

# EXPERIENCING GOD

STUDY  
GUIDE





**Hope's 10 for 10**, which launched Nov. 2, 2019, details 10 goals for Hope in the next 10 years! With a fresh, updated vision for the next decade of ministry, we are ready to see the amazing ways God is going to move! This study is focused on goal #8, Kingdom Expanders.



## KINGDOM EXPANDERS

8

**LAUNCH**  
**10 new local sites or campuses and 10 new partnerships with existing churches...**

... over the next 10 years (10 for 10 in 10!). Further develop existing Hope locations, providing a Christ-centered church home that brings the gospel of Jesus Christ to 25,000+ people who worship the Lord weekly at Hope. Gather for all-Hope unity events (Christmas, Easter, etc.) each year. Establish a mobile unit that allows live broadcasts from any location to foster even greater unity as one church in multiple locations.

Psalm 122:1 | Mark 4:31-32 | Hebrews 10:24-25

# EXPERIENCING GOD

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# Session 1:

## “Experiencing God”

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**PRE-READING:** Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2

*Knowing God by Experience*

*God Works According to His Nature*

### INTRODUCTIONS

Have each participant state their name and perhaps what drew them to this study.

### OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

**Read aloud:** Deuteronomy 7:8-9 (emphasis added)

*Rather, it was simply that the Lord **loves** you, and he was keeping the oath he had sworn to your ancestors. That is why the Lord rescued you with such a strong hand from your slavery and from the oppressive hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Understand, therefore, that the Lord your God is indeed God. He is the **faithful** God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his **unfailing love** on those who love him and obey his commands.*

1. What have you experienced recently or in the past that has taught you about God’s character?
2. Read again through the list of English names for God starting on page 15. Which of those names ring true in your life experiences? Share the name and, if you are comfortable, also share your experience that revealed that name to you.

**Read aloud:** 2 John 1:5-6

*I am writing to remind you, dear friends, that we should love one another. This is not a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning. Love means doing what God has commanded us, and he has commanded us to love one another, just as you heard from the beginning.*

3. On page 23 it says, “The foundation for God’s commands is His love relationship with you.” Even in very difficult times, are we always convinced that our experiences are going to work out for the good?

On that same page it says, “Life has some ‘land mines’ that could harm or destroy you ... He does not want your life to be destroyed through foolish choices.”

How can we best avoid life's "land mines" and know what is the right path? Have you encountered "land mines" in your life? If so, how did you get through that minefield?

4. On page 27, there are several examples of ways God asked things that made no sense to those being asked: Noah, Gideon, the 12 disciples and Paul. Perhaps you can think of other biblical examples, too.\* Has God ever asked you to do something that didn't seem to make sense for you? How did you respond and what was the outcome?

\*Here are just three more: Joseph, after being sold into slavery by his brothers, becomes the second highest authority in Egypt and by his power saves the 12 tribes from famine and destruction. David – there are several that could be cited for him, including him as a youth killing the Philistine giant Goliath. Also, God asking Ananias to go to Paul, a known "bounty hunter" of Christians. See Genesis 45:5,7; 1 Samuel 17:32-45; Acts 9:10-15.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Then, have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.



# PRAYER JOURNALING

Journaling is a wonderful way to talk to God. We invite you to use the following pages during your prayer time as you read through Experiencing God with your group.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Today I read** \_\_\_\_\_ **chapter(s)**

**Takeaways as I read...**

\_\_\_\_\_ *How I can apply this to my life...* \_\_\_\_\_



**Dear God,**

*Teach me...*

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*You are...*

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*I confess...*

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*I'm thankful for...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**



# Session 2:

## “Experiencing God”

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### **PRE-READING:** Chapters 3-5

*Doing God’s Will*

*Being God’s Servant*

*Seven Realities of Experiencing God*

### **OPENING PRAYER**

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation, and request that he reveal his truth to you collectively and individually.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Read aloud:** Psalm 16:1,11

*Keep me safe, O God, for I have come to you for refuge. You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.*

#### **Read aloud:** Acts 2:28

*You have shown me the way of life, and you will fill me with the joy of your presence.*

1. Do you now or have you struggled to know God’s will? What is your biggest challenge in pursuing God’s will for you?
2. We are taught by our culture, Western education and the corporate world to have long-range (five- to 10-year) goals. How does that fit in with following God’s will on a day-to-day basis? Can you have goals and still follow God’s will?

