FBC TEXARKANA
EXPERIENCING GOD
SESSION 1: GOD'S WILL AND YOUR LIFE
MARCH 3, 2013

PREPARATION

> **SPEND THE WEEK** completing unit 1 of *Experiencing God* and studying the related Scripture passages.

> **DETERMINE** which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.

> **PRAY** for our pastors and church staff, the *Experiencing God* small group series, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the lesson.

HIGHLIGHTS

> **WEEKLY EMPHASIS:** During this session, participants will be introduced to the seven realities of experiencing God. We will recognize Jesus' example for doing God's will. We will also identify and express God's activity in our lives.

> **LIFE APPLICATION:** When we understand that God is at work all around us, our perspective changes from following our agenda to following God's agenda and joining Him in the work He is already doing.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Have you ever jumped in on a project that was already in process? What was that like?

How might a project or activity where you are in charge differ from one with someone else in charge? What are the struggles with each?

Do we typically ask God, "What do you want me to do?" Or "What are you already doing?

God is already at work all around us. As we'll discover in our study today, He doesn't want us to ask, "What do you want me to do, God?" He wants us to discover what He is already doing all around us. He wants us to jump in where He is at work, that He might do something incredible through us.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the *Experiencing God* unit to discover what Blackaby says about God's Word and knowing and doing the will of God.

Begin by explaining the premise behind the *Experiencing God* study. **SAY:** Have you ever wanted to know the will of God? *Experiencing God* was birthed out of numerous

questions from college students who wanted to know and do the will of God. The heart of this study is for each of us to *know God* and to *know Jesus Christ* whom He has sent. We come to *know God* in a more intimate way by *experiencing God* at work in and through us. That's our goal throughout this entire study.

> LOOKING FOR MORE IN YOUR EXPERIENCE OF GOD

SAY: You may have been frustrated in your Christian experience because you know God has a more abundant life for you than you have experienced so far. Whatever your present circumstances may be, our prayer during this study is that each of you would be able to hear God speak, identify His work in your life, believe Him and His promises, adjust to His ways, see the direction He is taking you, and clearly know how to respond.

In what ways have you best experienced God in the past?

Invite a volunteer to read John 14:26. How does the Holy Spirit serve as a teacher in our lives?

The Holy Spirit guides us to apply the truths of God's Word according to God's will. He works to reveal God, His purposes, and His ways to each of us. Whenever we are presented with a biblical truth, we can depend on the Holy Spirit to confirm whether that teaching comes from God. Maintaining an intimate relationship with God is a big part of the Holy Spirit teaching us.

What does it mean that the Scriptures are our source of authority?

The Bible is God's Word to us. The Holy Spirit honors and uses God's Word in speaking to us. The Scriptures are our source of authority for our faith and practice. We can't depend on traditions, our experience or others' experience to be accurate authorities on God's will, but solely on God's Word.

>JESUS' EXAMPLE

During His earthly ministry, how did Jesus know what God wanted Him to do?

It's easy to say that Jesus knew what to do because He was the Son of God. However, Jesus set aside His rights to act as God. He became like us, was tested in every way like us, depended on the Holy Spirit like us, and studied the Scriptures as we are able.

Invite a volunteer to read John 5:17, 19-20. From this passage, who is always at work?

How much can the Son do by Himself? What does the Son do?

Why does the Father show the Son what He is doing?

Jesus was frequently tested by religious leaders. In this context, He had just healed a

man. However, it was God who was at work. Jesus set an example for us by looking to see what the Father was up to, and following Him. We often want the Lord to tell us where we are headed before we agree to set our course and go. We want a detailed map. However, Jesus says we don't need that. Instead, we are called to simply follow Him one day at a time.

How does doing everything Jesus tells us *one day at a time* help us to live in the center of where God wants us to be?

>ABRAM'S CALL

Read Abram's call in Genesis 12:1-5. Where did God tell Abram to go? What did God call Abram to do?

God simply said to "leave" and "go" to an unnamed place, "To a land I will show you." Are we willing to follow God in that way? Why or why not?

Many times, as with Abram, God calls people to simply follow Him. He is much more likely to ask you to follow Him one day at a time than He is to spell out all the details before you begin to obey Him.

