

UNIT

4

VERSE TO MEMORIZE

"The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him."

JOHN 14:21



LOVE & GOD'S INVITATION

God Is Provider

When the church I led in Canada started its first mission, we called Jack Conner as our mission pastor. However, we had no money for moving expenses and no funds for his salary. Jack had three children in school, so we felt we ought to pay him at least a modest salary to provide for his family. We prayed that God would provide for his moving expenses and salary since our church had no funds to pay him ourselves. I had never guided a church to do that before. We had stepped out in faith, believing God wanted Jack to be the pastor of our mission in Prince Albert. Except for a few people in California, I didn't know anyone who could help us financially. I began to ask myself, *How in the world will God make this provision?* Then it dawned on me that as long as God knew where I was, He could lead anyone in the world to find me. As long as He knew our situation, He could place our need on the heart of anyone He chose.

Jack sold his house, got in his car with his family, and set out for Canada, still not knowing how he would be paid or if his expenses would be covered, but convinced that God had called him. While Jack was on his way, I received a letter from a church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, that read, "God has laid it on our heart to send 1 percent of our mission giving to Saskatchewan missions. We are sending a check to use however you choose." I did not know how they got involved with us at that time, but a check arrived for \$1,100.

A few days later, I received a phone call from someone who heard about what we were doing and wanted to send regular financial support. The person's pledge completed the amount of money we needed for Jack's monthly salary. Just as I got off the phone, Jack pulled into our driveway.

I asked, "Jack, what did it cost to move you?"

He said, "Well, Henry, as best I can tell, it cost me \$1,100." I can't begin to describe for you what a joyous lunch we shared together that day as we celebrated God's goodness!

We took a step of faith by believing that the God who knows where we are is the God who can mobilize people anywhere in the world and cause them to know where we are and what we need. We made the adjustments and were obedient. We believed that the God who called Jack had also said, "I AM Provider." As we obeyed, God demonstrated Himself to be our Provider. In an extremely practical way, that experience led us to a deeper love relationship with our all-sufficient God.

DAY 1

I know God more intimately as He reveals Himself to me through my experiences with Him.

KNOW GOD

This unit continues to focus on your love relationship with God. You will find that the call to a relationship is also a call to be on mission with Him. If you want to know God's will, you must respond to His invitation to love Him wholeheartedly. God works through those He loves in order to carry out His Kingdom purposes in the world. During this unit we will look at how God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.

KNOWING GOD BY EXPERIENCE

You will never be satisfied merely to know *about* God. You come to know God through experience as He reveals Himself to you and you respond to what He says. When Moses was at the burning bush, he asked God, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what should I tell them?" (Ex. 3:13).

God responded, "**I AM WHO I AM.** This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Ex. 3:14). When God said, "I AM WHO I AM," He meant "I AM the eternal One. I will be what I will be." He was saying, "I am everything you will need." Just fill in the blank for your particular situation: "I am ..." During the next forty years Moses came to know God experientially as Jehovah or Yahweh, the great I AM.

In the Bible, God took the initiative to reveal Himself to people by experience. Frequently, when God revealed Himself to individuals, He disclosed a new name to them or described Himself in a fresh way. To a Hebrew, a person's name represented his character and described his nature. This is why in the Bible we frequently see new names or titles for God following an event in which someone experienced God in a fresh way. To know God by name required a personal experience of His presence.

Biblical names, titles, and descriptions of God therefore identify ways Bible characters personally came to know God. The Scriptures are a record of God's revelation of Himself to people. Each name for God is a part of that revelation.

For example, Joshua and the Israelites were fighting the Amalekites. Moses was overseeing the battle from a nearby mountain. While he held his hands up to God, the Israelites were victorious. When he wearily lowered his hands, they began to lose. God defeated the Amalekites through Israel that day. Moses built an altar and gave it the name "**The LORD Is My Banner.**" A banner is the standard that goes in front of an army to indicate whom it represents. "The LORD Is My Banner" says we are God's people. He is our God. Moses' uplifted hands gave constant glory to God, indicating the battle was His and Israel belonged to Him. Israel came to know God in a deeper way as they realized anew, "We are God's people; the Lord is our Banner." (See Ex. 17:8-15.)

1 For another example, read Genesis 22:1-18 and answer the following:

a. What did God ask Abraham to do (v. 2)? _____

b. What do you think verse 8 indicates about Abraham? _____

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1 For another example, read Genesis 22:1-18 and answer the following.

a. What did God ask Abraham to do (v. 2)? _____

b. What do you think verse 8 indicates about Abraham? _____

c. What did God do for Abraham (v. 13)? _____

d. What name did Abraham give the place (v. 14)? _____

e. Why did God promise to bless Abraham (vv. 15-18)? _____

God was in the process of developing Abraham's character to be the father of a nation. He put Abraham's faith and obedience to the test, bringing Abraham to a crisis of belief. Abraham had faith that the Lord would provide (see v. 8). He adjusted his life to act on his belief that God was **Provider**. He obeyed God. When God provided a ram, Abraham came to an intimate knowledge of God by experiencing God as his Provider.

