

**Reality 1:**  
**God is Always at Work Around You**

---

Right now God is working all around you. One of the greatest tragedies among God's people is that they are experiencing God day after day but do not know how to recognize Him. We want to help you learn to recognize clearly the activity of God in your life. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God will instruct you and help you know when and where God is working. Once you know where He is working, you can adjust your life to join Him.

**Biblical Servanthood**

We are to be the Father's servants (John 20:21), but I fear most Christians have the wrong idea of servanthood. They think a servant is one who finds out what his master wants him to do, and then he does it by himself. That is not a biblical concept of a servant. Rather than following the world's understanding of how a servant functions, we must follow the biblical concept of servanthood.

We often act as though God tells us what He wants us to do and sends us off all by ourselves to try and do it. We demonstrate that we are centered on ourselves and our actions rather than centered on God and His. Then we act as if we can call on Him and He will help us if we run into difficulties. That is never the biblical picture.

**A Subtle Trap**

Genesis 12-25 is the record of God accomplishing His purposes through Abraham. It is not the record of Abraham's walk with God. Can you see the difference of focus? The focus of the Bible is God.

The essence of sin is a shift from a God-centeredness to a self-centeredness. The essence of salvation is a return to centering our lives on God. Then God has us where He can accomplish through us purposes He had before He created the world. Though more could be said, here are some descriptions of the life orientations available to you:

**Self-centered:**

- life focused on self
- proud of self and self's accomplishments
- self confidence or lack of confidence because of focus on performance
- depending on self and one's own abilities
- affirming self or obsessed with failures
- seeking to be acceptable to the world and its ways
- looking at circumstances from a human perspective
- selfish and ordinary living

**Contrast that with God-centered living:**

- confidence in God
- dependence on God and His ability and provision
- life focused on God and His activity
- humble before God
- denying self
- seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness
- seeking God's perspective in every circumstance
- holy and godly living

**In your own words write a definition of being:**

Self-centered \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

God-centered \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Self-centeredness is a subtle trap. It makes so much sense (humanly speaking). We can avoid it at one time and fall right into the trap at another time. God-centeredness requires a daily death of self and submission to God (John 12:23-25).

## ***God's Purposes Not Our Plans***

To live a God-centered life, you must focus your life on God's purposes not your own plans. You must seek to see from God's perspective rather than from your own distorted human perspective. When God starts to do something in the world, He takes the initiative to come and talk to somebody. For some divine reason, He has chosen to involve His people in accomplishing His purposes.

Answer the following questions.

*Look up and read the Scriptures listed if you do not already know the answer.*

1. What was GOD about to do when He came to Noah and asked him to build an ark?  
(Gen. 6:5-14)

---

2. What was GOD about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah when He came to Abraham?  
(Gen. 18:16-21; 19:13)

---

3. What was GOD about to do when He came to Gideon? (Judg. 6:11-16)

---

4. What was GOD about to do when He came to Saul (later called Paul) on the road to Damascus? (Acts 9:1-16)

---

5. At each of these moments, what was the most important factor? Check one.
- What the individual wanted to do for God
  - What GOD was about to do

## **God's Plan Versus Our Plans**

Who delivered the children of Israel from Egypt? Moses or God? God did. God chose to bring Moses into a relationship with Himself so that He—God—could deliver Israel. Did Moses ever try to take matters about the children of Israel into his own hands? Yes.

In Exodus 2:11-15 Moses began to assert himself in behalf of his own people. That cost him 40 years of exile in Midian working as a shepherd (and reorienting his life to God-centered living).

When God delivered the children of Israel He even led the Egyptians to give the Israelites their gold, silver, and clothes. Egypt was plundered, the Egyptian army was destroyed, and the Israelites did not lose a single person.

Why do we not realize that it is always best to do things God's way? We cause some of the wreck and ruin in our churches because we have a plan. We implement the plan and get out of it only what we can do. God (Jesus) is the Head over the body—the church. Oh, that we would discover the difference when we let God be the Head of that body. He will accomplish more in six months through a people yielded to Him than we could do in 60 years without Him.

### **God's Ways**

Read the following Scripture and look for God's response to those who will not follow His ways. Then answer the questions that follow.

**“ I am Yahweh your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. But My people did not listen to Me; Israel did not obey Me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own plans' ” (Ps. 81:10-12).**

1. What had God already done for Israel? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What did God promise to His people? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How did the people respond? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What did God do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Now read the next two verses to see what could have been true for Israel.

Then answer the question that follows.

