fellowship with God breaks down, it is reflected in broken relationships with others.

**SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

*Koinonia* with God is an experience of His presence.

*Koinonia* with God is the basic element of salvation and eternal life.

I must love God with my total being.

I must submit to God's sovereign rule.

*Koinonia* is possible only if a church is made up of individuals who are willing to submit to the lordship of Christ in the body of Christ.

**6** In your opinion, who is looked to as the head of your denomination?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7** What is the second essential of *koinonia*?

1. We must love God with our total being.
2. \_\_\_\_\_

**8** Describe the way interference with Christ's rule threatens *koinonia* in a church. \_\_\_\_\_

**9** In all honesty before God, who is the Lord and Master of your life? Check one or write your own.

- Jesus Christ is.       I am.       Money and possessions are.  
 My job is.       My spouse is.  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**10** Pray through this lesson and specifically bring the following matters to the Lord.

- Ask God whether anything in your life is causing you to lose your first love for Him. Do you love anything more than Him? If He reveals anything, confess it and return to your first love.
- Ask God whether you are absolutely surrendered to His lordship in your life.
- Ask God whether you are allowing Jesus to function as the Head of your church.
- Pray for your spouse, your family, your church, and your denomination that God will be allowed to rule in every heart.

**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?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

# Essentials of *Koinonia*, Part 2

## DAY 5

ONLY A PERSONAL  
ENCOUNTER WITH  
THE LIVING CHRIST  
WILL RESULT IN EF-  
FECTIVE KOINONIA.

Yesterday you learned that *koinonia* with God requires that you love God with your total being and that you submit to His sovereign rule in your life. Many people, things, and influences in your life and in your church can threaten your fellowship with God if you allow them to distract you from loving Him and following Him. Today we will look at two more essentials of *koinonia* and possible threats to fellowship with God.

### 3. We must experience God in a real and personal way.

Your *koinonia* with God is based on your personal experience with Him. No substitutes will do. You cannot rely on the personal experience of your spouse, your parents, your pastor, your Sunday School teacher, or your fellow church members. Your *koinonia* with God must be real and personal.

*Koinonia* is threatened when you allow anyone or anything to make you a spectator rather than an active participant in relationship to God. You must encounter God firsthand, or you will become passive and apathetic. If you do not continually encounter God firsthand, your fellowship with God will grow cold. You will quit caring about God's concern for His church, His kingdom, and the lost world.

- 1** What are some things that happen in churches that can tempt a person to become more of a spectator than an active participant?

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- 2** What is one way you have substituted a spectator religion for a real and personal experience of God?

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Although church organizations and programs are designed to promote outreach, growth, and ministry, they can lead to shallow relationships and indifference. If a church is not careful, it may help people experience a program but miss a personal encounter with the living Christ. Well-organized programs, plans, methods, and Bible studies are valuable, but they must not take the place of the Holy Spirit's personal guidance. Churches must make sure their organization encourages personal experiences with God.

Spiritual truths and realities that others have already experienced must not be taught just for the sake of knowledge. Instead, people must be led to experiences in which God reveals to them the same spiritual truth or reality in a personal way. Secondhand experiences will not suffice.

Agencies of a denomination, for instance, have a place in doing God's will in ways individual churches cannot accomplish alone. Yet individuals and churches must not allow the work of the denomination to become a substitute for their personal involvement in God's work. When that happens, the result is social and spiritual indifference

rather than responsible involvement and participation. Only a personal encounter with the living Christ will result in true *koinonia*.

**3** What are some things your denomination can do that most churches cannot do alone? \_\_\_\_\_

**4** In what way could reliance on these good things, if misused, become a hindrance to a real and personal encounter with God? \_\_\_\_\_

This is not an either-or situation. It is both-and. Denominations, programs, methods, prepared study materials, and so forth are helpful tools for churches. But they must not become substitutes for personal encounters with God. Each individual needs to experience the Lord's presence at work in his or her life. Individuals experience *koinonia* when they follow God's leadership and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's purposes.

When programs and ministries become ends instead of means, activity for activity's sake, or superficial signs of success, *koinonia* is in grave danger of being obscured and lost. Churches must not concern themselves only with numerical results. They must carefully look at the motive and inner spirit of their work. Are lives being transformed? Are broken people finding spiritual and emotional healing? Are people personally encountering the living Christ at work in the church? If not, something is wrong with members' personal relationships with God.

**5** What is the third essential of *koinonia*?

1. We must love God with our total beings.
2. We must submit to God's sovereign rule.
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**6** What are some things in a church that can take the place of a real and personal encounter with God? \_\_\_\_\_

**7** What is one thing in your past that you allowed to take the place of a personal experience with God? For example, someone might say, "I gave money to the church, but I avoided getting personally involved in God's work. I never experienced a sense of personal involvement in what God was doing through my church." \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. We must completely trust in God.

To experience genuine *koinonia* with God, you must depend on God to do the things only He can do. You must trust in God alone.

Once when Israel was faced with trouble, it turned to Egypt for help rather than to the Lord. God said to the nation, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great

strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord" (Isa. 31:1).

**8** What are some things or people in which a church may be tempted to place its trust? For instance, a church may trust in wealthy givers who provide financial stability rather than in the God who provides through His people. \_\_\_\_\_

Placing your trust in anything other than God breaks your fellowship with Him. Here are some examples of things in which you can be tempted to place your trust to accomplish God's work instead of trusting in God.

- Yourself, your abilities, your resources
- Other people, their abilities, their resources
- Programs or methods
- Manipulation or coercion
- Pressure tactics or guilt
- Deceit

God provides people, relationships, resources, methods, and programs to be used by a church. However, a congregation that yields to the temptation to trust in these rather than the Lord displeases Him. Your church may be tempted to trust in yourselves; your pastor; a well-organized Bible-study program; a denominational agency; a bank; an outreach method; the government; or other organizations, people, or things. When you depend on any of these rather than God to accomplish His work in a church, fellowship with God and with other believers is broken. Sometimes leaders try to use pressure tactics to get members to do God's will. This tactic denies God's power to guide His people. When conflict arises, leaders may depend on a manual on handling church conflict instead of leading people back to trust in God and to love Him alone.

The Holy Spirit manifests Himself through believers and empowers them to accomplish God-sized tasks. God grows His church. The Holy Spirit produces unity. Christ brings forth spiritual fruit. You and your church must depend on God to accomplish His purposes in His ways through you. Completely depend on God.

Yes, God will call you to join Him. Yes, He will ask you to do things through which He will work. Often He will lead you to a program or method to help you organize and function to accomplish what He purposes. He will call you to use your money, resources, skills, and abilities. But in everything you must depend on God's guidance, provision, gifts, and power if you hope to bear lasting fruit. Without Him you can do nothing (see **John 15:5**). His presence creates and maintains fellowship, and He bears lasting spiritual fruit through an obedient and trusting people.

**9** What is the fourth essential of *koinonia*?

1. We must love God with our total beings.
2. We must submit to God's sovereign rule.
3. We must experience God in a real and personal way.
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**10** Name one thing in which you have been tempted to place your trust rather than God. \_\_\_\_\_

John 15:5

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

**SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

I must experience God in a real and personal way.

I must completely trust in God.

**11** Take time to pray. Pray through today's lesson. Ask God to identify ways you have missed experiencing Him by substituting religious practices for personal encounters with Him. Ask Him to reveal any ways you trust in other people or other things rather than in the Lord your Provider. Also pray about ways your church may unknowingly encourage people to substitute religion for personal experiences with God. Pray that your church will always trust in the Lord alone.

**12** Practice quoting or writing your Scripture-memory verses.

**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?

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

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

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**A GOD-GIVEN BURDEN FOR THE WORLD**

When my wife, Marilyn, and I were teenagers, God placed a burden for the world on our hearts. Early in our marriage we heard a missionary issue a call to those who were willing to go wherever God called them. We both went forward and surrendered our lives to go anywhere God sent us. Our denominational mission agency preliminarily approved us to serve in Africa, but then our oldest son, Richard, came down with a mysterious illness. The mission agency encouraged us to delay going to Africa until doctors could determine the nature of Richard's condition. Over the next few months God made it clear He was calling us not to Africa but to Canada. When we arrived in Canada, doctors discovered that Richard no longer had the illness. We served for the next 18 years in mission work in Canada. During that time God taught me much about walking with Him by faith, and I was eventually asked to write about what I had learned in the course *Experiencing God*.