#### **Read aloud:** Philippians 2:3-8

*Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave [servant\*] and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.*

*\*Some translations use servant; some use slave. In our culture, slave is even lower than a servant. God is not about making us feel like slave labor, but he does ask for our service.*

3. How do you see yourself? As a manager or as a servant? If you are currently in a leadership role in the church, are you a manager? What do you see as the differences between managing and serving, and can you be both at the same time – a servant manager?

**Read aloud:** Esther 4:14-15

*"If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?" Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die."*

Queen Esther in the Old Testament was clearly used by God. She was in a great place – she was queen, had servants at her beck and call, and she was living in luxury. Yet God called her to save the lives of the Jews. That was a huge calling, but **God calls all his people** to something, and there is no accounting for how influential your obedience could be.

**Read aloud:** Daniel 3:16-18

*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."*

4. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would not conform to King Nebuchadnezzar's ruling that they bow to a statue. They wanted to do God's will, and it could very well have cost them their lives. Most of us are not called to give our physical lives, but God wants our undivided hearts.

With that in mind: Is God inviting you to join him in his work? If so, what might that look like in the short term? How will you respond? What adjustments will you make?

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Pray specifically that class members will know and hear the call on their lives. You can have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.



# PRAYER JOURNALING

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*Teach me...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**



# Session 3:

## “Experiencing God”

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 6-7

*God Is at Work around You*

*God Pursues a Love Relationship with You*

### OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer, or ask someone in the group to do the opening prayer. Thank God for his presence and for guiding your conversation, and request that he reveal his truth to you collectively and individually.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. The examples given in chapter 6 of how God is at work are pretty big and dramatic. Certainly the biblical example of Moses is big – not only did he see at burning bush that was not consumed, but he heard clearly the voice of God. That is not to diminish the examples given at all, but for most of us, this may be a new pursuit, to see God at work around us.

As you read this chapter and think about your own experiences, can you identify times when God “showed up” and you knew it for sure? What about looking back on times in your life when, in hindsight, you believe God showed up but you didn’t understand it at the time?

**Read aloud:** Colossians 3:17

*And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.*

**Read aloud:** 2 Timothy 3:15

*Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval.*

*Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.*

2. Have you ever been asked to be a part of some ministry, but you didn’t feel as if you have the right skill set to do it well? Or perhaps you have been asked to do something in a ministry, but felt by doing that you were “wasting” your expertise in another area? Has your service been centered more on your own comfort level or listening to God’s voice and doing whatever he is asking?

**Read aloud:** 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

*A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another.*

*And to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak on unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.*

3. Many Christians have used a spiritual gifts assessment to discern what their gift(s) may be. However, on page 76, Blackaby says, "The Holy Spirit is the gift!", indicating that it's possible for a truly committed Christian to have more than one, and perhaps all the gifts at different times and circumstances.

Are you aware of your spiritual gift(s)? How did you become aware that it was a gift?

**Read aloud:** Matthew 6:33

*Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.*

4. On page 99, it is suggested that you take time to walk with God, possibly outside. Talk with him out loud if the location is appropriate. If you did that, would you share your experiences? Did you feel God's presence? Did anything strike you as especially meaningful or joyful?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Pray specifically that group members will know and hear God as he works in their lives. You can have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.



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*I'm thankful for...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**



# Session 4:

## “Experiencing God”

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 9-10

*God’s Invitation to Join Him in His Work*

*God Invites You to Join Him*

### OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer, or ask someone in the group to do the opening prayer. Thank God for his presence, and ask that he will speak specifically to each person’s heart to hear and interpret the invitation he offers to join him in his work.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

**Read aloud:** Isaiah 55:8-9

*“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”*

1. When you read chapter 9, how did you feel about statements such as “To live a God-centered life, **you must focus on God’s purposes, not your own plans**”? (page 106, emphasis added)

That’s a tough assignment, for sure. Giving up our own plans may seem counterproductive, and doing so may bring criticism and even anger from family and friends. That cannot seem like the right thing to others.