“ ‘If only My people would listen to Me and Israel would follow My ways, I would quickly subdue their enemies and turn My hand against their foes’ ” (Ps. 81:13-14).

5. What could have been true had Israel listened to and followed God?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Locate in your Bible and read Hebrews 3:7-19. Then answer one more question.

6. Why were the children of Israel denied entrance to the promised land?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

We adjust our lives to God so *He* can do through us what *He* wants to do. God is not our servant to make adjustments to fit our plans. We are His servants, and we adjust our lives to what He is about to do. If we will not submit, God will let us follow our own devices, but we will never experience what God is waiting and wanting to do for or through us.

## ***You Need to Know What God is About to Do***

When God called the prophets, He often had a two-fold message. The first desire of God was: “Call the people to return to Me.” If the people failed to respond, they needed to hear the second message: “Let them know that they are closer to the moment of judgment than they have ever been.” God’s word to the prophet was, “Tell the people: This is what I have been doing. This is what I am doing right now. This is what I am about to do. Then call them to respond.” You need to know what God has on His agenda for your church, community, and nation at this time in history. Then you and your church can adjust your lives to God, so that He can move you into the mainstream of His activity before it is too late. Though God likely will not give you a detailed schedule, He will let you know one step at a time how you and your church need to respond to what He is doing.

**Pray right now and ask for God’s guidance on how you should respond to Him...**

- **in your personal life**
- **in your family**
- **in your church**
- **in your work**
- **in your community**
- **in our nation**

You may want to jot some notes on separate paper.

What was God about to do when He started to tell Martin Luther that “the just shall live by faith”? He was going to bring people all over Europe to an understanding that salvation was a free gift and that each person had direct access to Him. He was bringing about a great Reformation. As you study great movements of God in church history, you will notice in every case that God came to someone and the person released his life to God. Then God began to accomplish His purposes through that individual.

Lesson 1, Devotion 1: God is Always at work Around You

**EXPO '86: A God-Sized Task**

Scripture: Read Genesis 12:1-4 and Exodus 19:3-6

When the World's Fair was coming to Vancouver, our association of churches was convinced that God wanted us to try to reach the 22 million people that would come to the fair. We had about 2,000 members in our association's churches in greater Vancouver. How in the world could 2,000 people make a great impact on such a mass of tourists from all over the world?

Two years before the fair we began to set our plans in motion. The total income for our whole association was \$9,000. The following year our income was about \$16,000. The year of the World's Fair we set a budget for \$202,000. We had commitments that would probably provide 35 percent of that budget. Sixty-five percent of that budget was dependent on prayer. Can you operate a budget on prayer? Yes. But when you do that you are attempting something only God can do. What do most of us do? We set the practical budget, which is the total of what we can do. Then we set a hope or faith budget. The budget we really trust and use, however, is the one we can reach by ourselves. We do not really trust God to do anything.

As an association of churches, we decided that God had definitely led us to the work that would cost \$202,000. That became our operating budget. All of our people began praying for God to provide and do everything we believed He had led us to do during the World's Fair. At the end of the year, I asked our treasurer how much money we had received. From Canada, the United States, and other parts of the world we had received \$264,000. People from all over came to assist us. During the course of the fair, we became a catalyst to see almost 20 thousand people come to know Jesus Christ. You cannot explain that except in terms of God's intervention. Only God could have done that. God did it with a people who had determined to be servants moldable and available for the Master's use.

How great was the promise to Abraham and what task went with the promise?

---

---

How do you feel about following God into a task so big that only He can see it come to pass?

---

---

---

Lesson 1, Devotion 2: God is Always at work Around You

## **JESUS IS YOUR WAY**

Scripture: Read John 14:1-6

For 12 years I pastored in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. One day a farmer said to me, "Henry, come out and visit with me at my farm." His directions went something like this: "Go a quarter mile past the edge of the city and you will see a big red barn on your left. Go to the next road and turn left. Take that road for three-quarters of a mile. You'll see a tree. Go right for about four miles, and then you will see a big rock . . ." I wrote all of this down, and one day I got there!

The next time I went to the farmer's house, the farmer was with me. Since there was more than one way to get to his house, he could have taken me any way he wanted to. You see, he was my "map." What did I have to do? I simply had to listen to him and obey him. Every time he said, "turn" I did just what he said. He took me a way I had never been. I could never retrace that route on my own. The farmer was my "map;" he knew the way.

When you come to the Lord Jesus to seek His will for your life, which of the following requests is most like what you ask? Check your response.