2 Look at the seven realities on the inside back cover. How does Abraham's experience of God follow that sequence?

At the beginning of this unit, you read how my church and Jack Conner came to know God as Provider. God revealed Himself to us through our experience of Him at work in our lives.

As a pastor of college students, I regularly met with the students. I knew they were in a period of rapid change in their lives, and I wanted to help them as they made major life decisions. A wonderful young woman who was studying nursing came to my office. I had been praying for her and God's work in her life. We talked about her alcoholic father. We discussed her decision to continue in nursing. Then I looked at her and said, "I want you to know that God has laid on my heart to pray for a husband for you."

She asked, "Are you serious?"

I said, "I *am* serious. Because you had an alcoholic father and have experienced so much turmoil and heartache, I believe God wants to give you a wonderful man to love you for who you are. I want you to know that, beginning today, I am praying that God will give you a wonderful, loving husband."

The young woman wept. She and I began to pray that God would provide her a life partner. About three months later, God brought into our church a young man who was an engineering student. The two fell in love, and I performed their wedding ceremony. Today, they have two children and have faithfully and joyfully served their Lord for many years.

How did this college student know God could provide a husband? She claimed who God was and then watched and prayed as God acted toward her in that way. She was willing to receive the one God gave her. She was prepared to respond when God revealed His choice to her. Then she came to know God as the **Provider of partners**.

3 Describe an event through which you know you experienced God at work in your life. _____

What name could you use to describe the God you experienced?

4 Read the following list of names, titles, and descriptions of God. Check those that describe God in ways you have personally experienced Him.

- My Advocate (Job 16:19)
- Comforter in sorrow (Jer. 8:18)
- Wonderful Counselor (Isa. 9:6)
- My strong Deliverer (Ps. 140:7)
- Our Father (Isa. 64:8)
- A sure Foundation (Isa. 28:16)
- God Almighty (Gen. 17:1)
- God who avenges me (Ps. 18:47)
- Our Guide (Ps. 48:14)
- Our Help (Ps. 33:20)
- Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14)
- My Hope (Ps. 71:5)
- Righteous Judge (2 Tim. 4:8)
- Our Leader (2 Chron. 13:12)
- Light of life (John 8:12)
- Lord of the harvest (Matt. 9:38)
- The Most Holy (Dan. 9:24)
- Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6)
- Refuge and Strength (Ps. 46:1)
- My Savior (Ps. 42:5)
- Sovereign Lord (Luke 2:29)
- My Support (2 Sam. 22:19)
- Bread of life (John 6:35)
- My Confidence (Ps. 71:5)
- Defender of widows (Ps. 68:5)
- Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11)
- A consuming Fire (Deut. 4:24)
- My Friend (Job 16:20)
- God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3)
- God who saves me (Ps. 51:14)
- Head of the church (Eph. 5:23)
- My Hiding Place (Ps. 32:7)
- Holy One among you (Hos. 11:9)
- Jealous (Ex. 34:14)
- King of kings (1 Tim. 6:15)
- Your Life (Col. 3:4)
- Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15)
- Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5)
- Our Peace (Eph. 2:14)
- My Redeemer (Ps. 19:14)
- My Salvation (Ex. 15:2)
- The Good Shepherd (John 10:11)
- My Stronghold (Ps. 18:2)
- Good Teacher (Mark 10:17)

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

Knowing God comes only through experience as He reveals Himself to me.

I know God more intimately as He reveals Himself to me through my experiences with Him.

Did you see that you have come to know God through experience? Could you check any of the names and not think of an experience in which God acted that way in your life? For instance, you could not have known God as Comforter in sorrow unless you had *experienced* His comfort during a time of sorrow. You come to know God when He reveals Himself to you. You come to know Him as you experience Him. That is why we have titled this course *Experiencing God*. You come to know God more intimately as He reveals Himself to you through your experiences with Him.

5 Write your Scripture memory verse for this unit in the margin above and review your verses from other units.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

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

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

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

WORSHIP GOD

DAY 2

Yesterday you learned that you come to know God by experience at His initiative. You learned that a Hebrew name described a person's character or nature. The name was closely associated with the person and his activity. Thus, to call on someone's name was to seek his presence. God's name is majestic and worthy of our praise. David wrote about the majesty of God's name in **Psalm 8:1**. Acknowledging God's name amounts to recognizing who God is. Calling on His name indicates that you are seeking His presence. Praising His name is praising *Him*.

Seeing God's names in Scripture can inspire you to worship Him. To worship is to reverence and honor God, to acknowledge Him as worthy of your praise. Spend this day worshiping God through His names. The psalms are rich in their instructions to direct your worship toward God through His names.

To worship is to reverence and honor God, to acknowledge Him as worthy of your praise.