Over the years I have learned that although God does not call everyone to be an author or a preacher, He expects all of His children to have the world on their hearts. Can God impact the world through one life or one church? Certainly. He is looking for those people and churches today.





# KINGDOM PEOPLE

## SESSION 11

### DVD Message Notes

1. God's strategy for taking God's good news to the ends of the earth was through these disciples.
2. If God has somebody with faith the size of a mustard seed, there is no limit to what God can do.
3. There is no small involvement of God.
4. As go God's people, so goes the redemption of the rest of the world.
5. We have such a focus on evangelism that we have missed discipleship.
6. "As go My people, so goes My glory in the world."
7. Is my life bringing honor to Christ?

### Your Notes

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### Unit Review

Using the hints below, write four essentials of *koinonia*. Then check your answers on page 240.

1. Love: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Submit: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Experience: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Trust: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Respond to the following.

1. How is your relationship with God reflected in your relationship with your "brother" (activity 6, p. 231)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What do you need to do to experience *koinonia* more completely in your church? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What do you sense God wants your church to do to experience *koinonia* more completely in the Kingdom? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Check your answers, using the pages cited in parentheses.

### Scriptures Referenced

Matthew 4:17  
John 17:4  
John 17:8  
John 17:18  
John 17:4  
John 17:9-10  
John 17:10  
John 17:15-18  
John 20:21  
Mark 16:15  
Acts 1:8

### Testimony

Kyle Hebert

### Sharing Time

- Last three questions in the review at left
- One of the most meaningful statements or Scriptures from this unit's lessons and your prayer response to God. Choose one from pages 229, 233, 239, 242, and 246.

### For Makeup or Review

Audio and video downloads are available at [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com).

EXPERIENCING GOD

UNIT

# 12

VERSE TO MEMORIZE

51

# Experiencing God in Your Daily Life

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## A CHURCH MEMBER WITHOUT A RELATIONSHIP

I was preaching in a church one Sunday about the way Christ's presence dramatically affects daily living. At the close of the service, a man came forward weeping. The pastor had him share with the congregation the commitment he had just made. The man confessed that a decade earlier his wife had urged him to come with her to church. When he attended, he liked the people, enjoyed worship, and decided to join the church. Later, he heard that the church needed teachers in the Children's Sunday School Department, so he volunteered. Over the years he served in numerous capacities in the church, including being a deacon and a Sunday School teacher. Yet as I preached that morning, the Holy Spirit awakened him to the fact that he did not have a personal relationship with Jesus. This good man had been practicing religion without a genuine, life-changing relationship with Christ.

As I spoke of how the Holy Spirit walks with us to guide us each day, the man realized he was not hearing the Holy Spirit speak to him. As I talked of God's love for us, he saw that he served God but did not have a love relationship with Him. To his and the church's surprise, this man suddenly recognized that for all his service and attendance at church, he did not have an experiential relationship with God.

This man is not alone. One comment I hear from people who study *Experiencing God* is "I thought I knew what it meant to be a Christian and to walk with God. But after taking this course, I realize I was a religious person, but I did not really know what it meant to enjoy a personal relationship with Him."

This is the heart of this course: to move you from merely being religious to having a vibrant, real, growing relationship with God. In this unit we will address what it means to walk daily with God in a personal relationship with Him.

DAY  
I

RETURN TO GOD,  
AND HE WILL  
FORGIVE YOU  
AND REESTABLISH  
YOUR FELLOWSHIP  
WITH HIM.

Deuteronomy 28:25

"The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven."

Deuteronomy 30:17

"If your heart turns away so that you do not hear ..." (NKJV).

Amos 8:11-12

"The days are coming ... when I will send a famine through the land— not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD."

John 15:4-5

"No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ... If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit."

# Returning to God

Christians can encounter times when they lose their intimacy with God. Even the most zealous Christian can find that his love for God has cooled if he is not careful. The drift away from the Lord can be so subtle that you fail to recognize the loss until it is fairly severe. The Scriptures describe some ways you can know whether you are in a right relationship with the Lord or if you have departed.

**1** Listed below are some evidences that you have departed from the intimacy of your fellowship with God. Read the Scriptures in the left margin and John 15:10-11 in the margin on the next page. Write the Scripture reference beside the corresponding evidence listed below. Some may have more than one reference.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. You no longer hear from God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. You lose your joy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. You do not produce spiritual fruit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. You no longer have victory in your life.

**2** Using these evidences of lost intimacy with the Lord, what can you conclude about your closeness to the Lord today?

- a. I may have begun to drift away.
- b. Thank the Lord, our intimacy is growing deeper.
- c. I'm farther away than I thought.
- d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#1 answers: a—Deuteronomy 30:17 and Amos 8:11-12; b—John 15:10-11; c—John 15:4-5; d—Deuteronomy 28:25

How does this loss of intimacy happen? Three parables of Jesus in Luke 15 illustrate how. In one parable a sheep is lost (vv. 3-7). Sheep typically get lost from the shepherd when they turn aside to distractions. In the second parable a valuable coin is lost (vv. 8-10). Generally, valuables are lost through carelessness. No one means to lose something precious. But by not taking precautions, we can misplace even the most valuable possessions. In the third parable a son is lost (vv. 11-32). In this story the prodigal son deliberately chose to leave to indulge in a wasteful lifestyle that dishonored his father.

**3** Match the way the loss occurred on the right with the parable on the left. Write a letter beside each number.

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| ___ 1. Lost sheep | a. Turning aside to distractions        |
| ___ 2. Lost coin  | b. Intentional choice                   |
| ___ 3. Lost son   | c. Carelessness, not taking precautions |

In similar ways, you can lose your intimate fellowship with God. Like a sheep (a), you can focus on the world and the things of the world, on pleasures and activities, or on other people and relationships. You lose your focus on the Lord, and before long you realize you have drifted far away. Like the carelessness that lost a valuable coin (c), you may fail to guard your heart and mind. When temptations come, your strength

to resist is not strong. Then sin robs you of your intimacy by breaking fellowship with your Lord. Or like the prodigal son (b), you may intentionally resist the Father's will through disobedience and the pursuit of sinful behaviors and activities.

Whenever you depart from God to any degree, He disciplines you in increasing measure until you return to Him. God loves you as His child and, as your Heavenly Father, will correct you until you turn from your rebellion (see Heb. 12:5-11). He will continue to bring discipline until it reaches a moment of crisis at which you must make a serious choice. You cry out to God in your distress.

Scripture promises that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). You confess your sin when you agree with God about the awful nature of your wrong. Confession and repentance go together. When you repent of sin, you turn away from the sin and return to God. When your fellowship with God is broken because of sin, agree with Him about your condition and turn from it. Return to God, and He will forgive you and reestablish your fellowship with Him. This responding to God's discipline that results in restoration of life and vitality with the Lord is called revival. Another important Scripture that describes revival is 2 Chronicles 7:13-14.

**4 Read 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 in the margin.**

a. When God brings judgment on His people, what four things should they do?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

b. What three things does God promise to do when His people return to Him? Underline them in the text.

God's remedy for restored fellowship with Him involves humility, prayer, seeking His face (seeking the experience of His presence), and repentance (turning from sin). He promises to hear, forgive sin, and heal the land. When we return to God (and not merely to religious activity), He returns to us in a fresh, close relationship and begins once again to fulfill His purposes for us (see **Zech. 1:3; 2 Chron. 15:2**). Revival means the life of God returns to our soul. This can happen to an individual, a church, a denomination, or a nation.<sup>1</sup>

**5 If you find that your heart is not as enthusiastic and devoted to God as it once was, take a moment now and pray. Confess your sin and return to Him now so you can begin to experience His presence returning to your life. If you have not departed from God, pray about your commitment to remain steadfast and true to Him.**

Confessing and returning to the Lord are good, but prevention is even better. Scripture gives much helpful counsel for keeping your heart from departing from the Lord.

**6 As you read the following counsel, underline a key word or phrase in each that will help you properly focus on your intimacy with God.**

1. Proverbs 4:23 cautions, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (NKJV). Guard your heart. Our hearts are desperately wicked and, if left unchecked and unguarded, will be quickly drawn away from God (see **Jer. 17:9**). Be careful what you allow into your mind and your heart!

**John 15:10-11**

"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love. ... I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

**2 Chronicles 7:13-14**

"When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

**Zechariah 1:3**

"Return to me," declares the LORD Almighty, "and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty."