**Read aloud:** Proverbs 12:15

*Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others.*

**Read aloud:** Proverbs 14:12

*There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.*

**Read aloud:** Isaiah 48:17

*This is what the Lord says – your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is good for you and leads you along the paths you should follow.”*

2. How can we discern the path God wants us to take, especially when it seems illogical based on current circumstances and possibly our skill set?
3. The example given on pages 115-116 shows how George Mueller knew God’s will. What can we learn from his summary of how to develop a heart relationship with God?

4. In our community and our church there are many opportunities for serving existing ministries. The author states: "God will first build some basic foundation into your life before He gives you a larger role in service to Him."

How is your foundation? If you feel that your foundation needs a little building up, what can you do that would help build your relationship with God?

**Read aloud:** John 5:39-42 (this is Jesus speaking)

*"You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life. Your approval means nothing to me, because I know you don't have God's love within you.*

**Read aloud:** Philippians 3:5,8-10 (written by the Apostle Paul about following rules, emphasis added)

*I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pureblooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin – a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. **I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law;** rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.*

5. Many people who identify as Christians believe that if they follow the rules – go to church, be kind, give to those in need, do the right thing, obey the law and be generally good people – that's all that's necessary to know God's will. After reading chapters 9-10, how do you feel about that assumption? What is God teaching you about knowing his will?

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Pray specifically that class members will know and hear God as he works in their lives. You can have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.



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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**



# Session 5:

## “Experiencing God”

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 11-12

*God Speaks to His People*

*God Reveals Himself, His Purposes, and His Ways*

### OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer, or ask someone in the group to say the opening prayer. Ask God to show up in every heart present to remind, prompt and prepare each person to realize when God has spoken or is speaking to individuals.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. The author gives us a list on page 134 of ways recorded in the Old Testament that God used to speak his truth to his people. Are there ways on that list that still occur today? If so, which ones are they? Have you experienced any of these things yourself?

**Read aloud:** 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

*Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.*

**Read aloud:** 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

*Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.*

2. Although God may still use some of the ways recorded in the Old Testament, how is communication from God different now?

**Read aloud:** Deuteronomy 4:29-31

*... You will search again for the Lord your God. And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him. In the distant future, when you are suffering these things, you will finally return to the Lord your God and listen to what he tells you. For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon you or destroy you or forget the solemn covenant he made with your ancestors.*

3. In the summary on page 152, the author states, “The method, however, is not the key to knowing God’s voice. You learn to know the voice of God through an intimate love relationship.” Where do you see yourself in that relationship, and how can you see it deepen?

4. What are some ways you have felt God speaking to you? How do you know the message was from God?

**Read aloud:** Ephesians 5:8-9, 15-17

*For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.*

*So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do*

5. We cannot carry out God's mission with only our own plans. How can we experience more of God's character in our lives?

**Read aloud:** Isaiah 55:6, 8-9

*Seek the Lord while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near.*

*"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."*

**CLOSING PRAYER**

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Pray specifically that class members will know and hear God as he works in their lives. You can have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.



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**Dear God,**

*Teach me...*

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*I'm thankful for...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**



# Session 6:

## “Experiencing God”

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 12-13

*God Speaks through the Bible*

*God Speaks through Prayer*

### OPENING PRAYER

Open your group meeting in prayer, or ask someone in the group to say the opening prayer. Ask God to encourage hearts and make his presence know in each person in the group.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

**Read aloud:** Psalm 119:9-11,32,37

*How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word. I have tried hard to find you – don’t let me wander from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*

*I will pursue your commands, for you expand my understanding.*

*Turn my eyes from worthless things, and give me life through your word.*

1. In our productivity-driven culture, it may be difficult to carve out time to read the Bible. However, Scripture is very clear on the importance of the Word of God – the Bible – in developing a relationship with God. If you regularly spend time reading the Bible, share how you developed the habit and discuss which version you prefer to use in your Bible reading.