1 Read the Scriptures below and on the next page. Circle or underline words or phrases that describe ways you can direct your worship toward God through His names.

"Save us, LORD our God,
and gather us from the nations,
so that we may give thanks to your holy name
and rejoice in your praise" (Ps. 106:47).

"All the nations you have made
will come and bow down before you, Lord,
and will honor your name" (Ps. 86:9).

"I will praise you forever for what you have done.
I will put my hope in your name, for it is
good" (Ps. 52:9).

"Those who know your name trust in you,
because you have not abandoned those
who seek you, LORD" (Ps. 9:10).

"Let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them shout for joy forever.
May you shelter them,
and may those who love your name
boast about you" (Ps. 5:11).

"We boast in God all day long;
we will praise your name forever"
(Ps. 44:8).

LORD, our Lord,
how magnificent is your name throughout the
earth! (Ps. 8:1)

"Revive us, and we will call on your name"
(Ps. 80:18).

"I will proclaim your name to my brothers and
sisters" (Ps. 22:22).

"Give me an undivided mind
to fear your name" (Ps. 86:11).

"Cover their faces with shame
so that they will seek your name, LORD"
(Ps. 83:16).

"I will thank the LORD for
his righteousness;
I will sing about the name of the
LORD Most High" (Ps. 7:17).

"The whole earth will worship you
and sing praise to you.
They will sing praise to your name"
(Ps. 66:4).

Ways to Worship God

- Bless His name
- Glory in His name
- Rejoice in His name
- Call on His name
- Hope in His name
- Remember the name
- Declare His name
- Know His name
- Seek His name
- Fear His name
- Lift up hands
in His name
- Sing praise to His name
- Give thanks to His name
- Love His name
- Sing to His name
- Glorify His name
- Praise His name
- Trust in His name

2 Use these ways to worship God. Turn to “Names, Titles, and Descriptions of God” on page 268. Spend the remainder of your study time today in worship. The names direct your attention to Him, who He is, and what He does. Praise Him for who He is. Thank Him for what He has done. Glorify Him. Love and adore Him. Seek Him. Trust Him. Sing to Him. Take as much time as you like for this period of worship. Make this a meaningful time to experience your love relationship with the Lord.

Review today’s lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

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

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

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

DAY 3

LOVE GOD

*If I love Him,
I will obey Him!*

John 14:21

“The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him.”

God takes the initiative to pursue a love relationship with you. This love relationship is not a one-sided affair. He wants you to know Him, worship Him, and love Him.

1 Read John 14:21 in the margin and answer these questions.

- Who is the one who loves Jesus? What does he have and do? _____

- How does the Father respond to the one who loves Jesus? _____

- What two things will Jesus do for the one who loves Him? _____

Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commands” (John 14:15). When you obey Jesus, you demonstrate that you love Him and trust Him. The Father loves those who love His Son. For those who love Him, Jesus said He would love them and show Himself to them. Obedience is the outward expression of your love for God. The reward for your obedience and love is that Jesus will reveal Himself to you. Jesus set an example for you in His life. He said, “On the contrary, so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do as the Father commanded me” (John 14:31). Jesus obeyed every command of the Father. He demonstrated His love for the Father by obedience.

2 How can you demonstrate your love for God? _____

A love relationship with God requires that you demonstrate your love by obedience. If you love Him, you will obey Him. This is not just following the letter of the law but following the spirit of the command as well. If you have an obedience problem, you have a love problem. Focus on loving God so much that you willingly obey everything He says.

GOD'S NATURE

God's nature is love. He will never function contrary to His nature. God will never express His will toward you except as an expression of His perfect love. He can't! He will never give you second best. His nature will not allow Him to. He will bring discipline, judgment, and wrath on those who continue in sin and rebellion. His discipline, however, is always based on love (see **Heb. 12:6**). Because God's nature is love, the way He expresses Himself to you is always best. Two verses describe His love toward us: "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16) and "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16).

"God is love" (1 John 4:16). Your absolute trust in God's love is crucial. This has been a powerful influence in my life. I never look at circumstances without seeing them against the backdrop of the cross. My relationship with God determines everything I do.

3 Do you believe that God's will for you is always best? Why or why not? How does your walk with God reflect your confidence in God's love? _____

Your relationship with God reveals what you believe about Him. It is spiritually impossible for you to truly believe one way and live another. If you believe God is love, you will also accept the fact that His will is always best. By nature God is omniscient—all-knowing. He has all knowledge—past, present, and future. Nothing is outside His understanding. Whenever God guides you, therefore, His directions are always right and trustworthy.

Have you ever asked God to give you several alternatives so you could choose the best one for you? How many options does God need to give you for you to have the best one? One! God always gets it right the first time!

4 Do you ever argue with God? Yes No Do you ever refuse to obey what God says? If you do, what does that reveal about your view of God's wisdom? _____

Whenever God gives you a directive, it is always right. God's will is always best. You never have to question whether His guidance is the best path for you. It always is. This is true because He loves you and knows the future. Because He loves you perfectly, you can trust Him and obey Him.