**2 Chronicles 15:2**

"The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you."

**Jeremiah 17:9**

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure."

**SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

Return to God, and He will forgive you and reestablish your fellowship with Him.

Revival means the life of God returns to our soul.

Confessing and returning to the Lord are good, but prevention is even better.

2. Proverbs 11:14 advises, "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (NKJV). Surround yourself with godly counselors who will encourage you and warn you if they see your heart beginning to shift.
3. Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). Make every effort to love God with all your being. Loving God is a choice you make. Keep your heart, mind and soul in a constant posture of love for God.
4. Jesus also said, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matt. 7:24). Adopt a lifestyle of obedience. Make it your habit to immediately obey anything God says. Obedience brings you into fresh experiences of God working in and through you. Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23).

You may have identified other words, but here are my summaries: (1) *guard your heart*, (2) *godly counselors*, (3) *love God*, and (4) *obey or 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?

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

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

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**DAY  
2**

**IF GOD HAS GIVEN YOU A LIFE PARTNER, YOU WILL WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN THE GREAT WORK GOD INTENDS TO DO IN HIS OR HER LIFE.**

# Experiencing God as Couples

Today's lesson for couples and tomorrow's lesson for parents may not be applicable to your circumstances. You may want to study them anyway. But if you prefer, use these two days for review and prayer.

People often ask me, "Henry, how do you explain how God has used your life to accomplish so much for His kingdom?" My response is always twofold. First, I am an extremely ordinary person. I have not done anything. I think God wanted to demonstrate what His incredible power could do in the lives of ordinary people, and He chose to work in my life. I have sought with all my heart to surrender my life to God, and the consequences of that commitment have amazed me. But the second thing I quickly add is this: "When God intended to use an ordinary life like mine for

His purposes, He chose to match my life with a life partner perfectly suited to me and God's direction for my life."

By nature I am a shy, introverted Canadian. My wife, Marilyn, is an extrovert who was born and reared in Oklahoma. We could not be more opposite if we tried. Yet God had an eternal purpose for both of us from the beginning of time. Both of our parents raised us to be active in our local churches. Our fathers were deacons. Both of our parents helped start new churches. Having grown up in such homes, we both surrendered our lives to do whatever our Lord commanded us to do and to go wherever He told us to go. Early in our lives we grew to love the local church and missions.

God's plans for me included learning to walk by faith through some extremely challenging times as a mission pastor in Canada and eventually traveling millions of miles around the world teaching others what God had instructed me. For me to fulfill God's will for my life, I would require a life partner with a unique calling of her own. Now God just had to get the two of us together! God did that by having me meet Marilyn at my roommate's wedding, where I was the best man, and she was the maid of honor. We were married a year later. What a joy to experience God's will together for these past 47 years!

- 1** List below some ways you are like your spouse and some ways you are different. Consider your personality, your interests, your backgrounds, your values, and so forth.

Similar

Different

As you yield yourselves to the Lord, He can take your similarities and differences and maximize your usefulness as a couple for His kingdom. For several years Marilyn and I led "Experiencing God as Couples" conferences across the country. It was marvelous to invite couples to stand together before God to see what He intended for their marriages. Ultimately, a course with videos was made of this teaching.<sup>2</sup> An unusually high percentage of the couples at these events felt called into Christian ministry. Many marriages were restored. Once couples came to understand God's purpose for their marriages, they discovered a new and exciting dimension to their lives together. Today we will look at ways you can experience God together with your spouse.

## God's Purpose for Marriage

Jesus said this of marriage: "Haven't you read ... that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matt. 19:4-6). Marriage is God's joining together a man and a woman to create a union through which He can accomplish His purposes and be glorified. Marriage is not merely a human contract or agreement. It is a divine creation. God has a special purpose for each couple He unites. He is so committed to the sanctity of marriage that He hates divorce (see Mal. 2:16).



Once couples came to understand God's purpose for their marriages, they discovered a new and exciting dimension to their lives together.

What does it mean to be one flesh? It implies that your life is not your own. You are not two separate individuals trying to work out a coexistence. You are one. When your spouse feels pain, you suffer too. When your spouse experiences spiritual victory, you are victorious as well. When God has a plan for the wife, it means God's activity will affect the husband.

**2 Describe one way you and your spouse have experienced an unusual God-given oneness.**

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At times someone says to me, "I want to go forward with God, but my wife is unwilling. Should I go on without her?" My response is "You are one flesh. You cannot leave your spouse behind." Others have said, "My wife clearly senses that God wants us to be more involved in missions, but I haven't heard God say anything to me." My response: "You are one flesh. If God spoke to your spouse, He has just spoken to you!" Because you are one flesh, you need to adjust your life to a word God speaks to your partner. Pray together and trust the Holy Spirit to bring clarity and assurance about the direction of His calling. Then you can walk together with confidence.

This is why I always strongly advise couples coming to me for premarital counseling to consider carefully where God is leading their potential partner. After they are married, God's directives to one will directly affect the other. I have known people who had a clear sense of God's leading in their lives in one direction, but after they married, they rejected everything God had previously said to them because their spouse was not interested in those things. When I asked Marilyn to marry me, I knew God had been working in her life long before she met me. Marilyn almost died when she was five, and after that she had a strong sense that her life belonged to God. So I asked her, "Marilynn, what has God told you He intends to do through your life? And what promises have you made to God? If I marry you, I vow to spend the rest of my life helping you keep every promise you ever made to God."

**3 If you have not already done so, take time with your spouse and list on separate paper some things you know God has done and said to each of you. What commitments have you made to Him? What do you sense He desires from you that has not yet come to pass? How have you sensed God leading you both to join Him in His work? Check here when you have taken such a time with your spouse. □**

Being one with your spouse is critical to your ability to hear from God. That is why the apostle Paul warned believers not to marry unbelievers (see **2 Cor. 6:14**). Paul said it is like trying to mix light and darkness. They cannot become one spiritually because they are opposite in their fundamental nature. The spiritual intimacy you have with your spouse will affect your walk with God. The apostle Peter said a husband who mistreats his wife will find that his prayers are hindered (see **1 Pet. 3:7**). That is also why it is wise never to allow your anger or a damaged relationship to remain unresolved (see **Eph. 4:26**).

You may be studying this course and realize you are unequally yoked with an unbeliever. If that is the case, share this fact with your group and your church. Invite them to pray with you and walk with you and your spouse until he or she comes to faith in Christ.

**2 Corinthians 6:14**

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

**1 Peter 3:7**

"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

**Ephesians 4:26**

"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry."



## Joining God's Activity in Your Spouse's Life

One of the most exciting things you can do is to look to see where God is working in your spouse's life and join Him! You can do this in several ways:

**1. Regularly pray for and with your spouse.** God knows what your spouse is going through better than you do. He knows her fears and insecurities. God knows what He intends to do through your spouse's life. Praying regularly for your spouse enables you to gain God's perspective on your spouse. Couples can easily frustrate each other. If you look at your spouse solely from a human perspective, you will see his or her limitations, failures, and weaknesses. When you look at your spouse from God's perspective, you will see his or her unlimited potential in the hands of God. As you pray, God can alert you that you need to take a specific action, such as offering a particular word of encouragement or giving a note or a gift. God may show you abilities in your spouse that she does not see in herself. As I prayed for Marilyn, God affirmed to me that she has some wonderful insights into walking with God that can encourage many others. Although I have been the "professional" speaker throughout our marriage, I encouraged my wife to accept invitations that came her way because I sensed she needed to be a steward of what God had done in her life and such opportunities would richly bless others.

**4 How would you characterize your prayer relationship with your spouse up to this point in your marriage? Check one choice or write your own.**

- a. We have learned to pray in agreement and unity—what a blessing!
- b. We have had our own prayer times but have not prayed together regularly.
- c. My spouse hesitates or will not pray with me.
- d. I am hesitant to pray aloud with my spouse.
- e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**5 What, if anything, do you sense the Lord wants you to do differently regarding your prayer relationship with your spouse?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Regularly ask your spouse spiritual questions.** Some Christian couples never speak to each other about God's activity. They may assume God is working, but they never talk about it. Ask each other questions like "What has God been showing you in your quiet times lately? Has God placed a particular burden on your heart as you have prayed? You seemed very intent during the sermon today. What was God saying to you?" I have also found my spouse is the best person for me to share God's activity in my life. As I relate what I have been hearing God say, my wife recognizes things I missed. Together we hear far more from God than we do separately.