There are many tools available to help develop the practice of reading the Word. Modern English versions, such as The Message and the New Living Translation, often help with understanding what you are reading. In addition, Hope offers a Daily Bible Reading on its website and app. It’s been said that it takes just three weeks to form a habit. With that in mind, commit to a regular time each day for the next three weeks, asking God to speak through his Word. Perhaps you can share with the group later of any a-ha moments you experienced.

2. The authors suggest keeping a journal as you read Scripture and pray. Perhaps journaling would help you focus as you read. If you already practice journaling, share how it has helped you to recognize God speaking to you through Scripture.

If you have never tried journaling, you may find it very helpful in sorting out your feelings, beliefs and perceptions. No previous experience required; it can be very simple – a few sentences or phrases that help you absorb the teaching of Scripture. A journal also offers you a way to look

back and see how God has spoken to you through his Word, through prayer and perhaps through circumstances.

**Read aloud:** Jeremiah 29:11-13

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.”*

**Read aloud:** 1 John 5:14-15

*And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for.*

**Read aloud:** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

*Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for his is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*

3. Do you find it easy or difficult to pray?
4. We often think of prayer as a time of confession and then asking God for what we need or want at that time, such as healing for ourselves or others, a financial need or a relationship need. The authors emphasize that prayer is more than a one-way litany of our situations, but a relationship based on two-way conversation. Is the concept of listening at least as much as we vocalize our prayers a new concept to you? How can you implement this practice into your prayer time?

**Read aloud:** Romans 8:26-28

*And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who know all hearts knows what the spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*

5. Do you find this reassuring or puzzling? Sometimes we cannot figure out how we should pray, and sometimes we realize that we ask for a specific outcome based on our own wants and needs, not on what God has in mind.
6. It is human and reasonable for us to wonder what God is up to when there are natural disasters, pandemics and horrible accidents in which good, kind, Christian people die or are harmed. How can we pray in circumstances such as these?



# PRAYER JOURNALING

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**Takeaways as I read...**

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**Dear God,**

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*I'm thankful for...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**



# Session 7:

## “Experiencing God”

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 14-15

*God Speaks through Circumstances*

*God Speaks through the Church*

### OPENING PRAYER

Open your group meeting in prayer, or ask someone in the group to say the opening prayer. Ask God to encourage hearts and make his presence know in each person in the group.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

**Read aloud:** Isaiah 26:3-4

*You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal Rock.*

**Read aloud:** Psalm 25:4-5

*Show me the right path, O Lord; point out the road for me to follow. Lead me by your truth and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you.*

1. Your circumstances today or sometime in the past may be confusing, frustrating and just plain annoying. (Think international pandemic of 2020 – the coronavirus certainly altered lives.) Have you gained any new perspective on how you can seek God in such a situation?
2. If, in your past, you experienced a puzzling circumstance that is now resolved, would you share how you journeyed through it, and how and when you felt God’s direction for you?

**Read aloud:** Ephesians 5:17

*Don’t act thoughtlessly but understand what the Lord wants you to do.*

3. One page 193, the authors state, “In making a decision, the greatest difficulty may not be in choosing between good and bad, but in choosing between good and best.” Do you agree, based on your own experiences? Do you recall a time in your life when both choices you were offered were good and you had to decide which one to take? How did you finally determine what was likely the best choice?

**Read aloud:** Genesis 28:16-22

*Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn’t ever aware of it!” But he was also afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, and very gateway to*

heaven!" The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. He named that place Bethel (which means "house of God"), although it was previously called Luz.

4. Several passages, particularly in the Old Testament, state that a marker was left to signify a time when God showed up for both individuals and groups of people. How have you marked spiritual encounters in your life?
5. How has God directed you to your church? Think beyond your own church affiliation. We know that the church is all those who believe in Jesus, not just our denomination or particular church.

**Read aloud:** Romans 12:4-8

*Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.*

6. Are you currently involved in a ministry to others? How did you become aware of the need? How did you know you were a person God wanted to use in that area?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Close your group meeting in prayer. Have participants share prayer requests. Ask God to make us all more aware of how and when he is speaking to us and directing us through our circumstances and through our church, and for his help in determining best choices, not just good ones.