God is omnipotent—all-powerful. He created the world from nothing. He will accomplish anything He purposes to do. If He asks you to do something, He Himself will enable you to accomplish it. We will look at this fact more closely in day 5.

5 What is God currently asking you to do that appears impossible or extremely difficult? Why would He do that? How will you respond? _____



If you have an obedience problem, you have a love problem.

Hebrews 12:6
"The Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

- 6** Match the fact about God's nature on the left with the correct application statement on the right. Write the correct letters in the blanks.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ___ 1. God is love. | a. God's directions are right. |
| ___ 2. God is all-knowing. | b. God can enable me to do His will. |
| ___ 3. God is all-powerful. | c. God's will is best. |

When your life is in the middle of God's activity, He will rearrange your thinking. God's ways and thoughts are so different from yours and mine they will often sound wrong or impossible. Your heart must be prepared to believe God and trust Him completely. You must believe that what He is doing is best for you. Don't try to second-guess Him. Let Him be God. The answers are 1-c, 2-a, 3-b.

God will begin to make Himself known to you simply as He would to a child. As you respond to Him in childlike trust, a whole new way of looking at life will begin to unfold for you. Your life will be fulfilling. You will never sense an emptiness or a lack of purpose in your life. God always fills your life with Himself. When you have Him, you have everything God has, available to your life.

GOD'S COMMANDS

- 7** When you hear words like *commands, judgments, statutes, and laws*, is your first impression negative or positive? Negative Positive Why?

God's commands are expressions of His love. In Deuteronomy 10:12-13 God declares that His commands are for our good: "What does the LORD your God ask of you except to fear the LORD your God by walking in all his ways, to love him, and to worship the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul? Keep the LORD's commands and statutes I am giving you today, for your own good."

- 8** Read Deuteronomy 32:46-47 in the margin. What effect should God's words have for you? _____

The foundation of these passages is the love relationship. When you come to know God by experience, you will be convinced of His love. When you are assured of His love, you can believe Him and trust Him. When you trust Him, you will obey Him. Scripture indicates, "This is what love for God is: to keep his commands. And his commands are not a burden" (1 John 5:3).

God loves you deeply and profoundly. Because He loves you, He has given you guidelines for living so you will not miss the full dimensions of the love relationship. Life also has some land mines that can destroy you or harm your life. God does not want to see you miss His best, and He does not want your life destroyed by foolish choices.

Suppose you were in a war-torn country and had to cross a field full of land mines. Suppose a person who knew exactly where each mine was buried offered to take you through the mine field. Would you say to him, "I don't want you to tell me what to do. I have free will! I don't want you to impose your ways on me"?

I don't know about you, but I would stay as close to that person as I could. I certainly would not wander off. His directions to me would preserve my life. He would say, "Don't go that way, because that way will kill you. Go this way, and you will live."

That is the purpose of God's commands. He wants you to receive life and have it abundantly. When the Lord gives you a command, He is trying to protect and preserve

Deuteronomy 32:46-47

"He said to them, 'Take to heart all these words I am giving as a warning to you today, so that you may command your children to follow all the words of this law carefully. For they are not meaningless words to you but they are your life, and by them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.'"



the best He has for you. He does not want you to forfeit His best for you. When God gives a command, He is not restricting you. He is freeing you.

9 Read Deuteronomy 6:20-25 below. Then underline the purpose of God's commandments, decrees, stipulations, and laws.

"When your son asks you in the future, 'What is the meaning of the decrees, statutes, and ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you?' tell him, ... 'The LORD commanded us to follow all these statutes and to fear the LORD our God for our prosperity always and for our preservation, as it is today. Righteousness will be ours if we are careful to follow every one of these commands before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us' " (Deut. 6:20-25).

God has given His commands so you can prosper and live life to its fullest measure. Let me give you an example. Suppose the Lord says, "Let me tell you where a beautiful, wonderful expression of love is. I will provide you with a spouse. Your relationship with this person will bring out the best in you. It will give you an opportunity to experience some of the deepest and most meaningful expressions of human love. That individual will encourage you, believe in you, and stand with you when you grow discouraged. That person will love you, believe in you, and trust you. From that relationship I will give you children who will sit on your knee and say, 'I love you.'"

But God also says, "Do not commit adultery" (Matt. 5:27). Is that command to limit or restrict you? No! It is to protect and free you to experience love at its best. What happens if you break the command and commit adultery? The love relationship is ruptured. Trust is gone. Hurt sets in. Guilt and bitterness creep in. Your children begin to struggle. Deep hurts severely limit the future dimensions of love you could have experienced together.

God's commands are designed to guide you to life's best. You will not obey Him, however, if you do not believe and trust Him. You will not believe Him if you do not love Him. You cannot love Him unless you know Him. But if you really come to know God as He reveals Himself to you, you will love Him. If you love Him, you will believe and trust Him. If you believe and trust Him, you will obey Him.

