

# EXPERIENCING GOD - TWO-SESSIONS -SESSION 1

## I. OPENING OVERVIEW

### A. Understanding "experiencing"

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1. Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary. (Eleventh ed.)

"experience"

the fact or state of having been affected by or  
gained knowledge through direct observation  
or participation

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### B. Preliminary Understanding: Seven Realities of Experiencing God

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1. *[Diagram of all 7 steps]*
  - a. *Leave out love relationship*
  - b. *Show how all steps require hearing God accurately when He speaks*

#### 2. Add love relationship aspect/priority

- a. *Explain why love relationship critical to other steps*
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### C. Overview of the Seven Realities of Experiencing God

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#### 1. Concept

- a. Experiencing God isn't just learning His character, sitting around allowing Him to grow our faith in Him
  - b. The real experiencing God comes as God is ready to use us in accomplishing His work
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2. Here are some realities of how God worked through them

a. Reality 1: God is always at work around you

- 1.) God continually works to redeem the world to Himself through the work of Christ & His believers

b. Reality 2: God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal

- 1.) This relationship is critical to knowing God and doing His will

c. Reality 3: God invites you to be involved with Him in His work

- 1.) God is sovereign, the only One with the right to begin a work
- 2.) When He is ready to work, He will invite the one or ones through whom He wants to work

d. Reality 4: God speaks by the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways

- 1.) By the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church (believers)
- 2.) He will reveal:
  - a.) His character, so that you can trust Him
  - b.) His purposes, so you will choose to work with Him
  - c.) His ways, so that you will accomplish His work in a way that glorifies Him

e. Reality 5: God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action

- 1.) God's invitation is to do work you cannot do without Him
- 2.) This causes a crisis of faith
  - a.) Either you believe in His character, or you don't
  - b.) Will you take the 1st step, believing He will support you
  - c.) Following God takes an action-oriented faith

f. Reality 6: You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing

- 1.) Requires major adjustments in the way that you think and you act

g. Reality 7: You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you

- 1.) God can only accomplish His purposes through you if you obey Him
- 2.) You obey Him because of your loving relationship with Him

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## II. KNOWING GOD BY EXPERIENCE - WHAT'S DIFFERENT ?

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John 17.3

This is eternal life, that they may know You,  
the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent

### A. A key definition about "knowing"

1. Jesus didn't say eternal life is knowing about God
2. It is about actually knowing God

### B. To really know God requires experiencing Him throughout our lives

1. As God gives you experiences, you learn His character as He interacts with you

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## III. GOD IS AND DOES - UNDERSTANDING GOD TO TRUST HIM

### A. When Moses asked God who should I say sent me to my people in Egypt, God replied (Exod 12.13-14) ...

"I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

> Heb *hayah* > to be, exist

#### 1. God was saying to Moses ...

- a. I am the Eternal One, I will be what I will be
- b. I am everything you will need

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### B. Importance of **trusting** God to experience Him

1. Knowing Him grows by *experiencing* Him as we live allowing Him to work His plan through us

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### C. Key aspects of God's character in learning to trust Him

#### 1. **God is love**

- a. Note the definition of God's love

1 John 4.16 "...God is love ..."

#### 1.) "is" > Gk *es·tee* = "to be"

- a.) God's very NATURE is love
- b.) He cannot act on the believer's life other than in a loving way because of His nature

b. His love bolsters us to accept that His will is always best

1.) Note this interesting statement

1 John 5.3

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments;  
and His commandments are not burdensome"

2.) God's commands are designed to GUIDE YOU to life's very best

c. Believer must never allow circumstances to cause losing sight of God's love for him/her

1.) John 3.16

2.) Could God have given any deeper demonstration of His love for believers ?

3.) This should encourage us to trust in God no matter what He challenges us with

**2. God is all-knowing and all-wise**

a. It is a part of God's character to be all-knowing and all-wise

1.) God knows every alternative, factor, and possible outcome

2.) He also knows everything about you

3.) Therefore, you must remember that His direction is always right

b. This means that waiting on His direction is essential

1.) This is one of the toughest situations for many believers

a.) It doesn't require that you know His will entirely

b.) It is just necessary that you take the first step when God's directive comes, and be alert for further directions

**3. God is all-powerful**

a. God is inherently all-powerful = omnipotent

Isa 46.10-11

10 ... 'My purpose will be established,  
And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';

11 ...Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass.  
I have planned it, surely I will do it.

