

Reality 3:

God Invites You to Become Involved with Him in His 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 individual persons and their relationship with God (Abraham, Moses, or Paul), but rather the activity of God and His relationship with individuals. The focus is on God and His activity.

God's Revelation Is Your Invitation

As God's obedient 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. 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.

Two factors are important for you to recognize the activity of God around you.

1. You must be living 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.

Fill in the blank:

God's revelation to me of His activity is my _____ to join Him.

What are two factors important to your recognizing the activity of God around you?

1. _____
2. _____

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

Working Where God Is at Work

Our church sensed that God wanted us to help start new churches all across Central and Western Canada. We had hundreds of towns and villages that had no evangelical church. In this situation, some churches would start with a population study or survey. Then they would apply human logic to decide where the most promising and productive places might be. By now you know that we would take a different approach. We tried to find out what God already was doing around us. We believed that He would show us where He was at work, and that revelation would be our invitation to join Him. We began praying and watching to see what God would do next in answer to our prayers.

Allan was a small town 40 miles from Saskatoon. It had never had a Protestant church. One of our members felt led to conduct a Vacation Bible School for the children in Allan. At the end of the week, we held a parents' night. We said to the group, "We believe God may want us to establish a Baptist church in this town. If any of you would like to begin a regular Bible study group and maybe be a part of a new church, would you just come forward."

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

Right behind her came an elderly man. He too was deeply moved and weeping. He said, "For years I was active in a Baptist church. Then I became enslaved to alcohol. Four and a half years ago I came back to the Lord. I promised God then that I would pray four to five hours every day until God brought us a Baptist church in 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 church immediately voted to start a new church in Allan. As of today, that church in Allan has started one church and two mission churches.

God hasn't told us to go away and do some work for Him. He has told us that He is already at work to bring a lost world to Himself. If we will adjust our lives to Him in a love relationship, He will show us where He is at work. That revelation is His invitation to us to get involved in His work. Then, when we join Him, He completes His work through us.

Knowing Where God Is at Work

God has tried, at times, to get our attention by revealing where He is at work. We see it, but we do not immediately identify it as God's work. We say to ourselves, *Well, I don't know if God wants me to get involved here, or not. I had better pray about it.* By the time we leave that situation and pray, the opportunity to join God is gone. A tender and sensitive heart will be ready to respond to God at the slightest prompting. God makes your heart tender and sensitive in the love relationship we already have talked about.

Can you describe a time when you missed an opportunity to join God in His work because you did not respond immediately? yes o no o If yes, describe.

If you are to join God in His work, you need to know where God is working. The Scriptures tell us of some things only God can do. You need to learn to identify these. Then, when something happens around you that only God can do, you can know it is God's activity. Unless God opens your spiritual eyes, you will not know it is Him at work.

Things Only God Can Do

The Scriptures say that no one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him (John 6:44). No one will seek God or pursue spiritual things unless the Spirit of God is at work in his life. Suppose a neighbor, a friend, or one of your children begins to inquire after 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. No one will ever seek after God unless God is at work in his life. Here are some things only God can do:

1. God draws people to Himself.
2. God causes people to seek after Him.
3. God reveals spiritual truth.
4. God convicts the world of guilt regarding sin.
5. God convicts the world of righteousness.
6. God convicts the world of judgment.

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

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. Find out what God is doing by asking probing questions. Then listen. Be ready to make whatever adjustments are required to join God in what He is doing.

Two More Points

We have been focusing on the fact that God invites you to become involved in His work. You need to connect the following two points to this fact.

1. God speaks when He is about to accomplish His purposes. When God reveals to you what He is doing is when you need to respond. He speaks when He is about to accomplish His purposes. That is true throughout Scripture. Now, keep in mind, the results of what God is doing may be a long time off. Abram's son was born 25 years after the promise from God. The time God comes to you, however, is the time for your response.

2. What God initiates, He completes. Isaiah confirmed this when God said through him, "Yes, I have spoken; so I will also bring it about. I have planned it; I will also do it" (Isa. 46:11). God says that if He ever lets His people know what He is about to do, it is as good as done—He Himself will bring it to pass. (See also 1 Kings 8:56 and Phil. 1:6.)

What God speaks, He guarantees that it will come to pass. This holds enormous implications for individual believers, churches, and denominations. When we come to God to know what He is about to do, we also come with the assurance that what God indicates He is about to do is certain to come to pass.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "What God initiates, He always completes."

I Agree I Disagree Why?

You may have disagreed with the statement. Be sure you always base your understanding of God on Scripture, not on personal opinion or experience alone. Throughout history, people have said they have a word from the Lord and then it does not come to pass. You cannot look to these kinds of experiences to determine your understanding of God.

A strong word of caution comes to spiritual leaders. Claiming a word from God is a solemn matter. God shows just how solemn by warning that a person who presumes to speak what God has not commanded will be subject to the death penalty. (Deut. 18:18-22; Jer. 28:9; Ezek. 12:24, 25). The true prophet of God is one who has a word from the Lord, and it comes to pass. God's nature demands it! What God says comes to pass.

Lesson 3, Devotion 1: God Invites You to Become Involved with Him in His Work

Seeing God Work

“Don’t you say, ‘There are still four more months, then comes the harvest’? Listen [to what] I’m telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ready for harvest” (John 4:35).