God is love. Because of His love, His will for you is always best. He is all-knowing, so His directions are always right. He has given His commands so you can prosper and live life to its fullest measure. If you love Him, you will obey Him!



SUMMARY STATEMENTS

Obedience is the outward expression of my love for God.

If I have an obedience problem, I have a love problem.

God is love. His will is always best.

God is all-knowing. His directions are always right.

God is all-powerful. He can enable me to do His will.

When God gives a commandment, He is not restricting me. He is freeing me.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

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

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

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

"I'm a Pastor Once Again"

I was attending a large convention meeting with my wife and my son Richard. Suddenly a man approached me and grabbed my hand. Fighting back his emotion, he explained that several years before, God had clearly called him to be a pastor. He had served in a church but had suffered deep hurts from vicious attacks by some of its members. He had resigned from the church, vowing never to serve in a church again. He obtained a good job in a new company and was soon a vice-president earning a large salary. For several years this man forsook his calling and immersed himself in his lucrative career.

Then the church he attended began studying *Experiencing God*. Through that course God reminded the bitter man that His love for him had never changed; neither had His call on his life. With tears streaming down his face, the man choked out, "I'm a pastor once again!" Bitter circumstances had taken this dear man's eyes off the love of his Lord, but as he returned to that love relationship, God enabled him to overcome the difficulties and pain he had faced in life.

DAY 4

GOD INVITES YOU TO JOIN HIM

When you see the Father at work around you, that is your invitation to adjust your life to Him and join Him in that work.

The Bible is the record of God's activity in the world. In it He reveals Himself (His nature), His purposes and plans, and His ways. The Bible is not primarily a book about individuals and their relationships with God, such as Abraham, Moses, and Paul. Rather, the Bible focuses on the activity of God and His relationships with individuals.

1 Describe a time when God invited you to become involved in His work.

GOD WORKS THROUGH PEOPLE

The Bible reveals that God has always been working in the world. He has never been absent from it or indifferent to what was taking place in history. When we read the Bible, we are reading God's redemptive activity in our world. We see that He chooses to take the initiative and involve His people in His work. He determines to work *through* people to accomplish His purposes.

- When God was about to judge the world, He came to Noah. He was going to do an awesome thing, and He was going to accomplish it through Noah.
- When God was going to build a nation for Himself, He came to Abraham. God was going to carry out His will through Abraham.
- When God heard the cry of the children of Israel and prepared to deliver them, He appeared to Moses. God came to Moses because of His plan to deliver the Israelites through him.

REALITY 3



INVITATION

Both the Old and New Testaments confirm that God works through people. When God's fullness of time had come to redeem a lost world through His Son, He gave 12 men to Jesus to prepare them to accomplish His purposes.

When God is about to do something, He takes the initiative and comes to one or more of His servants to let them know what He is about to do. He invites them to adjust their lives to Him so He will accomplish His work through them. The prophet Amos stated that:

The Lord GOD does nothing
without revealing his counsel to his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7).

- 2** In your own words, write out the process by which God typically accomplishes His purposes on earth. _____

GOD'S REVELATION IS YOUR INVITATION

You may be asking, *How does God invite me to be involved with Him?* Let's review Jesus' example from **John 5:17,19-20**. (See unit 1, p. 16.)

Jesus' Example

1. The Father has been working right up until now.
2. Now the Father has Me working.
3. I do nothing on My own initiative.
4. I watch to see what the Father is doing.
5. The Father loves Me.
6. He shows Me everything He is doing.
7. I do what I see the Father doing.

- 3** Read the verses in the margin. How did Jesus know what to do in His Father's work? _____

How did Jesus respond? _____

To experience God personally, remember God has been at work in our world from the beginning, and He is still working. Jesus lived His life aware that His Father was always at work around Him. He announced He had come not to do His own will but the will of the Father who had sent Him (see John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29; 17:4). To know the Father's will, Jesus said He watched to see what the Father was doing. Then Jesus joined Him in that work.

- 4** In the box "Jesus' Example," circle the key word in statement 4 that tells what Jesus did to recognize the Father's invitation to join Him.

The Father loved the Son and took the initiative to come to Him and reveal what He (the Father) was doing or was about to do. The Son was alert for the Father's activity around Him so He could unite His life with what the Father was doing.



God always takes
the initiative to
involve people
in His work.

John 5:17,19-20

"My Father is still working, and I am working also. Truly I tell you, the Son is not able to do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son likewise does these things. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing."

As God's child, you are in a love relationship with Him. Because He loves you and wants to involve you in His work, He will show you where He is working so you can join Him. The key word in statement 4 is *watch*. Jesus watched to see where the Father was at work. Then He did what He saw the Father doing. For Jesus the revelation of where the Father was working was His invitation to join God's activity. When you see the Father at work around you, that is your invitation to adjust your life to Him and join Him in that work.