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b. He can **enable** you to accomplish His will

1.) Note this key fact ...

Isa 55.8

For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD

2.) But we need to let Him take over in our lives so that we may experience what **He** can do with what we are and have

3.) **Trusting** God's character comes by the **experience** of **doing** His will

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D. So **Doing** God's Will allows us to experience God

1. How do we know what God's will is for us ?

a. Asking "What is God's will for my life ?" is wrong question !

1.) It shows focus on what YOU do

b. The real question is "What is GOD'S will ?"

1.) When we **know** God's will, then we can adjust our lives and purposes to that

2.) But we go about it backwards

a.) Our usual approach is to shout  
"Don't just stand there - DO SOMETHING !"

b.) It's more likely that God is shouting  
"Don't just do something - STAND THERE !"

3.) We are so involved in doing things, and looking to do things that "are His will" that we miss this

John 15.5

"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....."

a.) God wants us to "abide in Him"

- Allow Him to develop the loving relationship
- To experience God, and to let Him work through you, **the relationship comes first !**

b.) Note that without this abiding, you can do NOTHING

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4.) God alone has the right to start what He wants you to do

Matt 11.29-30

29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

- a.) A yoke is for two oxen to work together, to share the load
- b.) Jesus invites you to get into the yoke and work with Him
  - Sharing the burdens of life is minor in this statement
  - Allowing Him to work His plan through you is the focus

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**IV. GOD'S WORK**

A. A Key Awareness = God IS at Work Around You

1. Jesus knew what we as believers must recognize

(John 5.19-20)

a. God is always working

- 1.) He is redeeming a lost world

b. God wants to do this *through His people*

- 1.) Part of the love relationship with Him

c. Note how Jesus conducted Himself in completing assignments

- 1.) The Father is always working
- 2.) Now the Father has Me working
- 3.) I can do nothing on my own initiative or capabilities
- 4.) I *watch to see* what the Father is doing
- 5.) I *do what I see* the Father is already doing
- 6.) The Father loves Me > trust, support, guidance
- 7.) He shows me everything that He, Himself, is doing

d. Observe how this process follows a number of the key elements in the Seven Realities of Experiencing God

- 1.) The assignments came from God (John 12.49)
- 2.) God did the work through Him (John 14.10)

e. You miss the point if you think this happened because Jesus was acting as God !!

- 1.) Jesus *modeled* how the believer should allow God to work His plan through the believer
- 2.) He demonstrated the technique for us to adopt

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- f. The proper order of steps is **critical** to success
- 1.) The believer allows God to develop an intimate love relationship with the believer
  - 2.) God shows the believer what He is doing and invites involvement by assignments
  - 3.) The assignments will be in what **God** is doing
  - 4.) Therefore, after the love relationship is established, the believer must WATCH for what God is doing
2. Look how Jesus followed this formula with Zacchaeus
- a. God was stirring one man who climbed the tree
  - b. Jesus saw him in a tree straining to see Him
  - c. Jesus told him that He was going to his house for the day
3. A **caution** - Focus on the assignment, not your spiritual gift(s)
- a. Many Bible studies on finding your spiritual gift(s)
    - 1.) Gifts are imparted by the Holy Spirit when you accepted Christ
    - 2.) Believers are urged to determine their gift(s) and then look for assignments that fit them
  - b. Problems with this
    - 1.) A person may not know his or her spiritual gift(s)
    - 2.) Easy to become self-centered in trying to define your gifts
      - a.) You accept only assignments that you believe fit you
      - b.) This would limit your usefulness to God
  - c. You should be God-centered instead of self-centered
    - 1.) If it's a true assignment, the Holy Spirit will supply the gifts needed to complete it
    - 2.) Accept what is clearly given
4. Examples of God's pattern of working through OT characters
- a. The pattern
    - 1.) God gave the person the assignment
    - 2.) The Holy Spirit gave the skills, resources, guidance needed



b. Some examples

1.) Moses

- a.) Challenge Pharaoh to let the Israelites depart, and lead them to Canaan
- b.) No history of past successes, speaking or leadership skills
- c.) The Holy Spirit equipped him to administrate and lead

