

MESSAGE OUTLINE

Sunday, September 3, 2023

Today's Message: **GOD'S INVITATION***
Pastor Gary Stump
Experiencing God—Reality 3

Do we want to see evidence of God at work around us?

John 5:17b (NLT) Jesus [said], "My Father is always working, and so am I."

Is God actively engaged in our lives and in those around us? How can we recognize His hand at work, and how should we respond when we do?

SEVEN REALITIES OF EXPERIENCING GOD:

1. God is always at work around you.
2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.
3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.
4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.
5. God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.
6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.
7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him, and He accomplishes His work through you.

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

But if you're living a self-centered life, you will miss God's invitation.

Self-centered living is characterized by: (pp. 113-14)

- life focused on self
- pride in yourself and personal accomplishments
- self-confidence
- depending on self and one's own abilities
- affirming self
- seeking to be acceptable to the world and its ways
- looking at circumstances from a human perspective
- selfish and materialistic living

"The world urges us to protect, pamper, promote, comfort, and prosper ourselves." (Blackaby, 115)

God-centered living is characterized by: (p. 113)

- confidence in God
- dependence on God, on His abilities and provision
- a life focused on God and His activity
- humility before God
- denial of self
- seeking first the kingdom of God, His righteousness
- seeking God's perspective on our circumstances
- holy and godly living

"We must come to a place where we renounce our self-focused approach to life and turn the attention and control over to God." (p. 112)

1 Corinthians 13:11 (NLT) When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things.

Biblical Illustration: Israel

Psalm 81:11–14 (CSB) “But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel did not obey me. ¹² So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own plans.”... If only my people would listen to me and Israel would follow my ways, ¹⁴ I would quickly subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes.”

God doesn't lay out every detail of His plan, but will give us the next step

Psalm 119:105 (NIV84) Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

- You must be careful to identify God's initiative and distinguish it from your desires. A self-centered person tends to confuse his or her personal agenda with God's will.
- Stop the “Open and Closed Doors” praying—“the danger in this thinking lies in assuming that God's will is always the path of least resistance.”
- Difficult circumstances have nothing to do with obeying God's will
- God does not ask you to dream up something you can do for Him
- Frequently, the reason God's people miss His activity is that they are not committed to joining Him. They want God to bless their plans, not to adjust to His will.

George Mueller summed up the way to a heart relationship with God:

1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter.
2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If so, I make myself liable to great delusions.
3. I seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Spirit guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.
4. Next, I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.
5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.
6. Thus, through prayer to God, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. (pp. 125-126)

I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter.

George Muller. Answers to Prayer From George Müller's Narratives. (Public Domain. 1985. Kindle Edition).

What does “God at work” sound like:

“My family is really having a tough time financially.”

“I am having serious difficulty with my teenager.”

“Why does your family seem to work?”

“I wish I had a marriage like yours.”

“How come you're not stressed about that problem?”

“How do you remain calm with all that's going on right now?”

“I wish I could be sure about God like you are.”

“I'd like to know more about the Bible.”

Turtles on Fencepost

Romans 3:11 (NLT) No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God.

John 6:44 (NLT) For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up.

When God reveals to you what He is doing, that is the time for you to respond.

Two factors to recognize God's activity around you:

1. You must be living in an intimate love relationship with God.
2. God must open your spiritual eyes so you can see what He is doing. (p. 134)

Philippians 2:13 (NLT) For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

SO WHAT? Is your life best characterized as self-centered or God-centered?

What am I presently doing that can only be explained by God's activity in my life?

Questions for Reflection:

1. Do you desire more than anything else to know and do the will of God? If your honest answer is "no," what must happen before you can reach the place where your will is replaced by God's?
2. Do you have some plans that God has not been blessing? If so, why might that be?
3. Have you been experiencing difficult times lately? Have they caused you to grow discouraged in doing what God told you to do?
4. How might God interpret your current circumstances? Are your difficulties indicating that God wants you to quit what you are doing?

Closing Blessing:

2 Thessalonians 1:11 (NLT) So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do.

Hebrews 13:20–21 (NLT) Now may the God of peace— who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—²¹ may he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.

* The messages in this series have been inspired and adapted from the book: Henry T. Blackaby; Richard Blackaby; Claude V. King. *Experiencing God (2021 Edition)*. (B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition).



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ONWARD CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2023

1. NO YOUTH GROUP TONIGHT or NEXT SUNDAY (Labor Day Weekend & Family Camp)

2. HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY THIS WEDNESDAY, September 6th—We would love to have you join us at the Brown's house (14079 Clifton Court, Fishers, IN, 46040). You can bring your high school friends!

3. FAMILY CAMP SCHEDULE—SEPTEMBER 8-10

Blue Gate Garden Inn

800 S Van Buren St, Shipshewana, IN 46565
(260) 768-4725

FRIDAY

Check-In (earliest)	3:00pm
Dinner on your own	
Evening Program	7:30pm
Ice Cream Social	9:00pm

SATURDAY

Breakfast	7-9am
Morning Program	9:30am
Group Activity	11:00am
Free Time	Noon-5pm

Saturday—cont'd.

Dinner	5:00pm
Das Dutchman Essenhaus 240 US-20, Middlebury, IN 46540	
Evening Program	7:30pm
Free Time	9:00pm

SUNDAY

Breakfast	7-9am
Morning Program	9:00am
Check-Out	11:00am

4. MEN'S BIBLE STUDY—Beginning Friday September 15th—Each Friday at 7am at MCA. Study in the book of Romans. See Alex Abell for more info.

5. LADIES BIBLE STUDY (Two Options):

- **Beginning September 13th Wednesday Mornings @ 9:30am**—Each Wednesday morning at 9:30am at Kathy Stump's house (12928 Whitehaven Lane, Fishers, IN 46038). Studying the book of Ephesians. For more info email Kathy at kathystump77@gmail.com.
- **Beginning September 14th Thursday Evenings @ 7:00-8:30 pm**—Each Thursday evening at 7:00-8:30pm at Lynda North's house (9929 Brightwater Dr., Fishers, IN 46038). Studying the book of Ephesians. For more info email Lynda at LANorth7@gmail.com.

6. NEW GIVING QR CODE—If you would like to give online you can use this code →



Giving QR Code

7. PAL ("PARENTS OF ADDICTED LOVED ONES") MEETING—This is for families of adult children dealing with substance addiction. Every Tuesday night, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. Free weekly meetings. Dr. Nancy Smith, facilitator. For more information, contact nancy1108smith@gmail.com or 317-508-8149.

8. GIVE BIBLES IN HONOR OF OR IN MEMORY OF A LOVED ONE—The Gideons have provided a display on the counter in the foyer for you to give God's word in honor or in memory of a loved one.

9. ONWARD PRAYER RESPONSE CARD ONLINE—To make it easier for some to complete your Prayer Response Card... you can **scan this QR code.** →



Prayer Card QR Code