Is it possible for God to be working around you without your seeing it? Yes. **Elisha** and his servant were in the city of Dothan surrounded by an enemy army. The servant was terrified, but Elisha remained calm. "Elisha prayed, 'LORD, please open his eyes and let him see.'" So the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he saw that the mountain was covered with horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17). Only when the Lord opened the servant's eyes did he see God's activity around him.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem and its leaders as He prophesied the destruction that would take place in A.D. 70. He said, "If you knew this day what would bring peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:42). God was in their midst performing wonderful signs and miracles; yet they did not recognize Him.

Two factors are important for you to recognize God's activity around you.

1. You must live in an intimate love relationship with God.
2. God must take the initiative to open your spiritual eyes so you can see what He is doing.

5 Why do you think you have missed joining God's activity around you in the past? _____

6 What are two factors important to your recognizing God's activity around you?

1. _____
2. _____

Unless God allows you to see where He is working, you will not recognize it. When God reveals to you what He is doing around you, that is your invitation to join Him. Recognizing God's activity depends on your love relationship with Him and His taking the initiative to open your spiritual eyes to see His activity.

WORKING WHERE GOD IS AT WORK

Our church sensed God wanted us to start new churches all across central and western Canada. Hundreds of towns and villages needed a church.

7 If you were in our situation, how would you decide where to begin working? _____

Some churches would begin with a demographic study or a survey. Then they would tabulate the results and apply human logic to decide where the most promising, productive places might be to start a church. Instead, we tried to find out what God was already doing around us. We believed He would show us where He was at work,

and that revelation would bring His activity to our attention. We began praying and watching to see what God would do next to answer our prayers.

Allan was a small town 40 miles from Saskatoon that had never had a Protestant church. It desperately needed one. One of our members felt led to conduct a Vacation Bible School for the children in Allan. We said, "Let's find out if God is at work there." At the end of the week of Vacation Bible School, we held a parents night. We said to the group, "We believe God may want us to establish a church in this town. If any of you would like to begin a regular Bible-study group and be a part of a new church, would you come forward?"

From the back of the hall a woman came who was weeping. She said, "I have prayed for 30 years that a church would be started in this town, and you are the first people to respond."

Right behind her came an elderly man. Deeply moved, he was also weeping. He said, "For years I was active in a church. Then I turned to alcohol. Four and a half years ago I came back to the Lord. I promised God then that I would pray four or five hours every day until God brought a church to our town. You are the first people to respond."

We didn't have to take a survey. God had just shown us where He was at work! That was our invitation to join Him. We went back and joyfully shared with our church what God was doing. The congregation immediately voted to start a new church in Allan. That congregation eventually helped establish several other congregations in surrounding towns.

God hasn't told us to go and do what we can. He has assured us that He is already at work bringing a lost world to Himself. If we will adjust our lives to Him, He will show us where He is working. That revelation is His invitation for us to become involved in what He is doing. Then when we join Him, He accomplishes His work through us.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

God is at work in the world.

God takes the initiative to involve me in His work.

God must take the initiative to open my spiritual eyes so that I can see what He is doing.

When I see the Father at work around me, that is my invitation to adjust my life to Him and join Him in that work.

God's revelation is my invitation to join Him.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

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

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

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

DAY
5

*What God initiates,
He completes.*

KNOWING WHERE GOD
IS AT WORK

Sometimes God tries to get our attention by revealing where He is at work. We see it, but we do not immediately identify it as His activity. We say to ourselves, *I don't know whether God wants me to get involved here. I had better pray about it.* By the time we pray, the opportunity to join God has passed us by. A tender, sensitive heart will be ready to respond to God at the slightest prompting. God sensitizes your heart to His so you are prepared to recognize and respond to what He is doing around you.

If you are going to join God in His work, you need to know where He is working. The Scriptures identify things only God can do. You need to learn to identify these. Then when something happens around you that only God can do, you will recognize it is God's activity. This does not deny God's initiative. Unless God opens your spiritual eyes, you will not know He is the One at work. He takes the initiative to open your eyes.

THINGS ONLY GOD CAN DO

- 1** At the beginning of unit 2, I gave an illustration of something only God can do. Review "College Campus Bible Studies" on page 31 and write something only God can do. _____

The Scriptures say no one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him (see John 6:44). People don't seek God or pursue spiritual matters unless the Spirit of God is at work in their life. Suppose a neighbor, a friend, or one of your children begins to inquire about spiritual things. You do not have to question whether that is God drawing him or her. He is the only One who can do that. People do not seek God unless He is at work in their lives.

For example, as Jesus passed through a crowd, He always looked for where the Father was at work. The crowd was not the harvest field. The harvest field was within the crowd. Jesus saw **Zacchaeus** in a tree. Jesus may have said to Himself, No one can seek Me with that kind of earnestness unless My Father is working in his heart. So Jesus pulled away from the crowd and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house" (Luke 19:5). What happened? Salvation came to that household that day. Jesus always looked for the activity of the Father and joined Him. Salvation came as a result of Jesus' joining His Father's activity.