**3. Review your spiritual markers as a couple.** As God leads couples in their marriage, they will experience key moments when God clearly, unmistakably speaks. Identify these spiritual markers and periodically review them as a couple. This helps in two ways. First, it prepares you to understand where God is leading you. When I came to my official age of retirement, I, like everyone else my age, had to decide what to do. Should I join a country club and buy a set of golf clubs? As we reviewed what God had done in our lives as a couple, we realized that all of our married life had prepared us for what God wanted to do through us next. We ultimately formed

### Spiritual Questions

1. What has God been showing you in your quiet times lately?
2. Has God placed a particular burden on your heart as you have prayed?
3. You seemed very intent during the sermon today. What was God saying to you?

Blackaby Ministries International so we could respond to God's invitations around the world to continue ministering. When our oldest son, Richard, sensed God leading him to join our ministry, we recognized again that this fit perfectly with the spiritual markers in our lives. We can respond to each new invitation God gives us because we have a clear sense as a couple of the way God has led us to this point in our lives. A second benefit of reviewing your spiritual markers as a couple is that it provides a wonderful opportunity to celebrate God's activity in your lives. Each morning Marilynn and I have coffee together and reflect on God's goodness to us for almost five decades. What joy that brings!

**6 What are two benefits of reviewing your spiritual markers as a couple?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Take time this week to review your spiritual markers as a couple.**

**4. Minister together as a couple.** God led you to your spouse for a reason. He had a purpose in mind. One purpose is to produce godly offspring (see Mal. 2:15). If couples look for God's activity together, they will discover there are ways God wants to work uniquely through them together to accomplish His kingdom purposes. I know couples who regularly go on mission trips together, teach a Sunday School class, teach English to immigrants, intercede for others, host a home Bible study, take international students into their home, and adopt foreign children. They find tremendous rewards in ministering for Christ together as a couple.

One couple had separate ministries for years. The husband served in the church as a deacon; the wife went on mission trips. After several years the wife finally convinced her husband to go with her on a mission trip. The man was overwhelmed by the experience. In tears he confessed to his wife, "Now I understand what you have been talking about all this time!" They had been missing the privilege of serving their Lord together.

**7 What are some ways you and your spouse are presently joining God's activity together?** \_\_\_\_\_

**8 What are some ways you would like to?** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Give together.** Many Christian couples faithfully put their offerings in the offering plate each Sunday but have never discovered the joy of giving together. God is at work in the world around you. He wants you to become involved both personally and financially. Marilynn and I have found great joy in determining together where God wants us to invest the money He has given us. We support not only our local church but also various ministries around the world. This involves far more than writing a check. It includes seeking together how God wants us to invest our finances in His kingdom. Together we are laying up treasures in heaven.

God has called all of us to be on mission with Him. One of the first places we must seek His activity is in the life of the person we are most intimately related to. If God has given you a life partner, you will want to be involved in the great work God intends to do in his or her life.

**SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

Regularly pray for and with your spouse.

Regularly ask your spouse spiritual questions.

Review your spiritual markers as a couple.

Minister together as a couple.

Give together.

**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?

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

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

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## Joining God's Activity in Your Children's Lives

DAY  
3

Marilynn and I were married in 1960 in California. Those were turbulent times! We were in Los Angeles during the Watts riot. I was doing graduate work near Berkeley University during the student protests. The local elementary schools regularly had air-raid drills to teach the schoolchildren what to do in the event of a nuclear attack. Many people discouraged us from bringing children into such a dangerous and unsettled world. But I noticed that throughout Scripture when times were difficult, God's answer was often to send a baby into the world. Isaac, Moses, Samuel, Samson, John the Baptist, and of course Jesus were God's response to difficult times. Ultimately, Marilyn and I had five children, four boys and a girl. All five are serving in full-time Christian ministry, and now our grandchildren are beginning to sense God's call to ministry as well.

When our first child, Richard, was born, I spent all night praying over him after we brought him home from the hospital. I believed that God had given him to us for a particular purpose. I sensed God wanted to use him in Christian ministry when he grew up. I also knew that being raised in a pastor's home, he would feel pressure from some people to simply follow in his father's footsteps. I never told him what I thought God wanted him to do. Instead, I prayed and asked God to show me how to raise Richard so he would have a heart to know and do God's will. There were some difficult times along the way. Richard experienced serious health problems as a child. During his teen years he had to decide if he would go God's way or the world's. When he entered the university, he began to prepare to be a high-school social-studies teacher. Believing that he was running from God's will, I prayed and sought to help Richard enter a walk with God in which he would obey what God told him.

Halfway through his freshman year at the university, I noticed Richard walking down the aisle of the church auditorium during the altar call. In tears he explained to me that he knew God was calling him into Christian ministry and that he had been running from God. He didn't want to be a pastor just because his dad was or because

OUR GREATEST  
SINGLE CONTRI-  
BUTION TO GOD'S  
KINGDOM IS TEACH-  
ING OUR CHILDREN  
TO WATCH TO SEE  
WHERE GOD IS AT  
WORK AROUND  
THEM AND THEN  
JOIN HIM.

everyone expected him to be, but he would resist no longer. For the first time I told my oldest son I had known all his life that God was calling him into ministry. With a startled look, he asked, "Well if you have known for so long, why didn't you tell me?"

"I wanted you to hear it from God" I replied. Today Richard is the president of my ministry! Likewise, God gave us opportunities in each of our children's lives to help walk with God so they would not miss anything God intended to do in their lives. Scripture indicates:

Sons are a heritage from the LORD,  
children a reward from him.  
Like arrows in the hands of a warrior  
are sons born in one's youth.  
Blessed is the man  
whose quiver is full of them.  
They will not be put to shame  
when they contend with their enemies in the gate (Ps. 127:3-5).

Not everyone will be married or have children. For those to whom God entrusts them, children are a special assignment as well as a reward from the Lord. Wise parents understand that God has a special purpose for each child He gives to them, and they should carefully watch to see where God is at work in their lives.

- Isaac  
Genesis 17:19
- Joseph  
Genesis 37:5-11
- Moses  
Exodus 2:1-10;  
3:9-10
- Samson  
Judges 13:1-5
- Samuel  
1 Samuel 1:11;  
3:19-21
- David  
1 Samuel 16:1,  
11-13
- Jeremiah  
Jeremiah 1:4-10
- John the Baptist  
Luke 1:13-17

**1** Notice some of the unique purposes God had for children in the Bible. Choose two or more of the people listed in the margin and read the Scriptures under their names. Write their names below and God's purpose for their lives.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Although it is true that these biblical characters had unique assignments, God has a purpose for each person He creates. The psalmist described this truth about himself.

**2** Read Psalm 139:13-17 below and underline words that describe when God determined a purpose for the "days ordained" for the psalmist.

You created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.  
My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place.  
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,  
your eyes saw my unformed body.  
All the days ordained for me  
were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.  
How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them! (Ps. 139:13-17).

God has a unique purpose for each life. As He did for the psalmist, God determines that purpose before we are born. Just as God intended for Jeremiah to be His prophet before he was born, God has purposes for each of us. The apostle Paul identified one of God's eternal purposes for every person: "Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified" (Rom. 8:29-30).

**3** What is one thing God wants for every person? \_\_\_\_\_

God's eternal purpose for each of your children is that they be conformed to the image of Christ. If they are willing and responsive, God will draw each of your children into a unique love relationship with Him. He will speak to your children and will use the circumstances in their lives to fashion them into Christlikeness. There are several ways you can join in God's activity in your children's lives:

**1. Pray with and for your children.** Prayer is not primarily for us to tell God what we want Him to do for our children. It is for God to adjust our lives so we can be God's instrument in their lives. We don't always know what is best for our kids. We aren't aware of all they experience at school. We don't see all the temptations, criticisms, threats, or pressures they undergo. God does not make our children immune to difficulty, but He alerts parents so they can be God's spokesperson when their children need to respond to the circumstances in their lives. God also knows what the potential of each child is when placed in His hand. As much as we love our children, we can't begin to imagine all God has in His heart for them (see **1 Cor. 2:9**). That is why we rob our children if we merely seek to have them meet our expectations. We need to be on God's agenda for our kids' lives so they can experience the abundant life God intends for them (see **John 10:10**).