Can God be working around you and you not see it? Yes. Elisha and his servant were in the city of Dothan surrounded by an army. The servant was terrified, but Elisha was calm. “Elisha prayed, ‘LORD, please open his eyes and let him see.’ So the LORD opened the servant’s eyes. He looked and 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 all 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). Here was God in their midst performing wonderful signs and miracles, and they did not recognize Him.

For example, as Jesus passed through a crowd, He was always looking for where the Father was at work. The crowd was not the harvest field. The harvest field was within that crowd. Jesus saw Zacchaeus in a tree. Jesus may have said to Himself, “Nobody can seek after Me with that kind of earnestness unless My Father is at work in his heart.” So Jesus pulled away from the crowd and said, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, because today I must stay at your house” (Luke 19:5). What happened? Salvation came to that household that night. Jesus always looked for the activity of the Father and joined Him. Salvation came as a result of Jesus’ joining His life to the activity of God.

Read the following Scriptures and answer the questions that follow.

John 14:15-17—“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. 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.”

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

Lesson 3, Devotion 1: God Invites You to Become Involved with Him in His Work

2. Where will this Person live? _____

John 14:26—"The Counselor, the Holy Spirit—the Father will send Him in My name—will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you."

3. What are two things the Holy Spirit will do for Jesus' disciples? _____

John 16:8—"When He comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment."

4. What are three more things the Holy Spirit does?

Lesson 3, Devotion 2: God Invites You to Become Involved with Him in His Work

A Visitor Came by Accident

“Don’t neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it” (Heb. 13:2).

We had a man visit our church by accident. He saw on the bottom of the bulletin, “Pray for our mission in Kyle; pray for our mission in Prince Albert; pray for our mission in Love; pray for our mission in Regina; pray for our mission in Blaine Lake” and others. He asked what it meant.

“I explained that our church had made a commitment. If God ever shows us where someone desires a Bible study or a church, we will respond. He asked, “You mean to say, that if I were to ask you to come and help us start a Baptist church in our town, you would respond?” I told him that we would, and he started to cry. He was a construction worker in Leroy, 75 miles east of us. He said that he had been pleading with people to start a Baptist church in Leroy for 24 years. Nobody had wanted to help. He asked if we would come.

We established a church in Leroy. We bought two lots on the main street. This man was so excited he bought a school building and moved it to the site. He is now functioning as a lay pastor in a work beyond Leroy. Both of his sons have responded to the call to the gospel ministry.

As a church, we were already conditioned to seeing things that only God can do. When He let us see where He was working, we immediately saw that as our invitation to join Him. Frequently, the reason we do not join Him is we are not committed to join Him. We are wanting God to bless us, not to work through us. As a church, do not look for how God is going to bless you. Look for how God is going to reveal Himself by working through you and out beyond you to accomplish His purposes. The working of God in you will bring a blessing. The blessing is a by-product of your obedience and experience of God at work in your midst.

Who can tell what a solitary visit by a stranger can mean in your church? Ask some questions about what God is doing where that person is. Then you will know how to adjust your life to be an instrument of God, so that God can do what He wants to do. When you start to see God moving, adjust your life and respond.

Lesson 3, Devotion 2: God Invites You to Become Involved with Him in His Work

Has this illustration given you any ideas about how you can begin to watch for the activity of God around you? in your family? in your work? in your church? Write down the ideas you have.

The impressions you wrote down may be from God Himself. He may be inviting you to look for His activity. Don't miss the opportunity. Pray and watch to see what happens next.

Lesson 3, Devotion 3: God Invites You to Become Involved with Him in His Work

Make the Connections

“Counsel in a man’s heart is deep water; but a man of understanding draws it up” (Prov. 20:5).

When I was speaking in a series of meetings, Bill, a plant manager, said, “You know, I have not been looking on the job to see the activity of God.” He mentioned Christian people in key positions in his plant. He wondered if God had not placed them in those positions for a purpose. He decided to get these coworkers together and say, “Let’s see if God wants us to take this entire plant for Jesus Christ.” Does that sound like something God might want to do? Yes!

You start by praying. Only the Father knows what He has purposed. He knows the best way to get it done. He even knows why He brought these individuals together in this plant and why He gave Bill the burden to bring them together. After you pray, get up off your knees and watch to see what God does next. Watch to see what people are saying when they come to you. Suppose someone in the plant comes to Bill and says, “My family is really having a tough time financially,” or “I am having an especially tough time with my teenager.”

Bill had just prayed, “Oh, 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 what happens next, you may miss God’s answer to your prayer. Always connect what happens next. Then what should Bill do?

Ask the kind of questions that will reveal what is happening in that person’s life. Learn to ask questions of people who cross your path to find out what God is doing in their lives. For instance:

- How can I pray for you?
- What can I pray for you?
- Do you want to talk?
- What do you see as the greatest challenge in your life?
- What is the most significant thing happening in your life right now?
- Would you tell me what God is doing in your life?
- What is God bringing to the surface in your life?
- What particular burden has God given you?

The person responds, “I really don’t have a relationship with God. But in the last little while with 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 mother and dad made me go. I got away from it, but the financial problems we are under have really caused me to think about this.” Those statements sound like God is at work in the person’s life. He may be drawing the person to Himself, causing the person to seek after God, or bringing conviction of sin.

Lesson 3, Devotion 3: God Invites You to Become Involved with Him in His Work

What are some actions described in the previous paragraphs that will help you see if God is at work in a situation?