- 2** Read the following Scriptures and answer the questions that follow.

"If you love me, you will keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. ... You do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you" (John 14:15-17).

If you love and obey Christ, whom will the Father give you? List two of His names. _____

Where will this Person live? _____

“The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you” (John 14:26).

What are two things the Holy Spirit will do for Jesus’ disciples?

“When he comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment” (John 16:8).

What are three things the Holy Spirit does? _____

When you become a Christian, you enter a love relationship with Jesus Christ—God Himself. At that point the Counselor, the Spirit of truth, takes up residence in your life. He is always present to teach you. The Holy Spirit also convicts people of their sin. He convicts the world of righteousness and judgment. Here’s a list of some things only God can do.

Things Only God Can Do

1. Draw people to Himself
2. Cause people to seek Him
3. Reveal spiritual truth
4. Convict the world of guilt about sin
5. Convict the world of righteousness
6. Convict the world of judgment

When you see one of these things happening, you know God is at work. He is active when you see someone coming to Christ, asking about spiritual matters, beginning to understand spiritual truth, experiencing conviction of sin, being convinced of Christ’s righteousness, or being convinced of judgment.

WATCHING FOR GOD’S ACTIVITY

Jim had worked hard to become the CEO of his company. For years he had focused on climbing the corporate ladder, paying whatever price was necessary to get to the top. God began to convict Jim that he had never asked God why He had placed him in his influential position. Jim prayed and asked God to open his eyes to what He was doing in the company. That week someone on his staff began talking about the Bible. When Jim answered his questions, the employee asked him how he knew so much about the Bible. He asked Jim what he could do to know the Bible the way Jim did.

- 3** Suppose you were in Jim’s place. How would you find out what to do next? _____



Pray and watch to see what God does next.

Pray and watch to see what God does next. Only the Father knows what He has purposed. He knows the best way to accomplish His will. He understands why He brought these individuals together in this company and why He elevated Jim to be CEO. After you pray, get off your knees and watch to see what God does next. For Jim, it might be to lead a Bible study for interested employees on Wednesdays during the lunch hour. Jim would watch to see what people said when they participated. Suppose someone in the plant comes to Jim and says, "My family is really having a hard time handling some medical expenses financially." Or, "I am having an especially tough time with my teenager."

Make the connection. Jim prayed, "God, show me where You are at work." He needs to make the connection between his prayers and what happens next. If you do not connect your prayer with what happens after you pray, you may miss God's answer to your prayer. Always connect what happens next. Then what should Jim do?

Find out what God is already doing by asking probing questions. Ask questions that reveal what is happening in that person's life so you find out what God is doing:

Probing Questions

- How can I pray for you?
- Do you want to talk?
- What is the biggest need you have in your life right now?
- What is the most significant thing happening in your life now?
- What do you think God is trying to do?
- What are you learning about yourself through this?
- What do you think God is trying to say?

Listen. The person responds, "I really don't have a relationship with God. But since having this problem with my teenager, I sure have been thinking about it." Or "When I was a kid, I used to go to Sunday School. My mom and dad made me go. I got away from it, but our financial problems have really caused me to think about this." Those statements sound as if God is at work in the person's life. He may be drawing her to Himself, causing her to seek God, or bringing conviction of sin.

- 4** What ways can you discern if God is working in someone's life?

- 5** Look again at the box "Things Only God Can Do" on page 83. What would you watch for as you look for God's activity in the lives of people around you? List at least three.

I would watch for someone who _____

- 6** List in the margin the names of people around you who are currently experiencing God's activity in their lives.

When you want to know what God is doing around you, pray. Watch to see what happens next. Make the connection between your prayer and what happens next. Find out what God is doing by asking probing questions. Then listen. Be ready to make the adjustments required to join God in what He is already doing.

A man visited our church by accident and saw in the bulletin statements requesting prayer for our missions in Kyle, Prince Albert, Love, Regina, Blaine Lake, and other locations. He asked what the requests meant. I explained that our church had made a commitment: if God showed us where someone desired a Bible study or a church, we would respond. He asked, "You mean if I asked you to come and help us start a church in our town, you would come?" I told him we would, and he started to cry. He owned a construction company in Leroy, 75 miles east of us. He said he had been pleading with people to start a church in Leroy for 24 years. Nobody wanted to help. He asked if we would come. We established a church in Leroy and bought two lots on the main street. This man was so excited he bought a school building and moved it to the site. He eventually became its lay pastor.

As a church we were already conditioned to recognize things only God could do. When He let us see where He was working, we immediately realized that was our invitation to join Him. Frequently, the reason we do not join God is because we are not committed to join Him. We want God to bless us, not to work through us. As a church, do not look for ways God is going to bless you. Look for ways God is going to work through you and beyond you to accomplish His purposes and bring glory to Himself. God's work in you will bring a blessing to you and others, but the blessing is a by-product of your obedience and experience of God at work in your midst.

