

Experiencing God

God's Will and Your Life

John 15:4-5

July 16, 2016

I have taught "Experiencing God" by Henry Blackaby for many years. It is a great small group study and I always take away something new every time I teach it. "Small group study" by definition limits the number of people exposed to this very important topic, so I decided to make a sermon series of the material. I hope you are inspired to pick up this great study and "Experience God" with your small group – Roshelle

Today

Are you frustrated with your Christian Experience?

The pursuit of self is what we have been doing most of our lives, even in our spiritual lives. But self is a cul-de-sac, and eventually we end up back where we started frustrated and unfulfilled. Most of us, though, have grown tired of that neighborhood and all the back and forth trips we have made there. We long for something more than a casual walk around the religious block.

We long for companionship with God.

We have all traveled to a place we have never been before. **Some of us (like me) go to Google maps and get a general idea of where to go and how to get there – and then SET OFF. Some (like John) pour over the map, reading it carefully, maybe even calculating the miles and then taking the map along – JUST IN CASE.** In both cases there is a touch of nervousness - Will I make a wrong turn? Will I get lost? Will I get to my destination on time? But what if we took someone along who already KNOWS how to reach the destination. Knows all the potholes, U-turns, detours, and curves and can tell us exactly when to turn right or left and can bring us safely and on time to place we desire to go. No anxiety. No worry. No stress.

Well there is such a person and His name is Jesus. He IS THE MAP

- **John 1:1** - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- **Psalms 119:105** - Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.
- **Matthew 6:31-33** - Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' ³² "For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.

Christians are becoming more and more unfamiliar with the Bible as a guide for daily living. We turn instead to Dr. Phil or Oprah or the latest self-help book.

Christians cannot abandon the guidance we find in scripture. The Bible shows us how to relate to God and the world around us.

The only person who knows the best for your life, the true purpose of your life and wants to give you an abundant life is **God Himself.**

- **John 10:10** - The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have *it* abundantly.
- **2 Corinthians 1:20** - For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.
- **Jeremiah 29:11** - For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.
- **Philippians 1:6** - Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

We like a detailed road map. One that provides everything necessary to get us to our destination. That is the case in our spiritual life as well. We want it to be spelled out, but one thing we notice in scripture is that God asks ordinary people to follow Him without providing all the details in advance. Let us look at some examples scripture:

Abraham:

- **Genesis 12:1** - Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; ² And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." ⁴ So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Joseph's Dreams:

- Genesis 37

Jesus:

- **John 8:28** - So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *the one I claim to be* and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.
- **Matthew 6:34** - Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. *Each* day has enough trouble of its own.

Sometimes God provides a bigger picture, as with the story of Moses, but in every case the individual has to stay close to God for daily guidance or risks running off course.

When we finally get to the place where we do trust Jesus to guide us, we will experience, maybe for the first time, the true freedom of the road.

WHAT IS GOD'S WILL

Okay, I'm supposed to follow Jesus and He is not going to give me much information in advance. Now what? You may be tempted to ask, "What is God's will for my life?" Actually, that is the wrong question to ask. Last week I admonished you to move away from a me / circumstance-centered life and move toward a God-centered life. "What is God's will for my life?" is a me / circumstance centered question. Instead ask, "What is God's will?" Then, "How do I fit into His overall plan." Our focus must shift from our lives to God.

Notice the process:

- **John 5:17-20** - Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." ¹⁸ For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. ¹⁹ Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.

Talk about a guy who did not need a map!! But Jesus clearly outlines how it was that He knew what to do during His earthly mission - He watched to see what God was doing and then joined Him.

It looks like this:

- The Father has always been working.
- Now I am working.
- I don't do anything of my own initiative.
- I watch to see what my Father is doing.
- I do what I see the Father doing.
- The Father loves me.
- He shows me everything He is doing.

Scripture is full of examples of God using ordinary people to accomplish great things:

- Elijah prayed that there would be no rain..... There was no rain
- Esther went before a king to save her people..... They were saved
- Joseph and Daniel interpreted dreams
- Noah built an ark – as a VERY OLD MAN (600 when he entered the ark).
- Peter and John healed a cripple
 - **Acts 4:13** - Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling, and *began* to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

You might not be an Elijah or an Esther or a Noah, but God doesn't want you to be any of them, He wants you to be you and in obedience let Him do through you whatever He wants to do.

Right now, at this very moment, God is at work around you and in you. The tragedy is that although we claim to want to know and experience God, we go day after day not recognizing His activity. We often have on spiritual blinders. We don't give something a second look because we don't think there is anything to see. But, as Christians, we must understand that there is something to see, something that may lie just below the surface, something that has the power to change the way we think, act, or feel. Something so profound as to change the way we look at life. That is how Jesus lived His life.

The goal of this series is to help you identify God's activity. I will encourage you on this journey, but it is God who will open your mind to the truths He desires you to know. He, more than anyone, wants you to experience Him in a personal and life changing way. The place to start is right here. Let's take an honest look at what we expect as we navigate the Christian experience. May I say that perhaps more often than not we are looking for what we can get out of it than what we can bring to it. We want to be served not be servants.....

But notice:

- **Matthew 20:25-28** - Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
- **Philippians 2:3-8** - Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

God is looking for servants. He desires to work through us to touch a world that is deeply in need of Him. He can only do that through people who are willing to be used and have no agendas of their own. Servants serve.

- **Jeremiah 18:1-6** - The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD saying, "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I shall announce My words to you." ³ Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. ⁴ But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make. ⁵ Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter *does*?" declares the LORD. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel."

The clay must do 2 things:

- It must be molded.
- It must stay in the Potter's hand.

God wants us to allow Him to mold and shape us into the instrument of His choosing. Then He takes our lives and works through them to accomplish His purposes. Remain in the Master's hand!!

- **Philippians 2:13** - For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.
 - First enter into a love relationship with Him.
 - Get to know Him.
 - Adjust your life to His.
 - Let Him reveal where He is working.

The doing will come, but what God wants more than our activity is US. The relationship must come first.

- **John 15:4-5** - Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."

7 Realities of Experiencing God:

- God is always at work
- God pursues a relationship with you.
- God invites you to become involved in His work.
- God speaks through the HS, the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and trusted individuals to reveal Himself, purposes and ways.
- God's invitation always leads to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.
- Adjustments must be made in your life in order to join God in what He is doing.
- You experience God as you obey Him and as He accomplishes His work through you.

It is my hope that you will come to experience God in a new a better way and that you will begin to see below the surface of things looking less with your eyes and more with your heart.