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BLACKBAY is the founder of Blackaby Ministries International and the former special assistant to the presidents of the following agencies: the Southern Baptist Convention; the International Mission Board, the North American Mission Board, and LifeWay Christian Resources. His father was a deacon and a lay pastor who helped start churches in Canada. Henry is a graduate of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. He has four honorary doctor's degrees. He pastored churches in the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas before going to Faith Baptist Church in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. Henry also served as a director of missions in Vancouver, British Columbia. He has written dozens of books and has spoken in churches and conferences in two hundred countries. He counsels Christian CEOs of major companies and has spoken in the White House and the United Nations. Henry's wife is the former Marilyn Sue Wells. They have five children: Richard, Thomas, Melvin, Norman, and Carrie. All five children serve in full-time Christian ministry. 2 For further information about Henry Blackaby and his ministry, contact Blackaby Ministries International, P.O. Box 1035, Jonesboro, GA 30237; 770.471.2332; www.blackaby.org. CLAUDE V. KING is the former pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Huntington Beach, California. He is a graduate of Belmont College and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. RICHARD BLACKBAY, Henry's oldest son, holds a PhD in history as well as an honorary doctorate. He has served as a pastor and a seminary president and is currently the president of Blackaby Ministries International. He and his wife, Lisa, have three children: Mike, Daniel, and Carrie. Richard is the author of CrossSeekers, Putting a Face on Grace, and Unlimiting God and has coauthored a dozen books with his father. Editor's note: Henry Blackaby is the primary author of the content of this course. Claude King wrote the learning activities to assist you in your study. Richard contributed material to the revised edition. The illustrations of the authors are written solely from their personal viewpoints. Others who were involved, if given the opportunity, could write different and more complete accounts. Preface When we first wrote Experiencing God in 1990, we didn't realize the enormity of the spiritual hunger in the hearts and lives of God's people to experience God. God's people had head knowledge but little heart and life experience with God. They knew there had to be much more to the Christian life than more and more activity, but they didn't know what was missing, nor did they know what to do about it. They longed to experience God. God had granted me an understanding of Himself and His ways. He had also brought Avery Willis and Claude King into my life. God was ready to hear the cry of His people: Show me your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, 3 For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day (Ps. 25:4-5, NKJV). Experiencing God was my life message. This is how I had always understood and walked with God. This is how I had pastored and guided God's people. I had shared these truths in many places where I was asked to speak. Over and over again people asked, "Have you ever written down what you're teaching? God's people need to hear these truths." Avery Willis is the author responsible for adult discipleship training at the time, gave me the encouragement and opportunity to put me down in writing in the workbook Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing God's Will. Since 1990 God has used this study to touch and change millions of lives and thousands of churches around the world. At the 10th anniversary more than three million copies of the workbook had been distributed, and God was using other Experiencing God resources. This workbook is now published in 47 languages and has been used in almost every denomination. We are amazed that God, in His mercy and grace, would use such a modest work by ordinary people! He has chosen to grant His favor on His truth expressed in this study. The original workbook has given birth to many Experiencing God resources, listed at the right. We have been overwhelmed by the response to the truths shared in Experiencing God. So many lives have been radically changed—in prisons; in the military; and in all walks of life, including lawyers, judges, CEOs, professional athletes, and politicians. Thousands of churches, high schools, colleges, and seminaries have been greatly helped and radically changed. God has used these truths to affect people around the world, including leaders of countries, government officials, and diplomats. Hundreds of missionaries are on the fields of the world because of this study, and hundreds of others are now serving as pastors, evangelists, and faithful servants. Only heaven really knows how God has chosen to use Experiencing God. This resource has also had a profound effect on our lives and the lives of our family. We have all received God's grace as a continuing affirmation of His hand on us for His purposes, and we continue to obey God as He directs us. As we seek to be good stewards of His grace, we cry out, "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:1-2, NKJV). As God has granted us—especially as a family—many open doors to share with God's people, we beg our friends and the many friends of Experiencing God to pray for each of us: Marilyn and me; Richard 4 and Lisa, Michael, Daniel, and Carrie; Tom and Kim, Erin, Matthew, and Connor; Mel and Gina, Christa, Stephen, and Sarah; Norman and Dana, Emily, Douglas, and Anne; Carrie and Wendell; Elizabeth, and Joshua. Thanks must also go to Claude King, who helped develop the first workbook and continues to remain faithful to the Lord in serving Him, and to those at LifeWay Christian Resources who continually improve and provide Experiencing God. The Blackbays Unit 1: God's Will and Your Life Verse to Memorize "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."—John 15:5 Vancouver World's Fair When the World's Fair was coming to Vancouver, our association of churches was convinced God wanted us to try to reach the 22 million people who would come to our city. We had about 2,000 members in our churches. How in the world could our little group make much 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 association was \$9,000. The following year it grew to \$16,000. The year of the World's Fair, we set a budget for \$202,000. I We had commitments that would provide 35 percent of that budget. Sixty-five percent of it depended 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 represents what we can do. Then we might set a second 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 make a practical difference in what we do. As an association of churches, we decided 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 everything we 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. 5 People all over North America assisted us. During the fair we became a catalyst to see about 20,000 people accept Jesus Christ. I cannot explain that except in terms of God's intervention. Only God could have done that. He accomplished it with a people who were moldable and available for the Master's use. "That which you sow will also be reaped."