**NOTES:**

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# PRAYER JOURNALING

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**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Today I read** \_\_\_\_\_ **chapter(s)**

**Takeaways as I read...**

\_\_\_\_\_ *How I can apply this to my life...* \_\_\_\_\_



**Dear God,**

*Teach me...*

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*You are...*

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*I confess...*

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*I'm thankful for...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**



# Session 8:

## “Experiencing God”

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 16-17

*God’s Invitation Leads to a Crisis of Belief  
Joining God Requires Adjustments*

### OPENING PRAYER

Open your group meeting in prayer, or ask someone in the group to say the opening prayer.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

**Read aloud:** Hebrews 3:7-8

*That is why the Holy Spirit says, “Today when you hear his voice, don’t harden your hearts as Israel did when they rebelled, when they tested me in the wilderness.”*

**Read aloud:** Revelation 1:3

*God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near.*

1. If others could see what your present walk with God is like, would they see evidence of God working in and through you?
2. The authors give many examples of both biblical and personal crisis situations. Yours likely does not seem as dramatic as these examples. Plus, saying something is a “crisis of belief” is not something most of us want to admit to. After all, we still believe in Jesus. However, have you ever felt that God was telling you – maybe even pushing you a bit – to do something you didn’t feel capable of doing and perhaps even didn’t have the skill set to do it? If so, please share how you resolved that “crisis of belief” in your own circumstances.
3. Can you relate to the statement, “God’s invitation leads to a crisis of belief”? How have you experienced such a crisis in your life?

**Read aloud:** Numbers 14:24

*But my servant Caleb has a different attitude than the others have. He has remained loyal to me, so I will bring him into the land he explored. His descendants will possess their full share of that land.*

Caleb was one of the 12 spies that Moses sent as scouts into the Promised Land after the Exodus from Egypt. He and Joshua were the only two who brought back an enthusiastic, truthful and good report. They believed in the power of God, as they had seen it demonstrated in their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. The interesting thing about Caleb is that he was

not a native Israelite. He was a Kenizzite (Genesis 36:6,9,11), although he was associated with the tribe of Judah. But he, in some ways an outsider to the Israelites who were separatists, believed God. Imagine the belief crisis he must have felt.

4. In studying this book, are you becoming aware of adjustments you need to make in your life concerning values, attitudes, actions, habits and relationships?

**Read aloud:** Acts 9:10-17a

*Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"*

*"Yes, Lord!" he replied.*

*The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again."*

*"But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name."*

*But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."*

*So Ananias went and found Saul ...*

5. Scripture tells us Saul, a Pharisee, the strictest sect of Judaism, later Paul, stayed with Ananias maybe three years to learn and understand the message of Jesus, which in many ways contradicted Levitical law and rules of the Pharisees. He later went as a missionary or itinerate minister to many different areas in the known world. In addition, he wrote 28 percent of what we now have as the New Testament. That was an abrupt and unexpected crisis of belief.

God may not have blinded you and spoken to you audibly so you would believe. How did you first know that you needed God in your life and redemption because of what Jesus did for all by his death and resurrection?

6. On pages 235-236, there is a list of statements made by Christians who adjusted their lives to serve God. Keep in mind, God doesn't expect all of us to quit our jobs and go overseas as missionaries or enroll in seminary. However, as a believer in Christ, there is a call on your life. Do any of these statements touch your heart in a way that makes you aware of God's call on your life?



# PRAYER JOURNALING

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**Today I read** \_\_\_\_\_ **chapter(s)**

**Takeaways as I read...**

\_\_\_\_\_ *How I can apply this to my life...* \_\_\_\_\_



**Dear God,**

*Teach me...*

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*You are...*

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*I confess...*

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*I'm thankful for...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**



# Session 9:

## “Experiencing God”

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 18-19

*Joining God Requires Obedience*

*God Accomplishes His Work*

### OPENING PRAYER

Open your group meeting in prayer, or ask someone in the group to say the opening prayer.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Counting the cost is a big part of any life-changing decision. We are taught to think in practicalities and of the well-being of families and ourselves. The authors discuss the personal cost as well as family cost of heeding a call in terms of both finances and time commitment. Does counting the cost make you fearful because of what may happen if you obey God’s call on your life?

