



EXPERIENCING

GOD

STUDENT EDITION

HENRY T. BLACKABY
CLAUDE V. KING

LifeWay | Students

EXPERIENCING
GOD

STUDENT EDITION, REVISED
Knowing and Doing the Will of God



HENRY T. BLACKABY
&
CLAUDE V. KING

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This book has been adapted for youth from the original adult edition of *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*. With the exception of chapters 1 and 3, new chapter introductions were written specifically for youth.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. The 2000 statement of *The Baptist Faith and Message* is our doctrinal guideline.

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Henry has served as director of the Office of Prayer and Spiritual Awakening at the North American Mission Board and director of missions in Vancouver, British Columbia. He has written for numerous publications and serves on the Bold Mission PRAYER Thrust committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. He has led conferences throughout the United States, Canada, and in Zambia and Austria.

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EDITOR'S NOTE. In the following materials Henry Blackaby is the primary author of content materials. As your personal tutor, he will speak to you just as if he were sitting at your side as you study. Claude King has written the learning activities to assist you in your study. Brent Gambrell has written the chapter introductions for chapters 2 and 4-9. The personal illustrations of the authors are written solely from their personal viewpoints. Others who were involved, if given the opportunity, could write a different and more complete account. The point of agreement, however, would center on God's activity as He accomplished things that only can be explained in terms of His divine presence and activity.

How to Use This Book

Right away you will notice that this book is different from most books you read. It is not designed for you to sit down and read from cover to cover. It is designed for you to study carefully, understand, and apply biblical principles to your life. It is about experiencing God, day by day, moment by moment.

To get the most out of this study, you must take your time by studying only one day's lesson at a time. Do not try to study through several lessons in one day. You need time to let the new information and ideas sink in. You are wanting to experience a person—Jesus Christ. Time and meditation are necessary to allow the Holy Spirit to make Christ real in your life.

The learning activities will appear in bold print (like this paragraph). Follow the instructions given to complete the activity. After you have completed the activity, you will continue reading.

Normally you will be given answers following the activity, so you can check your work. Write your own answer before reading mine. Sometimes your response to the activity will be your personal response or opinion, and no right or wrong answer can be given. If you have difficulty with an activity, write a note in the margin. Discuss the answer with your leader or small group.

Do not skip any of the learning activities. Each one is designed to help you learn and apply to life the truths presented in the content. If you leave out any of these activities, you may miss an encounter with God that could change your life.

At the end of each day's lesson, I will ask you to review the lesson and pray. As you review and pray, do the following:

1. Ask God to identify for you one or more statements or Scriptures from the lesson that He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. This is a personal application question that has no wrong answer. If God causes a statement or Scripture to be meaningful to you, that is the correct response.

2. Reword the statement or Scripture you select into a prayer of response. Pray about what God may want you to do in response to the truths learned.
3. You may want to take notes in the margin each day as you study. God may reveal several responses He wants you to make to a particular lesson. Don't let those thoughts get away from you. Write them down so you can review them. You may even want to keep a notebook for recording your spiritual journey. I will talk to you more about a journal later.

Once each week you should attend a small-group session that is designed to help you discuss the ideas and concepts you studied the previous week, share insights and testimonies, encourage one another, and pray together.

If you have started studying *Experiencing God, Student Edition*, and you are not involved in a small group, enlist a few friends to study through the course with you. You will discover that other members of the body of Christ can help you more fully know and understand God's will.

I am praying that God will use this study to radically change your life for the kingdom's sake. His work in your life will far surpass all your plans and dreams. He will bring purpose and fulfillment into your life with overflowing joy.

Chapter 1

God's Will and Your Life

*"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."*

-John 15:5



THE WORLD'S FAIR

In 1986, when the World's Fair was coming to Vancouver, our association of churches was convinced God wanted us to try to reach the 22 million people who would come to the fair. We had about two thousand members in our churches in the greater Vancouver area. How in the world could two thousand people make a great impact on such a mass of tourists from all over the world? Both youth and adults had some exciting ideas.

Two years before the fair we began to set our plans in motion. At that time, the total income for our whole association was \$9 thousand. The following year our income was about \$16 thousand. For the year of the World's Fair, we took a great leap of faith and set a budget for \$202 thousand. We had commitments that would probably provide 35 percent of that budget; 65 percent of the budget was dependent on prayer.