- o 1. Lord, what do you want me to do? When do you want me to do it? How shall I do it? Where shall I do it? Who do you want me to involve along the way? And please tell me what the outcome will be.
- o 2. Lord, just tell me what to do one step at a time, and I will do it.

Isn't the first response most typical of us? We are always asking God for a detailed "road map." We say, "Lord, if You could just tell me where I am heading, then I will be able to set my course and go." He says, "You don't need to. What you need to do is follow Me one day at a time." We need to come to the place where the second response is ours.

Who is it that really knows the way for you to go to fulfill God's purpose for your life? God is. Jesus said, "I am the way."

- He did not say, "I will show you the way."
- He did not say, "I will give you a road map."
- He did not say, "I will tell you which direction to head."
- He said, "I am the way." Jesus knows the way; He is your way.

If you were to do everything that Jesus tells you one day at a time, do you suppose that you always would be right in the center of where God wants you to be? Check your response.

- o 1. No, Jesus does not really know God's will for my life.
- o 2. No, Jesus might mislead me and take me the wrong way.
- o 3. Well, Jesus would rather I wait until He tells me all the details before I start to follow Him.
- o 4. Yes, If I follow Jesus one day at a time, I will be right in the center of God's will for my life.

Lesson 1, Devotion 2: God is Always at work Around You

When you get to the place where you trust Jesus to guide you one step at a time you experience a new freedom. If you don't trust Jesus to guide you this way, what happens if you don't know the way you are to go? You worry every time you must take a turn. You often freeze up and cannot make a decision. This is not the way God intends for you to live your life.

I have found in my own life that I can release the way to Him. Then I take care of everything He tells me one day at a time. He gives me plenty to do to fill each day with meaning and purpose. If I do everything He says, I will be in the center of His will when He wants to use me for a special assignment.

### ***Interpret Experience by Scripture***

During this course and during your life you will have times when you want to respond based on your own experiences or your own wisdom. Such an approach will get you in trouble. This should be your guideline: Always go back to the Bible for truth (or, for the Holy Spirit to reveal Truth). Always look to see what God says and how He works in the Scriptures. Make your decisions and evaluate your experiences based on biblical principles.

When you study the Scriptures, do not base your decision on one isolated case. Look to see how God works throughout the Scriptures. When you learn how God has worked throughout history, you can depend on His working in a similar way with you. Your experience is valid only as it is confirmed in the Scriptures. I never deny any experience that a person has had. I always reserve the right, however, to interpret it according to what I understand in the Scripture. At times individuals get upset with me and say, "Well, I don't care what you say, I've experienced this."

I respond as kindly as I know by saying, "I do not deny your experience. I do question your interpretation of what you experienced, because it is contrary to what I see in the Word of God." Our experiences cannot be our guide. Every experience must be controlled and understood by the Scriptures. The God revealed in Scripture does not change.

To see if you have grasped this idea, mark the following statements as T (true) or F (false).

- \_\_\_\_\_1. Human interpretations of my experiences are an effective way to know and follow God.
- \_\_\_\_\_2. I should always evaluate my experiences based on the truths I find in the Word of God.
- \_\_\_\_\_3. I may get a distorted understanding of God if I do not check my experiences against the truths of Scripture.
- \_\_\_\_\_4. I can trust God to work in my life in similar ways that I see Him working throughout the Scriptures.

Lesson 1, Devotion 3: God is Always at work Around You

Number 1 is false; 2, 3, and 4 are true. In #1 your experiences must be interpreted in light of the Scriptures. Experience alone is not a sound guide. You must be cautious about isolating a single experience from the context of Scripture. You will want to see how God works throughout Scripture. You will never go wrong if, under the Holy Spirit's instruction, you let the Bible be your guide.

Christians are relying less and less on the Bible as a guide for faith and practice. As a result, they turn to worldly solutions, programs, and methods that appear to be the answer to spiritual problems. I use the Word of God as a guide to what we should be doing. Some people say, "Henry, that is not practical." They want to move me away from the Bible and rely on the world's ways or on personal experience. As a Christian disciple, I cannot abandon the guidance I find in the Bible. The Bible is my guide for faith and practice.

How do you let the Word of God become your guide? When I seek God's direction, I insist on following the directives that I see in the Word of God. For example, does God call people to follow Him without giving them all the details up front? We know that He called Abram to follow that way. Is that pattern consistent in the Scriptures?

Write a prayer expressing your heart feelings about making the Bible the practical guide for understanding all of life.

---

---

---