**4** List your children's names on the following lines and take a few minutes to pray for each one. Beside each one write the primary prayer you are praying for him or her. Use the margin if you need more space.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Talk with your children about God's activity.** Parents talk to their children about numerous things, but no topic is as important as discussing God's activity in their lives. Deuteronomy 6:6-9, 20-25 instructs parents to regularly talk with their children about God's activity. Parents should rehearse with their children God's acts throughout their family history. Parents ought to recount to their children how they met Christ personally, how God led them to be married, how God guided them in their careers, how God led them to their church, and how God has walked with them through the years. Parents should point out to their children God's ongoing activity in their lives so they learn to recognize God's activity for themselves.

**5** Write on the following lines two or more spiritual markers or ways God has worked in your life (or in your lives as parents) that you could share with your children. Watch for a time this week when you could tell them about God's activity in your life.



God's eternal purpose for each of your children is that they be conformed to the image of Christ.


\_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 2:9

"No eye has seen,  
no ear has heard,  
no mind has conceived  
what God has prepared  
for those who love him."

John 10:10

"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (NKJV).



I wanted my  
kids to learn to  
put their trust  
in God, not in  
their parents.

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As Marilyn and I raised our children, we constantly pointed out God's activity to them. When God provided for a financial need we faced, we were careful to give God the praise before our children. When God answered our prayers, we would help them see the connection between what we prayed and what happened next. As a result, walking with God daily became a natural part of our children's lives.

I also learned to ask my children God-centered questions. Instead of "What would you like to be when you grow up?" I would ask, "What do you sense that God wants you to do?" When my children came to me with a question, they learned to expect me to point them to God: "What do you think God wants you to do?" was my usual reply. If I had merely given my children my opinion every time they came to me for help, they would have learned to come to me for answers instead of to God. I wanted my kids to learn to put their trust in God, not in their parents. As my children grew older, I regularly asked them, "What has God taught you lately?" Those times always provided many opportunities to discuss important issues with them.

**6** Review the previous paragraph and underline questions you might ask your children to help them focus on God and His activity.

**3. Minister with your children.** One of the greatest joys we had as parents was ministering alongside our children. We often invited people to our home, and through those times our children learned to care for others. When I was a pastor, I would often take one of our children with me when I spoke at one of our mission churches. At times I would take one of them to visit a widow or someone in the hospital. Our kids served in Vacation Bible School and youth camps.

I know families who go on mission trips together every year. Some families openly discuss their family budgets and decide as a family what causes beyond the support of their local church they will contribute to that year. Many of history's greatest missionaries and ministers were taught as children to be on mission with God.

**7** From the following list identify a ministry activity (or write your own) in which you can and will participate with one or more of your children. Better yet, let your children help you decide on a project.

- Visit someone in a nursing home or a hospital or a shut-in at home
  - Assist a widow or a senior adult with yard work or home repairs
  - Serve a meal in a local rescue mission or homeless shelter
  - Participate in a mission trip or local mission project
  - Train for and participate in disaster relief
  - Prayerwalk your neighborhood or city and pray for people you encounter
  - Lead or participate in a worship service in a park, recreational area, campground, or assisted-living facility
  - Prepare and deliver a meal to a grieving family or someone who has recently returned from the hospital
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
-

As my kids have grown older, I have had the privilege of speaking and writing with all five of them. Last year I had a new first. I spoke at a men's conference along with my oldest son, Richard, and his oldest son, Mike—three generations of Blackabys all ministering for their Lord together! It is important to model for our children how to join God's activity. When we heard of a new opportunity for ministry God had given, we shared it with our children and asked them what they thought God wanted us to do in response. As our children grew older, they recognized God at work around our family and suggested ways they thought our family should become involved. As Marilyn and I have watched our children mature, we have realized our greatest single contribution to God's kingdom is teaching our children to watch to see where God is at work around them and then join Him.

**SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

- Pray with and for your children.
- Talk with your children about God's activity.
- Minister with your children.

**8 Describe a time when your family ministered together. If necessary, complete one of the suggestions in activity 7 and record it below.**

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**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?

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

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

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# Experiencing God in the Marketplace

## DAY 4

For too long Christians have assumed God's activity generally occurs at a church building on Sunday. In reality, throughout Scripture God was continually at work in the marketplace. When God launched His great work to bring salvation to all humanity, He called Abraham, one of the most successful businessmen of his day (see Gen. 24:35). Abraham's son Isaac also prospered in the marketplace (see Gen. 26:12-14). Likewise, Isaac's son Jacob became wealthy through his business acumen (see Gen. 30:43). Joseph served God not as a preacher or a missionary but as a grain administrator (see Gen. 41:37-57). Moses had a profound encounter with God while working as a shepherd (see Ex. 3:1-6). Elisha was invited to join God's activity while plowing a field (see 1 Kings 19:19-21). Amos declared that he was not a prophet or the son of a prophet

**WHY WAS SO MUCH OF GOD'S ACTIVITY ACCOMPLISHED IN THE MARKETPLACE? BECAUSE THAT IS WHERE PEOPLE LIVED THROUGHOUT THE WEEK.**



Church on  
Sunday provides  
an opportunity  
for the saints to  
be equipped for  
their mission  
work throughout  
the week at  
their job sites.

\_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 4:11-12

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."

#2 answers: 1--a, 2--b, 3--a

but a sheep breeder and a tender of sycamore trees (see Amos 7:14). Daniel served God as a government official.

Jesus was trained as a carpenter. When He began calling the 12 men who would walk with Him as His disciples, He called fishermen (see Mark 1:16-20), a tax collector (see Mark 2:14), and other career people. I believe one reason Jesus called businesspeople is that they are not intimidated by the world. They live and thrive in the marketplace. Once these businesspeople had experienced life-transforming encounters with Jesus, they were prepared to turn their world upside down! Joseph of Arimathea was a businessman who, though fearing the religious leaders, had the courage to approach the Roman leader Pilate for Jesus' body (see Mark 15:42-43; John 19:38). Lydia, a businessperson, was a key member of the church in Philippi (see Acts 16:14-15). Two of the apostle Paul's supporters in his church-planting ministry were Aquila and Priscilla, also businesspeople (see Acts 18:1-2).

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

- a. In the Bible God only used priests and other religious leaders to do His work.
- b. Many of the best-known Bible characters were ordinary businesspeople who were available to God for His work.
- c. The only significant religious activity in our nation takes place inside church buildings on Sundays.

#1 answers: true--b; false--a and c

Why was so much of God's activity accomplished in the marketplace? Because that is where people lived throughout the week. The same is true for believers today. Church on Sunday provides an opportunity for the saints to be equipped for their mission work throughout the week at their job sites.

**2** Read Ephesians 4:11-12 in the margin and match the persons on the left with the task assigned to them in the body of Christ.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Apostles and prophets          | a. Equip others for works of service                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. God's people (members)         | b. Perform works of service to build up the body of Christ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Evangelists, pastors, teachers |  |

One of the greatest movements of God I am seeing today is His work in the marketplace. I work with a group of Christian CEOs of some of America's largest companies. These men and women have realized God has placed them in their positions for a purpose. These business leaders impact the lives of tens of thousands of employees. They control huge advertising budgets. They have access to world leaders that missionaries do not. One businessman's company produced power plants. He provided one free to a village in Africa on the condition that he could tell the villagers why he was helping them. By the time the power was turned on in that village, the chief and almost all the people had become believers. Another CEO gives Bibles to world leaders as gifts when he visits their country on business.

Many people are discovering that God has placed them in their companies so they can be witnesses to their colleagues as well as to customers. I could tell you numerous stories of people who led their colleagues to faith in Christ. I know business leaders who lead Bible studies for their staffs during the lunch hour. Some physicians pray with and share Christ with patients. Many of the people who meet Christ in a workplace would never have dreamed of visiting a church on Sunday, so Christ sends





I believe churches ought to have commissioning services for those who go into the marketplace every Monday morning in the same way we pray over missionaries who travel to other countries to share the gospel.

His servants to job sites where they encounter people who need to hear about Him. I believe churches ought to have commissioning services for those who go into the marketplace every Monday morning in the same way we pray over missionaries who travel to other countries to share the gospel.

**3** If your church had commissioning services of marketplace missionaries (members who are on mission with God in their workplaces) what are some of the groups you might commission? Check groups that are most numerous in your church.