2.) David

- a.) His assignment was to be king over Israel
- b.) He was a shepherd without the skills or experience
- c.) But God's Spirit came on him and he completed the assignment

3.) The workmen of the Tabernacle

- a.) God gave Moses the details
- b.) God then supplied the necessary skills by calling craftsmen and filling them by His Spirit (Exod 31.2-6)

5. Notice the key difference between spiritual gifts and what God gives

a. He didn't give a *thing*, God *Himself* was the *Gift* as the Holy Spirit

b. 1 Cor 12.7 talks about this in a way we often miss

1.) vs 7 "...to each one is given the *manifestation* of the Spirit for the common good"

a.) Manifestation > a revealing of Himself

2.) Each person's gift is not a *thing*... God gives *Himself*

a.) When you see a spiritual gift being exercised, you are seeing a manifestation of the Holy Spirit through that person

b.) Holy Spirit can change the believer's gifts to fit the assignment

c.) The focus is on God and what He does through you

c. Focus your attention on hearing God's call to an assignment

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B. Being God's Servant - Joining in His Work

1. Jesus was the prime example of God's Servant (Jn 12.26)

a. Note Jesus' attitude (Phil 2.5-8)

1.) Jesus exhibited humility and obedience

b. When we accept Jesus as Savior, we join His redemption mission

c. But look at how different this concept of servant is

1.) World's concept of servant

a.) Servant waits for master to tell him what to do

2.) Jesus' example of God's servant

a.) Jesus' servant is in a growing relationship with Him

b.) God is able to do His works through that relationship

2. Note how this applies to becoming an effective servant of God

a. Typical new believer's approach

1.) Seek to find out what God wants them to do

2.) Start to work on some thing(s)

3.) Do a little Bible study along the way

4.) Pray for guidance

b. God's approach

1.) God will mold the believer into the shape He wants to use before He puts him to use

2.) Then He can use you as He see fit

3.) Believer must trust God's character and the relationship

3. Example of servants from Scripture

a. Peter and John

1.) Called before the Sanhedrin because Peter had healed a crippled man

2.) Peter gave a Spirit-inspired speech concerning the matter

3.) Note the reaction of the leaders ...

Acts 4.13

"Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus"

4.) Two key facts in this

- a.) Peter and John were ordinary men
- b.) Their relationship with Jesus was recognized as the reason for the power and confidence, not their power
  - God worked through them because of their relationship with Jesus, which had grown over the time spent with Him

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4. What about you ?? God just wants you as you are

- a. Note what Paul said in 1 Cor 1.26-29

**V. CRITICAL - GOD PURSUES A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU**

A. What is this "love relationship" with God

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1.

Matt 22.37-38

37 And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

38 "This is the great and foremost commandment."

2. What does "all" mean ??

- a. It means everything about you
- b. Your ability to know and experience God depends on "all"

3. This is THE goal to aim toward

- a. Platform on which God will work through you
  - 1.) to achieve His goals
  - 2.) through which your experiencing God will grow
- b. You must ask the Holy Spirit to grow you into it

B. How does it come about ??

1. God takes the initiative to bring you into this relationship

- a. John 3.16, Rom 8.37, 39
- b. Is it not reasonable for God to desire your love in return ?

2. How then does God bring you into the loving part ?

a. Note John 14.21

"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

b. So obedience is the key

- 1.) Jesus loves the obedient one, will manifest Himself to him
- 2.) Obedience shows that you trust and love Jesus
- 3.) He reciprocates in love and shows Himself further
- 4.) It's a closed feedback loop to grow your experience with God

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C. The difficulties in gaining this relationship

1. # 1: We are a "doing" people

a. We do things "for" God, neglect the foundational loving relationship

2. # 2: We still don't seek Him, even after salvation

a. God always has to do the drawing John 6.44 Jer 31.3

b. Note the interchange between Jesus & Peter in Matt 16.15-17

- 1.) Jesus said Peter was responding to God's taking the lead in his life
- 2.) Peter wouldn't have known the answer without that