**Read aloud:** Genesis 22:1-2, 9-12

*Some time later, God tested Abraham’s faith. “Abraham!” God called. “Yes,” he replied. “Here I am.”*

*“Take your son, your only son – yes, Isaac, whom you love so much – and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you.”*

*When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. At the moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham.”*

*“Yes,” Abraham replied. “Here I am!”*

*“Don’t lay a hand on the boy!” the angel said. “Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son.”*

2. The authors state on page 254, “Usually, when God calls or gives you a direction, His call is not the thing He wants you to do. He is telling you what He is about to do where you are.” Do you have a sense of what God may be about to do where you are?

**Read aloud:** Hebrews 11:17-19

*It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, even though God had told him, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted." Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.*

**Read aloud:** James 2:23

*And the scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." And he was called God's friend.*

3. Abraham was doing exactly what God told him to do, but the door slammed shut. Have you ever experienced a "closed door" when you were doing what you sensed God wanted you to do?

**Read aloud:** Hebrews 11:13-16

*All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

4. Like the Old Testament "heroes of the faith" listed in Hebrews 11 (Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab and others), we don't always see the results of our obedience to God's call. Have you experienced a time when you have seen or been told by someone that your obedience accomplished something, perhaps even something you had not expected as an outcome?
5. Keep in mind that knowing and experiencing God is a lifelong journey. As you have progressed through this study, what, if anything, has changed for you? Are you experiencing God in new or different ways? Is your faith deepening? Do you know God better?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Ask participants to share prayer requests. Ask that God will help us be obedient so his work can be accomplished, even though it may be costly to us and perhaps go unrecognized here on Earth.



# PRAYER JOURNALING

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**Today I read** \_\_\_\_\_ **chapter(s)**

**Takeaways as I read...**

\_\_\_\_\_ *How I can apply this to my life...* \_\_\_\_\_



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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**



# Session 10:

## “Experiencing God”

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 20-22

*Returning to God*

*Experiencing God as Couples*

*Joining God’s Activity in Your Children’s Lives*

### OPENING PRAYER

Open your group meeting in prayer, or ask someone in the group to say the opening prayer.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

**Read aloud:** James 1:26-27, 2:17

*If you claim to be religious but don’t control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.*

*So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.*

**Read aloud:** 1 Corinthians 4:5

*So don’t make judgments about anyone ahead of time – before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.*

1. One example given in the book is of a man who participated in many ministries and yet realized he didn’t really know God. He was going through the motions, doing good things, but with the wrong motive. How can you discern if you are doing good things simply because they are there and need to be done, or if you are truly called of God to be a part of that ministry? (Think about times you did something more as a job that needed doing than as a ministry – a calling from God on your life.)

**Read aloud:** Psalm 80:18-19

*Then we will never abandon you again. Revive us so we can call on your name once more. Turn us again to yourself, O Lord God of Heaven’s Armies. Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.*

**Read aloud:** Romans 12:1-2

*And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy*

*the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

2. Revival is a very personal thing and may look different in each person's life. It's more than making a resolution or setting a goal. It's about committing yourself to God and listening to him and his guidance in your life. It's transformation. How has God transformed you? What's different in your life?

**Read aloud:** Revelation 19:7

*Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honor to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself.*

3. Scripture tells us the church is the Bride of Christ. In an ideal marriage, the couple communicates with each other continually. As part of the church, do you communicate with God continually – not just talking to him, but listening? Has this study helped you become more aware of God's work in your life?

**Read aloud:** Psalm 127:3

*Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him.*

On page 283, there is a list of children in the Bible pointing out the significant purpose as parents God had for those listed. The list includes only men, but the Bible also includes many women who served significant roles as parents or family members.

**Read aloud:** Genesis 21:1-2,6-7

*The Lord kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would.*

*And Sarah declared, "God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me. Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age.*

God promised Abraham that his offspring would be a nation more numerous than the stars in the sky or the grains of sand on the sea shore. God used Sarah to carry out that promise.