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> schoolteachers  | <input type="checkbox"/> salespersons      | <input type="checkbox"/> medical professionals     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> factory workers | <input type="checkbox"/> pilots            | <input type="checkbox"/> government workers        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> accountants     | <input type="checkbox"/> lawyers           | <input type="checkbox"/> government leaders        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> artists         | <input type="checkbox"/> flight attendants | <input type="checkbox"/> business managers, CEOs   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> media personnel | <input type="checkbox"/> firefighters      | <input type="checkbox"/> law-enforcement personnel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bankers         | <input type="checkbox"/> cab drivers       | <input type="checkbox"/> IT personnel              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> scientists      | <input type="checkbox"/> engineers         | <input type="checkbox"/> mechanics                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> farmers         | <input type="checkbox"/> judges            | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainers              |

Others: \_\_\_\_\_

God is at work among businesspeople around the world. Many of their hearts are restless as they realize that reaching the top of the corporate ladder or achieving their financial goals does not bring the peace and contentment they have sought.

One businessman was at work when the Holy Spirit drew his attention to a particular colleague. Although the Christian did not know the other man well, he felt impressed to ask to have lunch with him. Over lunch the man confessed that just that morning he had left his wife. Before that day was over, the Christian had led his troubled coworker to place his trust in Christ and to be restored to his wife.

As a salesman made the rounds in his community, the Lord drew his attention to a house for sale. A few weeks later he noticed a moving van in the driveway of that house. Two weeks later he spied a wheelchair ramp being installed to the front door. Every time this Christian drove by that home, he felt the Spirit nudging him to find out who lived there. Finally one day as he drove by, he strongly felt that he should stop and visit the new home, so he approached the house and rang the doorbell. The house was not far from his church, so he decided to invite the stranger to his church. He was met by a disabled man with a bitter, lonely story. He was deeply grateful someone had cared enough to come by. The man said he had noticed the church and wondered whether its people were friendly. Now he knew.

Other businesspeople have discovered that God has granted them prosperity so they can invest their wealth in the kingdom of God. Suddenly, rather than being absorbed in their work, these men and women have found that a new world of God's activity in His kingdom has opened to them. Some have begun using their resources to build church buildings around the world. Others have invested in Bible colleges and seminaries that are training people for Christian ministry. Others have supported orphanages and ministries to those suffering from hunger and disease. Jesus commanded those who would be His followers, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33). This command is not just for people in full-time Christian ministry. Jesus expects every disciple to make his or her first priority to be involved in the building of God's kingdom and then to see how God provides for all their other needs.

**SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

One of the greatest movements of God I am seeing today is His work in the marketplace.

I believe churches ought to have commissioning services for those who go into the marketplace every Monday morning

“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.”

**4 Pray, asking the Lord to open your eyes and touch your mind and heart with ways you can serve Him on mission in your workplace or through the platform and resources your work provides. Consider (but don't be limited to) some of the following.**

- Minister to needy people in the name of Christ
- Seek justice and alleviate human suffering
- Share the good news about Christ with coworkers, vendors, and/or customers
- Testify to Christ and His goodness in public
- Invest financial resources in Kingdom work and share with those in need
- Demonstrate holiness and love to those who need an example of Christlikeness
- Pray for God's work in the lives of others
- Provide a listening ear and wise counsel to people facing problems
- Influence leaders and governments for Kingdom causes
- Take a stand for truth, righteousness, justice, honesty, and purity
- Use your expertise to serve churches, ministries, or mission enterprises
- Lead a Bible study or a discipleship class at lunch or before or after work

Others: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**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 5**

# Continuing to Experience God

**THIS COURSE SHOULD BE ONLY THE STARTING POINT FOR A WHOLE NEW ADVENTURE IN FOLLOWING CHRIST DAILY.**

Two persons were walking together on their way to Emmaus, a town roughly seven miles from Jerusalem (see Luke 24:13-35). They were discouraged. They had chosen to follow Jesus, and they had been excited about all He had done and taught. Then Jesus had been cruelly taken from them. Now they were bewildered, not knowing what to do next. Suddenly a stranger joined them and asked what they were talking about. They explained what had happened and that they could no longer follow Jesus as they had intended. Over the next few miles the stranger explained to them that the events surrounding Jesus' death were not the end but the beginning of an exciting new opportunity to walk daily with the Son of God. Rather than being taken from them, Jesus was now closer to them than they could have imagined!



There are no  
substitutes for  
obedience!

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**SUMMARY  
STATEMENTS**

1. Stay immersed in God's Word.
2. Remain intimately involved with a church family that will love and nurture you.
3. Pray regularly.
4. Strive to keep your vows to God.
5. Take time to process what God has said to you or done in your life through this course.

you commune with Him, you will keep your focus on Him and be reminded that you are to follow Him daily.

**3** Pause now to pray. Ask the Lord to cultivate in you an intimate, consistent communion with Him.

**4. Strive to keep your vows to God.** Ecclesiastes warns, "When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it" (Eccl. 5:4-5). Throughout this course God has spoken to you. You may have made several commitments to Him in response.

**4** Review your spiritual journal or the daily-review activities in this book. On separate paper make a list of commitments you have made to God. Keep that list in your Bible where you can review it regularly.

Remember that God takes our promises to Him extremely seriously. God is not mocked. Be diligent to follow through with everything you promised God you would do. Remember, a good intention is not the same as obedience. There are no substitutes for obedience!

**5. Take time to process what God has said to you or done in your life through this course.**

God may have spoken to you many times over the past weeks. If you do not let this material soak into your heart and life, however, it may be like the seed that fell on stony ground and was soon taken away (see Matt. 13:20-21). Processing God's Word means allowing God to explain and apply all He has said to you. It is not enough to agree with what God said in your mind. You must also apply God's Word in your heart and life.

If, for instance, God spoke to you about forgiveness, it is not enough to believe in forgiveness. You must ask God to examine your heart and relationships to see if you have not truly forgiven someone. If God reveals someone to you, ask Him to show you what action you must take to be reconciled. Don't treat God's truth as a doctrine to be believed but as a reality that must be lived and experienced. If there are special truths God revealed to you during this study, don't let them be lost when you put this book on your bookshelf and go on to your next study. Identify all the truths God revealed to you and meditate on them until you are assured that you understand and experience everything God intended when He revealed them to you.

**5** As time allows before your final small-group session, review the most meaningful statements or Scriptures you listed at the end of each day in this study. Of all those statements or Scriptures, which one has had the most profound impact on your thinking, your actions, or your life?

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**6** As you come to the end of this course, take a moment to write on separate paper a prayer of commitment to the Lord. Tell Him how you intend, with His help, to walk with Him in the coming days. Sign and date your prayer so you can return to it in years to come.

I am so glad you chose to take this course and to study it right until the end. I trust that God will honor your faithfulness and will bring you into an ever-deepening walk with Him as you continue to experience God.

Many people who study *Experiencing God* feel a letdown when they finish the course and stop meeting regularly with their small group. Many tell us they hated coming to the end of the course because they feared their Christian life might go back to the way it was before. Let me encourage you by saying that this does not need to be the case. Your encounter with Christ through this material has not been an end but a beginning. I pray God has shown you how you can experience a love relationship with Him that is real and fresh every day. I trust that you have been challenged to watch to see where God is at work and then to join Him. I hope you have made the adjustments in your life that God has asked for and are now obeying everything He has told you to do. But all of this is only the beginning! God wants you to know and experience more of Him. He wants you to understand new truths that will set you free (see John 8:32). There is far more of God's nature, His purposes, and His ways that He wants to reveal to you. This course should be only the starting point for a whole new adventure in following Christ daily. As you prepare to move to the next stage in your walk with God, consider adopting a few practices that will help you to continue going deeper with your Lord.

**1. Stay immersed in God's Word.** Remember God's instruction to Joshua: "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Josh. 1:8). Make it your habit to read God's Word daily. God has many more truths to reveal to you if you will give Him the opportunity.

**1** Take some time to review your Scripture-memory verses. Which one has been the most meaningful to you and why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Remain intimately involved with a church family that will love and nurture you.** Hebrews urges us: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). God made us interdependent on one another. You cannot experience all God has for you apart from the rest of the body of Christ.

**2** What do you sense you should do next to stay connected in the body of Christ? Consider the following options or write your own.

- a. Lead a new group study of *Experiencing God* for others
- b. Participate in a group study of another discipleship course. What will you study next? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Get involved on a ministry team: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Accept a place of service as \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Pray regularly.** Scripture indicates that Daniel made it a habit to pray three times daily (see **Dan. 6:10**). As a result, he had a powerful prayer life in which God spoke to him and answered him the moment he began praying (see **Dan. 9:23**). One of the best ways to prevent your heart from growing cold is to regularly talk with God. As

To learn about other discipleship courses that are available, go to [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com) or visit the LifeWay Christian Store serving you.