3. # 3: We have a short-time perspective

a. Paul struggles with this in Philippeans Chapter 3

- 1.) He renounced his impeccable Hebrew background as mere trash compared to his relationship with Christ
- 2.) He finished with what this meant to his present and his future

Phil 3.13-14

13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,

14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

a.) Paul's ultimate goal was to know Christ and to become like Him for a future blessing

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b. We must allow the Holy Spirit to shape our loving relationship with God

- 1.) God knows you and what is best for you
- 2.) Allow Him to orient your life in worthwhile ways

D. Learning to walk with God

1. You need a daily appointment with God

- a. This love relationship is personal , and requires a personal get together`
- b. God looks forward to it, because He initiated the love relationship, and assured it with Jesus' sacrifice
- c. We need to look forward to it, as well, and to be there each day

2. God's wants the relationship to be real and personal

- a. God's whole plan of advancing the kingdom depends on His working through His people
- b. He needs His people to be close to Him in a loving relationship to know His call and directives

**VI. GOD TAKES THE LEAD**

a. It is God Who takes the Initiative in the loving relationship

1. God also takes the initiative to involve us in His work

- a. Genesis is NOT a record of God's walk with Abraham
- b. God accomplished His work through Abraham
- c. The focus was on God, not Abraham

2. God calls us to **God-Centered** living

a. Here are the characteristics of such a life

- 1.) Loving God thoroughly
- 2.) Confidence in God
- 3.) Dependence on God, His ability & provision
- 4.) Life focused on God & His workings (think what this really means !!)
- 5.) Humbleness before God
- 6.) Denying self
- 7.) Seeking first the kingdom of God & His righteousness
- 8.) Seeking God's perspective in every circumstance
- 9.) Holy and godly living

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b. In contrast is Self-Centered Living

1.) Characteristics

- a.) Life focused on self
- b.) Pride in self & self's accomplishments
- c.) Self-confidence
- d.) Depending on self & self's abilities
- e.) Affirming self
- f.) Seeking to be acceptable to the world & its ways
- g.) Looking at *circumstances* from a human perspective
- h.) Selfish and ordinary living

3. We need to be focused on God's purposes and not our plans

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a. God initiates this awareness when He is ready

1.) Note biblical instances

- a.) Noah was warned about the coming Flood
- b.) Abraham warned about the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah
- c.) Gideon informed that he would deliver the Israelites from Midian
- d.) Paul told he would carry the gospel to the Gentile world

2.) Note the order of things

- a.) God didn't ask each one to dream up what they wanted to do for Him
- b.) He told them what He was about to do
  - Sometimes their involvement was to be immediate
  - Sometimes they would be used later

b. Here's the pattern

1.) We submit our wholehearted dedication to God

2.) Then we wait

- a.) He will show us what He is about to do
- b.) Or we can see where He is already working and see if He will let us join in

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4. We need to be watching for God working
  - a. How can we be sure to see what He is doing ?
    - 1.) Allow Him to grow the love relationship in us
    - 2.) As we come to grow closer to Him, our knowledge of God and appreciation of His character grows
    - 3.) This will grow our ability to sense His direction in His work will grow
    - 5.) We will then recognize His invitation for us to work His plan through us
  - b. Cautions in knowing if we see His working or not
    - 1.) Circumstances can't be trusted on their own
    - 2.) Prayer, Scripture and circumstances must agree to be assured what we see is really God working

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5. The example of George Mueller
  - a. English pastor throughout the 1800's
  - b. He was concerned about the people's unbelief that God still answered prayers
    - 1.) God impressed on him the need to pray
    - 2.) Mueller prayed for God to direct him to a work where people would see results coming by God's hand only
  - c. When Mueller saw God lead him to do a work, he would pray to God for resources and tell no one of the need
    - 1.) Mueller built four orphanages that cared for 2,000 children at one time
    - 2.) He distributed over \$ 8MM that his prayers brought in
  - d. Here's Mueller;s approach to determining God's will
    - 1.) He sought to get his heart into a state where it had no will of its own in the matter at hand
    - 2.) He did not decide on feelings, simple impressions, emotions
    - 3.) He sought God's will through the Holy Spirit and God's Word
    - 4.) He took into account providential circumstances that match what he was seeking through the Spirit and the Word
    - 5.) After this preparation, he asked God to reveal His will to him
    - 6.) He finally came to a deliberate judgement based on all he has learned
      - a.) He repeated His request two or three times
      - b.) If his mind is at peace, he proceeded to follow God's will in the matter