Can you operate a budget on prayer? Yes. But when you do that, you are attempting something only God can do. What do most of us do? We set the practical budget, which is the total of what we can do. Then we set a hope or faith budget. The budget we generally trust and use, however, is the one we can reach by ourselves. We do not really trust God to do anything.

As an association of churches, we decided that God had definitely led us to the work that would cost \$202 thousand. That became our operating budget. All of our people began praying for God to provide and to guide us in doing everything we believed He wanted us to do during the World's Fair.

At the end of the year, I asked our treasurer how much money we had received. From Canada, the United States, and other parts of the world, we had received \$264 thousand. But people did more than give money. They came from all over the world to assist us. During the course of the fair, we became a catalyst to see almost 20 thousand people come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God had truly moved—far beyond anyone's expectations!

We cannot explain what happened at the World's Fair except in terms of God's intervention. Only God could have accomplished those results. And how did God do it? He did it with believers of all ages who had determined to be servants, who were moldable, flexible, and available for the Master's use.



Jesus Is Your Way

***As You Follow Jesus One Day at a Time,
He Will Keep You Right in the Center of God's Will***

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. -1 Corinthians 2:14

Jesus said, “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). The heart of eternal life and the heart of this study is for you to KNOW GOD and to KNOW JESUS CHRIST whom He has sent.

Knowing God does not come through a program or a method. It is a relationship with a person. It is an intimate love relationship with God. Through this relationship God reveals His will and invites you to join Him where He is already at work. When you obey God, He accomplishes through you something only He can do.

Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). Would you like to experience life to the full? You may if you are willing to respond to God’s invitation to an intimate love relationship with Him. I want to help you move into the kind of relationship with God that will enable you to experience eternal life to the fullest degree possible.

RELATIONSHIP TO JESUS CHRIST—THE BEGINNING POINT

Since you are taking this study, I assume that you have already trusted Jesus Christ as Savior, and you acknowledge Him to be Lord of your life. If you have not made this most important decision in your life, the rest of the study will have little meaning for you because spiritual matters can only be understood by those who have the indwelling Spirit of Christ (1 Cor. 2:14).

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).

If you sense a need to accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord, now is the time to settle this matter with God.

Ask God to speak to you as you read the following Scriptures:

- Romans 3:23—All have sinned.
- Romans 6:23—Eternal life is a free gift of God.
- Romans 5:8—Because of love, Jesus paid the death penalty for your sins.
- Romans 10:9-10—Confess Jesus as Lord.
- Romans 10:13—Ask God to save you, and He will.

To place your faith in Jesus and receive His gift of eternal life, you must:

- Recognize that you are a sinner and that you need a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Confess (agree with God about) your sins.
- Repent of your sins (turn from sin to God).
- Ask Jesus to save you by His grace.
- Turn over the rule in your life to Jesus. Let Him be your Lord.

If you need help, call your pastor, youth leader, or a Christian friend. If you have just made this important decision, call someone and share the good news of what God has done in your life. Then share your decision with your church.

LOOKING FOR MORE IN YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH GOD?

You may be frustrated in your Christian experience because you know God has a more abundant life for you than you have experienced. Or you may earnestly desire God's directions for your life and ministry. You may have experienced tragedy in your life and don't know what to do. Whatever your present circumstances may be, my earnest prayer is that somehow in this time together you will be able to:

- Hear when God is speaking to you.
- Clearly identify the activity of God in your life.
- Believe God to be and do everything He promises.
- Adjust your beliefs, character, and behavior to God and His ways.
- See what God wants to do through your life.
- Clearly know what you need to do in response to God's activity in your life.
- Experience God doing through you what only God can do!

YOUR STUDY GUIDE

Reaching these goals is an impossible task for this study. These are things only God can do in your life. For your deeper walk with God, I will try to serve as your guide and encourager. I will be sharing with you some of the “wonderful works” the Lord has done as God’s people have applied biblical principles to following God. In the activities, I will invite you to interact with God so He can reveal to you the ways He wants you to apply these principles in your own life.

Read John 14:26. Fill in the blanks to tell what this verse says the Holy Spirit will do.

The Holy Spirit will _____ you _____ things.

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things” (John 14:26a).

YOUR TEACHER

The Holy Spirit of God will be your personal Teacher (John 14:26). He is the One who will guide you to apply biblical principles according to God’s will. He will confirm in your heart the truth of Scripture. Therefore, your intimate relationship with God in prayer, meditation, and Bible study will be an essential part of this study. Let the Spirit of God bring you into an intimate relationship with the God of the universe *who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us* (Eph. 3:20).