Who can tell what a visitor can mean to your church? Ask questions about what God is doing in that person's life. Then you will know how to adjust your life to be an instrument of God so He can accomplish His work through you. When you start to see God moving, adjust your life and respond.

- 7** Has this illustration given you any ideas about how you can begin to watch for God's activity around you? in your family? in your work? in your church? Write any ideas you have in the margin.

The impressions you wrote down may be from God Himself. He may be inviting you to join His activity. Pray and watch to see what happens next.

WHEN GOD SPEAKS

We have spent two days focusing on God's invitation for you to become involved with Him in His work. Be aware of two points about God's invitation for you to join Him.

- 1. God speaks when He is about to accomplish His purposes.** Scripture demonstrates that when God reveals to you what He is doing, that is the time to respond. Although the completion of God's work may take a long time—for example, Abram's son was born 25 years after God's promise—the time God comes to you is the time for your response. That is when you must adjust your life to Him. You may need to prepare for what He is going to do through you.
- 2. What God initiates, He completes.** Isaiah confirmed this truth when God said,

I have spoken; so I will also bring it about.

I have planned it; I will also do it" (Isa. 46:11).



If God showed us where someone desired a Bible study or a church, we would respond.



God speaks when He is about to accomplish His purposes.

Earlier he warned God's people,

The LORD of Armies has sworn:
 As I have purposed, so it will be;
 as I have planned it, so it will happen.
 For the LORD of Armies himself has planned it; therefore, who can
 stand in its way?
 It is his hand that is outstretched, so who can turn it back?
 (Isa. 14:24,27).

God says that if He lets His people know what He is about to do, it is as good as done—He Himself will bring it to pass (also see 1 Kings 8:56; Phil. 1:6).

When God speaks, He guarantees it will happen. This holds enormous implications for individual believers, churches, and denominations. When we come to God to know what He is about to do where we are, we also have the assurance that what God reveals He is about to do will certainly occur.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

A tender, sensitive heart will be ready to respond to God at the slightest prompting.

Pray and watch to see what God does next.

Make the connection. Ask probing questions. Listen.

God speaks when He is about to accomplish His purposes.

What God initiates, He completes.

8 What God initiates, He always completes. Agree Disagree
 What is the reason for your response? _____

If you disagreed with the statement, be sure to always base your understanding of God on Scripture, not on your personal opinion or experience alone. Throughout history, people have said they had a word from the Lord, but then it did not come to pass. Do not look to these kinds of experiences to determine your understanding of God.

I must add a strong word of caution for spiritual leaders: if you ever indicate to God's people that you have a word from the Lord, you are obligated to follow through with what God said until He brings it to pass. God declared that anyone who says, "I have a word from the Lord" but what they said does not come to pass they are a false prophet (see Deut. 18:18-22; Jer. 28:9; Ezek. 12:24-25). A true prophet of God declares a word from the Lord that comes to pass. God's nature demands it! Whatever God says inevitably occurs.

9 Review your Scripture memory verses and be prepared to recite them to a partner in your small group session this week.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	What does God want you to do in response to today's study? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
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LOVE AND GOD'S INVITATION

SESSION 4

VIDEO TEACHING NOTES

1. One of the most beautiful things about our relationship with God is that He invites us to become involved with Him.
2. Don't ever underestimate what God can make of you.
3. When you pray, do you stop and watch what God does after you pray?
4. When God invites you into His activity, He does so from a place of being all-knowing and all-loving.
5. Sometimes it's not the big things God calls you to do, but the small things that have a big impact.

Scriptures Referenced

Ephesians 2:1
Ephesians 2:10
John 5:7, 19-20
John 6:44

Sharing Time

- An event through which you have come to know God by experience and the name that describes Him (activity 3, p. 71)
- (Move to quads.) What you thought, felt, or experienced during worship on day 2 (activity 2, p. 74)
- Ideas for recognizing God's activity around you (activity 7, p. 85)
- One of the most meaningful statements or Scriptures from this unit's lessons and your prayer responses to God. Choose one from pages 72, 77, 81, and 86.

YOUR NOTES

UNIT REVIEW

Match the fact about God's nature on the left with the application statement on the right. Write the correct letters in the blanks (activity 6, p. 76).

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ___ 1. God is love. | a. God's directions are right. |
| ___ 2. God is all-knowing. | b. God can enable me to do His will. |
| ___ 3. God is all-powerful. | c. God's will is best. |

Fill in the blanks in the third reality of experiencing God (activity 1, p. 78).

God invites you to become _____
with Him in His _____

List at least three things only God can do (p. 83).

Check your answers, using the pages cited in parentheses.

Streamable session videos are included with the purchase price of this book. Look for your access code on the insert attached in the back of this book.