**Daniel 6:10**

"Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God."

**Daniel 9:23**

"As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed."



# NAMES, TITLES, AND DESCRIPTIONS OF GOD

*The following are representative names, titles, and descriptions of God found in the New International Version of the Bible. At least one Bible reference is provided for each name.*

## FATHER

A faithful God (Deut. 32:4)  
A forgiving God (Neh. 9:17)  
A fortress of salvation (Ps. 28:8)  
A glorious crown (Isa. 28:5)  
A jealous and avenging God (Nah. 1:2)  
A Master in heaven (Col. 4:1)  
A refuge for his people (Joel 3:16)  
A refuge for the oppressed (Ps. 9:9)  
A refuge for the poor (Isa. 25:4)  
A sanctuary (Isa. 8:14)  
A shade from the heat (Isa. 25:4)  
A shelter from the storm (Isa. 25:4)  
A source of strength (Isa. 28:6)  
A stronghold in times of trouble (Ps. 9:9)  
An ever-present help in trouble (Ps. 46:1)  
Architect and builder (Heb. 11:10)  
Builder of everything (Heb. 3:4)  
Commander of the army of the LORD (Josh. 5:14)  
Creator of heaven and earth (Gen. 14:19)  
Defender of widows (Ps. 68:5)  
Eternal King (Jer. 10:10)  
Father (Isa. 9:6; 63:16; Matt. 5:16)  
Father of compassion (2 Cor. 1:3)  
Father of our spirits (Heb. 12:9)  
Father of the heavenly lights (Jas. 1:17)  
Father to the fatherless (Ps. 68:5)  
God (Gen. 1:2)  
God Almighty (*El Shaddai*; Gen. 17:1)  
God and Father of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:3)  
God Most High (Gen. 14:18-22)  
God my Maker (Job 35:10)  
God my Rock (Ps. 42:9)  
God my Savior (Ps. 18:46; 27:9)  
God my stronghold (Ps. 144:2; 2 Sam. 22:3)  
God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Ex. 3:16)  
God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3)  
God of all mankind (Jer. 32:27)  
God of glory (Ps. 29:3)  
God of gods (Deut. 10:17; Ps. 136:2)  
God of grace (1 Pet. 5:10)  
God of peace (1 Thess. 5:23)  
God of retribution (Jer. 51:56)  
God of the living (Matt. 22:32)  
God of the spirits (Num. 16:22)  
God of truth (Ps. 31:5)  
God our Father (Col. 1:2)  
God our strength (Ps. 18:2)  
God over all the kingdoms (Dan. 4:17)  
God the Father (Col. 3:17)  
God who avenges me (Ps. 18:47; 94:1)  
God who relents from sending calamity (Joel 2:13)  
Great and awesome God (Deut. 7:21)

Great and powerful God (Jer. 32:18)  
Great, mighty, awesome God (Deut. 10:17)  
He who blots out your transgressions (Isa. 43:25)  
He who comforts you (Isa. 66:13)  
He who forms the hearts of all (Ps. 33:15)  
He who raised Christ from the dead (Rom. 8:11)  
He who reveals His thoughts to man (Amos 4:13)  
Helper of the fatherless (Ps. 10:14)  
Him who is able to do more than all we ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20)  
Him who is able to keep you from falling (Jude 24)  
Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead (2 Tim. 4:1)  
Holy Father (John 17:11)  
Holy One (Rev. 16:5)  
Holy One among you (Hos. 11:9)  
I AM WHO I AM (Ex. 3:14)  
Jealous (Ex. 20:5)  
Judge of all the earth (Gen. 18:25)  
King of glory (Ps. 24:7-10)  
King of heaven (Dan. 4:37)  
Living and true God (1 Thess. 1:9)  
Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:18)  
Lord God Almighty (Rev. 4:8; 16:7; 21:22)  
LORD is Peace (Judg. 6:24)  
LORD Most High (Ps. 7:17)  
LORD is my Banner (Ex. 17:15)  
LORD my Rock (Ps. 28:1)  
LORD of all the earth (Mic. 4:13; Zech. 4:14)  
Lord of kings (Dan. 2:47)  
LORD our God (Deut. 1:6; 10)  
LORD our Maker (Ps. 95:6)  
LORD who heals you (Ex. 15:26)  
LORD who is there (of Jerusalem; Ezek. 48:35)  
Lord who makes you holy (Heb. 2:11)  
LORD who strikes the blow (Ezek. 7:9)  
LORD will provide (Gen. 22:14)  
Love (1 John 4:8)  
Maker of all things (Eccl. 11:5; Jer. 10:16)  
Most High (Gen. 14:18-22)  
My advocate (Job 16:19)  
My Comforter in sorrow (Jer. 8:18)  
My confidence (Ps. 71:5)  
My helper (Ps. 118:7; Heb. 13:6)  
My hiding place (Ps. 32:7)  
My hope (Ps. 25:5,21)  
My light (Ps. 27:1)  
My mighty rock (Ps. 62:7)  
My refuge in times of trouble (Ps. 59:16)  
My song (Ex. 15:2)  
My strong deliverer (Ps. 140:7)  
My support (2 Sam. 22:19)  
One to be feared (1 Chron. 16:25)  
Only wise God (Rom. 16:27)  
Our dwelling place (Ps. 90:1)  
Our help and our shield (Ps. 33:20)  
Our judge (1 Sam. 24:15)  
Our lawgiver (Isa. 33:22)

Our leader (2 Chron. 13:12)  
Our Mighty One (Isa. 33:21)  
Our Redeemer (Isa. 47:4; 63:16)  
Our refuge and strength (Ps. 46:1)  
Righteous Father (John 17:25)  
Rock of our salvation (Ps. 95:1)  
Shepherd (Ps. 23:1)  
Sovereign Lord (Acts 4:24)  
The Almighty (Gen. 49:25; Ruth 1:20)  
The compassionate and gracious God (Ex. 34:6)  
The Eternal God (Gen. 21:33)  
The consuming fire (Isa. 33:14)  
The everlasting God (Isa. 40:28)  
The exalted God (Mic. 6:6)  
The faithful God (Deut. 7:9)  
The gardener (husbandman; John 15:1)  
The glorious Father (Eph. 1:17)  
The glory of Israel (Mic. 1:15)  
The God who saves me (Ps. 88:1)  
The God who sees me (Gen. 16:13)  
The great King above all gods (Ps. 95:3)  
The just and mighty One (Job 34:17)  
The living Father (John 6:57)  
The Majestic Glory (2 Pet. 1:17)  
The Majesty in heaven (Heb. 1:3)  
The one who sustains me (Ps. 54:4)  
The only God (Jude 1:25)  
The potter (Jer. 18:6)  
The rock in whom I take refuge (Ps. 18:2)  
The spring of living water (Jer. 2:13)  
The strength of my heart (Ps. 73:26)  
The true God (1 Thess. 1:9)  
You who judge righteously and test the heart and mind (Jer. 11:20)  
You who love the people (Deut. 33:3)  
Your glory (Ps. 57:11)  
Your praise (Isa. 38:18; Ps. 71:8; 138:1)  
Your very great reward (Gen. 15:1)

## SON (JESUS)

A Nazarene (Matt. 2:23; Mark 14:67)  
All (Col. 3:11)  
Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8)  
Anointed One (Acts 4:26; Ps. 2:2)  
Apostle and high priest (Heb. 3:1)  
Author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2)  
Author of life (Acts. 3:15)  
Author of their salvation (Heb. 2:10)  
Branch of the LORD (Isa. 4:2)  
Bread of God (John 6:33)  
Bread of life (John 6:48)  
Bridegroom (Luke 5:34-35)  
Chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20)  
Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4)  
Chosen and precious cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:6)  
Christ Jesus my Lord (Phil. 3:8)  
Christ Jesus our hope (1 Tim. 1:1)  
Christ of God (Luke 9:20)

Consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25)  
 Crown of splendor (Isa. 62:3)  
 Eternal life (1 John 5:20)  
 Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11)  
 Faithful and true witness (Rev. 3:14)  
 First to rise from the dead (Acts 26:23)  
 Firstborn from among the dead (Col. 1:18)  
 Firstborn over all creation (Col. 1:15)  
 Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep  
 (1 Cor. 15:20)  
 Fragrant offering and sacrifice to God  
 (Eph. 5:2)  
 Friend of tax collectors and "sinners"  
 (Matt. 11:19)  
 God over all (Rom. 9:5)  
 God's Son (John 11:4)  
 Great high priest (Heb. 4:14)  
 Great light (Matt. 4:16)  
 Great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb. 13:20)  
 Guarantee of a better covenant (Heb. 7:22)  
 He who comes down from heaven and  
 gives life to the world (John 6:33)  
 He who searches hearts and minds  
 (Rev. 2:23)  
 Head of every man (1 Cor. 11:3)  
 Head of the body, the church (Col. 1:18)  
 Head of the church (Eph. 5:23)  
 Head over every power and authority  
 (Col. 2:10)  
 Heir of all things (Heb. 1:2)  
 Him ... who died and came to life again  
 (Rev. 2:8)  
 Him who loves us and has freed us  
 from our sins (Rev. 1:5)  
 His one and only Son (1 John 4:9)  
 Holy and Righteous One (Acts 3:14)  
 Holy One of God (John 6:69)  
 Holy servant Jesus (Acts 4:27,30)  
 Hope of Israel (Jer. 17:13)  
 Horn of salvation (Luke 1:69)  
 Image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15)  
 Immanuel (God with us; Matt. 1:23)  
 Indescribable gift (2 Cor. 9:15)  
 Jesus (Matt. 1:21)  
 Jesus Christ (John 1:17)  
 Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 1:4; 5:21)  
 Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:6)  
 Jesus of Nazareth (Mark 1:24; Matt. 26:71)  
 Judge of the living and the dead  
 (Acts 10:42)  
 KING OF KINGS (Rev. 19:16)  
 King of the ages (Rev. 15:3)  
 Lamb of God (John 1:29; 1:36)  
 Light for revelation to the Gentiles  
 (Luke 2:32)  
 Light of men (John 1:4)  
 Light of the world (John 8:12)  
 Living bread that came down from heaven  
 (John 6:51)  
 Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18)  
 Lord (*Kurios*; Josh. 3:11,13)  
 Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8)  
 LORD OF LORDS (Rev. 19:16)  
 Lord of peace (2 Thess. 3:16)

Lord of the harvest (Matt. 9:38)  
 Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8)  
 Lord (*Rabboni*; John 20:16)  
 Man accredited by God (Acts 2:22)  
 Man of sorrows (Isa. 53:3)  
 Master (Luke 8:24; 9:33; Col. 4:1)  
 Mediator of a new covenant  
 (Heb. 9:15; 12:24)  
 Merciful and faithful high priest (Heb. 2:17)  
 Messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1)  
 Messiah (John 1:41)  
 Morning star (Rev. 2:28)  
 My friend (Jer. 3:4)  
 My intercessor (Job 16:20)  
 One who makes men holy (Heb. 2:11)  
 One who speaks to the Father in our  
 defense (1 John 2:1)  
 One who will arise to rule over the  
 nations (Rom. 15:12)  
 Our glorious Lord Jesus Christ (Jas. 2:1)  
 Our God and Savior Jesus Christ  
 (2 Pet. 1:1)  
 Our only Sovereign and Lord (Jude 1:4)  
 Our Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7)  
 Our peace (Eph. 2:14)  
 Our righteousness, holiness and  
 redemption (1 Cor. 1:30)  
 Physician (Luke 4:23)  
 Prince and Savior (Acts 5:31)  
 Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6)  
 Prince of princes (Dan. 8:25)  
 Prince of the hosts (Dan. 8:11)  
 Ransom for all men (1 Tim. 2:6)  
 Refiner and purifier (Mal. 3:3)  
 Resurrection and the life (John 11:25)  
 Righteous Judge (2 Tim. 4:8)  
 Righteous One (Acts 3:14; 7:52)  
 Rock eternal (rock of ages; Isa. 26:4)  
 Ruler of God's creation (Rev. 3:14)  
 Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5)  
 Savior of the world (John 4:42)  
 Second man (1 Cor. 15:47)  
 Shepherd and Overseer of your souls  
 (1 Pet. 2:25)  
 Son of Man (John 3:13-14; 5:27; 6:27)  
 Son of the Blessed One (Mark 14:61)  
 Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16)  
 Son of the Most High God (Luke 8:28)  
 Source of eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9)  
 Sure foundation (Isa. 33:6)  
 Teacher (Matt. 23:10)  
 The Amen (2 Cor. 1:20)  
 The Beginning and the End (Rev. 21:6)  
 The bright Morning Star (Rev. 22:16)  
 The exact representation of His (God's)  
 being (Heb. 1:3)  
 The First and the Last (Rev. 1:17)  
 The gate (door; John 10:7,9)  
 The good shepherd (John 10:11)  
 The Head (Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19)  
 The last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45)  
 The life (John 14:6)  
 The Living One (Rev. 1:18)  
 The living Stone (1 Pet. 2:4)

The LORD Our Righteousness (Jer. 23:6)  
 The man from heaven (1 Cor. 15:49)  
 The man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5)  
 The most holy (Dan. 9:24)  
 The One and Only (John 1:14,18)  
 The only God our Savior (Jude 1:25)  
 The radiance of God's glory (Heb. 1:3)  
 The rising of the sun (Isa. 59:19)  
 The stone the builders rejected (1 Pet. 2:7)  
 The testimony given in its proper time  
 (1 Tim. 2:6)  
 The true light (John 1:9)  
 The true vine (John 15:1)  
 The truth (John 14:6)  
 The way (John 14:6)  
 The Word (*logos*; John 1:1)  
 True bread from heaven (John 6:32)  
 Wisdom from God (1 Cor. 1:30)  
 Wonderful Counselor (Isa. 9:6)  
 Word of God (Rev. 19:13)  
 Word of life (1 John 1:1)  
 Your life (Col. 3:3)  
 Your salvation (Isa. 30:15; Eph. 1:13)

## HOLY SPIRIT

A deposit (earnest; 2 Cor. 5:5)  
 Another Counselor (John 14:16,26)  
 Breath of the Almighty (Job 32:8)  
 Holy One (1 John 2:20)  
 Holy Spirit (John 1:33)  
 Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30)  
 Seal (2 Cor. 1:22)  
 Spirit of Christ (1 Pet. 1:11)  
 Spirit of counsel and of power (Isa 11:2)  
 Spirit of faith (2 Cor. 4:13)  
 Spirit of fire (Isa. 4:4)  
 Spirit of glory (1 Pet. 4:14)  
 Spirit of grace and supplication  
 (Zech. 12:10)  
 Spirit of his Son (Gal. 4:6)  
 Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4)  
 Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19)  
 Spirit of judgment (Isa. 4:4)  
 Spirit of justice (Isa. 28:6)  
 Spirit of knowledge and of the fear  
 of the LORD (Isa. 11:2)  
 Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2)  
 Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11)  
 Spirit of sonship (adoption (Rom. 8:15)  
 Spirit of the living God (2 Cor. 3:3)  
 Spirit of the LORD (Isa. 63:14; Luke 4:18)  
 Spirit of the Sovereign LORD (Isa. 61:1)  
 Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 1 John 4:6)  
 Spirit of wisdom and of understanding  
 (Isa. 11:2)  
 Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17)  
 The gift (Acts 2:38; 10:45)  
 The promised Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33)  
 The same gift (Acts 11:17)  
 Voice of the Almighty (Ezek. 1:24)  
 Voice of the LORD (Hag. 1:12; Isa. 30:31)

EXPERIENCING  
**GOD**  
*Group Covenant*

I, \_\_\_\_\_

*covenant with my Experiencing God group to do the following.*

- 1. Complete the study of the Experiencing God workbook each week before the group session.*
- 2. Pray regularly for my fellow group members.*
- 3. Participate in all group sessions unless urgent circumstances beyond my control prevent my attendance.  
When unable to attend, I will make up the session at the earliest possible time with the group leader  
or with the assigned group member.*
- 4. Participate openly and honestly in the group sessions.*
- 5. Keep confidential any personal matters shared by others in the group.*
- 6. Be patient with my Christian brothers and sisters and my church as God works in us all to make us  
what He wants us to be. I will trust God to convince others of His will. I will not try to manipulate  
or pressure others to do what I think is best. I will simply bear witness of what I sense that God may  
be saying to us and watch to see how the Spirit uses that witness.*
- 7. Pray at least weekly for my pastor and my church.*

Others: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Experiencing God Group Members*

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