Why do you think God calls us before He fully explains where we are going?

> THE SEVEN REALITIES IN MOSES' LIFE

Pass out the 7 Realities handout. Invite several volunteers to read these aloud. Explain that we will use these realities to look at Moses' call and response.

REALITY 1. Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 2:23-25. How was God already at work?

What are some evidences that God is at work all around us?

One of the deepest tragedies among God's people is that, although we long to experience God, we are encountering Him day after day but do not recognize Him.

REALITY 2. Have a volunteer read Exodus 3:1-4. How do we see God pursuing a relationship with Moses that was real and personal?

God took the initiative to come to Moses and pursue a relationship at the burning bush. God told Moses He would go with him into Egypt. Throughout Moses' life, God continued to pursue that relationship.

How has God continued to pursue a relationship with you at various times throughout your life?

TEACHING PLAN

REALITY 3. Read Exodus 3:8-10. Here God invited Moses to become involved with Him in His work.

How did God want to involve Moses in the work He was already doing?

Time and again, God invited Moses to talk with Him and to be with Him. God initiated and maintained a growing relationship based on love, and God daily fulfilled His purposes through Moses.

REALITY 4. Have a volunteer read Exodus 3:4-8.

This is a great example of God revealing what He is about to do. That revelation then becomes an invitation to join Him. God talked to Moses about His will, and His desire for Moses to be an instrument for delivering the Israelites from their bondage.

How has God used His Word to reveal specific truths about Himself in your life?

REALITY 5. Read Exodus 3:11-13. In what ways did Moses express a crisis of belief when he made these statements to God?

Moses gave many objections. He questioned whether God could do such a great work through someone like him, whether other people would believe God had appeared to him, and whether he was capable of speaking eloquently enough. Each time, Moses doubted God more than himself.

Who in the group would be willing to share a personal crisis of belief? (As people share, stop them before they express how God resolved the crisis. Come back to these volunteers after reality 6.)

REALITY 6. Ask someone to read Exodus 4:19-20. Here, how did Moses show faith and action?

What adjustments did Moses have to make?

Moses had to come to a place where he believed God could do everything He said He would do. Then he had to leave his job and in-laws and move to Egypt. After making these adjustments, he was in a position to obey God. It meant going where God was working so God would do what He had purposed to do in the first place.

Invite volunteers who shared about their crisis of faith to share how God brought them back to faith and action.

REALITY 7. Ask a volunteer to read Exodus 14:21-22. How did God work directly through Moses?

TEACHING PLAN

We see that God delivered the Israelites. How do you think Moses felt when God delivered the Israelites through him?

Moses must have felt unworthy to be used in such a significant way. Moses obeyed and did everything God told him. Then God accomplished through Moses all He intended. Every step of obedience brought Moses (and Israel) to a greater knowledge of God. Exodus 6:1-8 shows us how God promised the Israelites that they would experience His power.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How have you seen God use an ordinary person to accomplish His purposes?

Do you agree with the following statement? Why or why not?
When you believe nothing significant can happen through you, you have said more about your belief in God than you have declared about yourself.

Why do you think God likes to do His work through ordinary people?

Could God work in extraordinary ways through your life to accomplish significant things for His kingdom? What steps can you take to move toward an answer of "yes" this week?

What does it look like for each of us to trust Jesus day by day this week?

PRAY

Finish your time in prayer together. Encourage volunteers to pray out loud a one-sentence prayer of personal commitment to God for the duration of our study. Close the time of prayer by praying that group members would specifically listen to hear where God is at work and that they would have the courage to join Him in that work.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

❏ Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:

Begin evaluating your day-to-day actions. Are they self-centered or God-centered?

TEACHING PLAN

We will talk more about that next week.

In what areas of your life might you be struggling with a crisis of faith? Be honest and ask God for courage to join Him in His work.

Are you daily trusting that God is who He says He is? Is God's Holy Spirit guiding you to trust His Word?

❏ A note of encouragement, following up on any prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

❏ The challenge to follow along in the *Experiencing God* learning book by completing Unit 2 before our next meeting, pages 30-48.

❏ For those following along in the 15th anniversary edition book, the challenge to read chapters 1-5, pages 1-64.

❏ The challenge to memorize John 15:5, our memory verse for Unit 1.