**Read aloud:** Exodus 2:4,7

*The baby's [Moses'] sister then stood at a distance, watching to see what would happen to him.*

*Then the baby's sister [Miriam] approached the princess. "Should I go and find one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" she asked.*



# PRAYER JOURNALING

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**



# Session 11:

## “Experiencing God”

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 23-24

*Experiencing God in the Church*

*Experiencing God in the Marketplace*

### OPENING PRAYER

Open your group meeting in prayer, or ask someone in the group to say the opening prayer.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Many Christians think of church as a place for worship and teaching. The authors point out that the function of the church is much broader than that. In what ways do you see your church community ministering beyond the worship and teaching functions?

**Read aloud:** Galatians 6:2

*Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.*

**Read aloud:** Ephesians 1:18,3:10

*I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called – his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.*

*God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*

2. Being a part of the church is not just for your own comfort and spiritual formation, but also to serve. Keep in mind you don't have to teach, preach or lead worship to be involved. What does ministry involvement look like for you individually?
3. If you are currently a part of a ministry, church sponsored or not, organized or personal, how were you prompted to become a part of that? Did God speak to you? Did someone point out a need? Did you see a request for volunteers? Please share your experiences.

**Read aloud:** Colossians 3:23

*Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.*

4. If you're employed, God provided that job for you. He placed you there, not just to make a living, but to be witness for him. Not in a disruptive way, because you owe your employer to do the work assigned to you.

Are you aware of anything God is doing in your place of business?

5. When COVID-19 became an issue, many folks were asked to work from home. That may continue for a long time, even when the need for isolating has ended. In working, whether in the workplace or from home, are you aware of ways you can minister to co-workers?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Ask participants to share prayer requests. Pray specifically for group members to become involved in a ministry and to be more aware of God in the church and in the workplace.



# PRAYER JOURNALING

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**



# Session 12:

## “Experiencing God”

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 25-26 & Closing Remarks  
*Experiencing God in His Kingdom*  
*Continuing to Experience God*

### OPENING PRAYER

Open your group meeting in prayer, or ask someone in the group to say the opening prayer.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

King David was not only a great king, but Scripture says he was a man after God’s own heart. He was also the father of Solomon, the wisest man to ever live. The following passage is David’s advice to Solomon.

**Read aloud:** 1 Chronicles 28:9 (emphasis added)

*“And Solomon, my son, **learn to know the God of your ancestors intimately. Worship and serve him with your whole heart and a willing mind.** For the Lord sees every heart and knows every plan and thought. **If you seek him, you will find him.** But if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. So take this seriously. The Lord has chosen you to build a Temple as his sanctuary. Be strong, and do the work.”*

**Read aloud:** Psalm 119:2

*Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts.*

**Read aloud:** Luke 12:31

*Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need.*

1. Do the words “God’s kingdom” mean something different to you than they did when you started this study?
2. Has anything changed in the way you are personally learning to know God and seeking his Kingdom?
3. The author suggests that you study a map of the world, asking the Lord if it is his plan for you to minister in some way in a particular country. Taking short-term mission trips is a good way to experience how you can minister in another country. On the Lutheran Church of Hope website under the Serve tab, you will find a list of local mission partners who are always in need of volunteers and contributions to their work. There is also a list of upcoming **mission trips** on the website. God is already at work through Hope throughout our nation and the world, but there is much

more to be done. Pray and check out what mission experiences God may be prompting you to consider.

4. In the closing chapter, there are five steps listed to help you keep the principles and spiritual practices you have developed fresh and top-of-mind as you continue to experience God. Review those steps and discuss how they apply to you personally.

**Read aloud:** Philippians 1:6

*And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.*

5. Discuss how you can continue to be in touch, encourage, pray and be accountable to each other. Do you want to continue to meet and study together as a small group?

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Ask God to continue the work that he has started in each person's heart.



# PRAYER JOURNALING

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**Today I read** \_\_\_\_\_ **chapter(s)**

**Takeaways as I read...**

\_\_\_\_\_ *How I can apply this to my life...* \_\_\_\_\_



**Dear God,**

*Teach me...*

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*You are...*

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*I confess...*

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*I'm thankful for...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**











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