LET JESUS BE YOUR WAY

For 12 years I was pastor of a church in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. One day a farmer said to me, “Henry, come out and visit with me at my farm.” He then gave me directions that I wrote down. One day, with the directions in hand, I set out for the farm. After many wrong turns, I finally got there.

The next time I went to the farmer’s house, the farmer was with me. What did I have to do to get there? I simply had to listen to him and obey him. Every time he said, “turn,” I did just what he said. The farmer was my “map” because he knew the way.

When you come to Jesus to seek His will for your life, which of the following requests is most like what you ask? Check your response.

- 1. Lord, what do You want me to do? When do You want me to do it? And please tell me what the outcome will be.
- 2. Lord, just tell me what to do one step at a time, and I will do it.

Isn't the first choice the most typical way we respond? We are always asking God for a detailed "road map." We say, "Lord, if You could just tell me where I am heading, then I will be able to set my course and go."

He says, "You don't need to. What you need to do is follow Me one day at a time." We need to come to the place where the second response is ours. Who is it that really knows the way for you to go to fulfill God's purpose for your life? Jesus is. He said, "I am the way."

"I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

If you were to do everything Jesus tells you one day at a time, do you suppose that you always would be right in the center of where God wants you to be? Check your response.

- 1. No, Jesus does not really know God's will for my life.
- 2. No, Jesus might mislead me and take me the wrong way.
- 3. Well, Jesus would rather I wait until He tells me all the details before I start to follow Him.
- 4. Yes, if I follow Jesus one day at a time, I will be right in the center of God's will for my life.

When you get to the place where you trust Jesus to guide you one step at a time, you will experience a new freedom. If you don't trust Jesus to guide you this way, you will worry every time you make a turn. You will often freeze up and not be able to make a decision. This is not the way God intends for you to live your life.

ABRAM FOLLOWED ONE DAY AT A TIME

Abram (later, God changed his name to Abraham) is a good example of the one-day-at-a-time principle at work in a Bible personality.

Read about the call of Abram to do God's will. Notice how much information he was given before he was asked to follow. Underline where he was to go and what he was to do.

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you" (Gen. 12:1).

Abram was 75 years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated, and the people they had acquired in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there (Gen. 12:4-5).

What did God say? How specific was He? "Leave" and "go." Go where? "To a land I will show you."

Are you ready to follow God's will that way? Check your response.

- 1. NO, I don't think God will ever ask me to go anywhere that He doesn't show me ahead of time where I am going.
- 2. I'm not sure.
- 3. YES, I am willing to follow Him by faith and not by sight.
- 4. OTHER: _____

Many times, as with Abram, God called people just to follow Him. (Tomorrow you will read about several.) He is more likely to call you to follow one day at a time than He is to spell out all the details before you begin to obey Him. As we continue our study together, you will find this truth active in the lives of many biblical personalities.

"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt. 6:33-34).

Read Matthew 6:33-34; then pause and pray.

- Agree that God is absolutely trustworthy.
- Agree with God that you will follow Him one day at a time.
- Agree that you will follow God even when He does not spell out all the details.
- Agree that you will let God be your Way.

If you cannot agree to these actions right now, openly confess your struggles to God. Ask Him to help you want to do His will in His way. Claim the promise: It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose (Phil. 2:13).

As I noted at the beginning of this book, at the end of each day's lesson, I will ask you to review the lesson and pray. Following are the review items. Today I will suggest some possible ways you could respond to the items. After today you are on your own.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures that He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. 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?

After today's lesson a person might have responded like this:

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Jesus is my way. I don't need a complete road map to stay in the center of God's will.

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

Lord, I will follow You even if I don't know the way.

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

I need to quit worrying about tomorrow and trust Jesus to guide me one day at a time.

Write out your memory verse for this chapter. You may use a different translation for your memory verses if you prefer. Practice your memory verses daily.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- As I follow Jesus one day at a time, He will keep me in the center of God's will.
- Jesus is my way. I don't need any other road map.

Now, to review the suggestions for completing each lesson of this study, read again "How to Use This Book" (pp. 6-7). Note the following points:

- Study only ONE lesson each day, Monday through Friday.
- The bold text marks each learning activity.
- Complete ALL of the learning activities. Do not skip any.
- Attend a small-group session once a week.