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6. Bottom line - It is God Who initiates His work, not us
- a. To know what His purpose is, and hear His invitation to follow
    - 1.) We must be God-centered in a loving relationship
    - 2.) Reject self-centeredness
    - 3.) Seek guidance from the combined Spirit and Word
    - 4.) Ask the Lord for His will in faith

B. God Invites You to Join Him in His work

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1. We must look for God's timing, not ours, to work
  - a. When He is ready, He will show you - don't rush it
    - 1.) God will use that waiting time to mold and shape your character to be suited to the assignment
      - a.) Allowing the love relationship to develop more, so you can recognize His signal and instructions
      - b.) Molding, shaping your character to suit the assignment
    - b. Note this applied even to Jesus' work
      - 1.) He appeared working in the temple at 14
      - 2.) He was 30 before He began His formal ministry
      - 3.) In between, He worked as a carpenter while waiting for His Father to give Him the go ahead
      - 4.) And the Holy Spirit developed His human character, obedience, and whatever else was required to complete His assignment Lk 2.40, 52
  2. God will reveal when you are being invited to join in
    - a. Look at Jesus' example again
      - 1.) John 5.19-20
        - a.) Note that Jesus waited for the Father to show Him when it was time to join in
        - b.) Jesus kept looking for the Father's activity going on around Him and then joined in
        - c.) The Father told Jesus what was needed because He love Him and wants Him to join in
      - b. Look at a BIG missed invitation in Scripture
        - 1.) Jerusalem's leaders
          - a.) Jesus prophesied Jerusalem's coming destruction in AD 70
          - b.) He had done a host of miracles and preaching in front of the leaders, and they failed to see that it was God working
          - c.) They had been diligent Scripture students, but didn't develop the love relationship with God

3. How can we know where God is at work

a. Look for things only God can do

- 1.) Drawing people to Himself
- 2.) Causing people to seek after Him
- 3.) Revealing spiritual truth
- 4.) Convicting the world of their sin guilt
- 5.) Convicting the world of righteousness, and what it is
- 6.) Convicting the world of the reality of coming judgement

4. What should you do when God has made you aware of where He is working ?

a. Pray

- 1.) Only the Father knows what He is doing and why
- 2.) Only He knows the best way to get it done, & what you can do
- 3.) Pray for His guidance as to what He wants you to do, how and with what

b. Make the connection

- 1.) Watch for where God prompts the answer to your prayers
- 2.) When you see something related begin to happen, be open to determining if this is the answer to your prayers for guidance
- 3.) Don't look for something bigger, missing God giving the next step !

c. Ask probing questions

- 1.) For example, God's answer to your prayers may be a person coming to you with a question related to what you are praying about
- 2.) Don't give an immediate answer, or take immediate action
- 3.) Ask questions to find out what God is doing in their life
  - a.) *How & what can I pray for you ?* [example of CM students sidewalk table]
  - b.) Do you want to talk ?
  - c.) What is the most significant thing happening in your life right now ?
  - d.) Would you tell me what God is doing in your life ?

d. Be sure to listen long before taking any action or giving advice

- 1.) Look for signs of where God is working in the person's life
- 2.) Pray for additional direction from God of where and how He would want you to join Him working

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5. Remember the surety of God's purpose in inviting you to work with Him

a. Note

Isa 46.11b

"...Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass.  
I have planned it, surely I will do it"

Isa 14.24, 27

"24 The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely,  
just as I have intended so it has happened, and  
just as I have planned so it will stand, ...

27 "For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can  
frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand,  
who can turn it back?"

b. What God starts, He completes

- 1.) If He invites you to work with Him on something, you  
can be confident of His full support

Phil 1.6

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began  
a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

- a.) This isn't limited to assurance of salvation  
b.) God will be just as faithful in completing a work He  
has invited you to join Him in

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CONCLUSION

Remarks from Slide 18