—Gal. 6:7 The following Scriptures are the ones that we used in our study. □ Romans 8:28: "For those who love God, all things work together for good to those who love Him." □ Romans 8:29: "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined them to be conformed to the image of His Son." □ Romans 8:30: "For those whom He predestined, He also called them; for those whom He called, He also justified; and for those whom He justified, He also glorified." □ Romans 10:13: "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved." □ Romans 10:14: "How can they call on the name of the Lord if they have not heard? How can they hear without a preacher? How can they preach unless they are sent? How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news!" □ Romans 10:15: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news!" □ Romans 10:16: "For they have not heard, because there is no one to preach." □ Romans 10:17: "For faith comes from hearing the message, and hearing comes through the word of Christ." □ Romans 10:18: "But they say, 'We have heard, but we do not understand.' 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specifically for one another and for your church. 2. Record prayer requests (small group). As groups finish praying, suggest: Turn to the prayer section of your journal and record prayer requests or ways God led you to pray for the faith of other believers and for the faith of other church. Music—5 minutes Optional special music (small group). Sing a hymn or chorus or play a recorded song that relates to faith and action like “Have Faith in God,” “Trust, Try, and Prove Me,” or “Faith Is the Victory.” For special music you might consider playing a recording of “Fin’ Us Faithful.” DVD Viewing and Discussion—45 minutes 1. View the DVD for session 7 (small group). Invite members to turn to the viewer guide at the end of unit 7 and view DVD session 7. 2. Discuss the message and testimony (small group). Ask and discuss the following questions or use your own. a. How does the need for medical supplies in Peru during a cholera epidemic demonstrate a crisis of belief? What are some things that give clear evidence God was at work in this assignment? b. What is the difference between a crisis and a crisis of belief? c. What are some examples from Henry’s message that illustrate faith and others that illustrate unbelief during a crisis of belief? 393.3. Apply the truth to your church. What are some things you sense God is saying to your church? How do you think your church should respond? Closure—5 minutes 1. Wait on the Lord (small group). Review any questions or concerns that may have come up during the session. Ask the group to pray for these concerns and seek answers to questions during the coming week. 2. Preview unit 8 (small group). Ask members to pay special attention to the kinds of adjustments that may be required for a person to move into the mainstream of God’s activity. 3. Pray (small group). Ask members to join hands in a circle and pray for your church and for one another as you regularly face the crisis of belief. AFTER THE SESSION Use the standard guide to evaluate the session. Session 8: Adjusting Your Life to God SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVES This session will help members— • state six of the realities of experiencing God; • identify ways a person waits on the Lord; • identify ways God has led them to make adjustments in their lives; • demonstrate a commitment to the lordship of Christ by verbalizing a prayer of surrender. Before the Session □ 1. Complete all the learning activities in unit 8 of the member book. □ 2. Pray now for God’s guidance as you prepare for this group session. Pray specifically for each member of your group. □ 3. Read “During the Session.” Select the activities that best suit the learning needs of your group. Adapt or develop other activities you sense will best help your group gain the greatest benefit from the unit of study. □ 4. Decide on the amount of time to allow for each activity. Record a time beside the activity to indicate when it should begin. Always be prepared to change your plans if the Holy Spirit leads you and the group in another direction. □ 5. Gather the following items and include any others you need for activities you may have developed on your own. 394 • The “Seven Realities” poster • A dry-erase board or newsprint and suitable markers □ 6. Remove the unit posters from the previous session and save them for future use. Display the posters you have prepared for unit 8. □ 7. Prepare a one-minute preview of unit 9. Pay special attention to the additional instructions in “During the Session.” □ 8. If you are using the DVD messages, do the following. • Secure and set up the equipment necessary for viewing. • Preview the session 8 DVD message (29:08 min.) and list one or two key ideas or questions you think will be of special interest to your group members. Use these ideas to introduce the DVD message. • Think about your own response to the DVD discussion questions in “During the Session.” Think about how you will respond after “Prayer Time” if people have been deeply touched by the Lord. During the Session Arrival Activity—5 minutes 1. Greet members as they arrive. Ask them to complete the unit review at the end of unit 8 while others are coming in and to make sure they have completed the learning activities that will be discussed in “Sharing Time.” 2. Open with prayer (small group). Call on a member to pray and ask God to guide all group members to make the adjustments He desires of them. Unit Review—15 minutes 1. Seven realities (small group). Display the “Seven Realities” poster. Point to the arrow at the top and ask a member to state the first reality. Turn to the next person in the circle and ask her to state the second reality. Continue around the circle until you have stated at least the first six. Mention that in the next unit members will study the seventh reality in detail. 2. Review (small group). Review and discuss, if needed, the answers to the questions on the unit review. Spend time discussing the written responses to the last two questions. Ask: What does a person do while he is waiting on the Lord? As members respond, write their responses on a dry-erase board or on newsprint. (Answer: pray, watch circumstances, share with and listen to other believers, continue doing the last thing God told you to do—day 5) 395.2. Q & A (small group). As time permits, ask volunteers to answer the following. a. What is required as a demonstration of faith (activity 1, day 1)? b. Who are some of the people in the Bible who had to make adjustments to God, and what adjustments did they have to make (day 1)? c. Who one Bible character who was asked to make an adjustment but refused (day 1)? d. What are some kinds of adjustments you may have to make in order to obey God (activity 1, day 2)? e. Does God ever ask a person to change his own plans and directions in order to follow God’s purposes (day 3)? Do you think He will ever ask you to change your plans and directions in order to follow Him? (Note: if some answer no to this second question, remind them that they cannot stay where they are and go with God. God always requires an adjustment.) 4. Poster discussion (small group). Focus attention on the statements on the unit posters you have displayed. Read each statement and ask members to comment on what that statement means to them. Ask what adjustments may be needed in their lives to relate correctly to God. Sharing Time—30 minutes 1. Scripture memory (pairs). Ask members to quote Luke 14:33 to each other and share what God may have said to them through this week’s memory verse. 2. Written responses (quads). Ask members to turn in their books to the following learning activities and share responses with one another. Topics are listed in “Sharing Time” at the end of unit 8. • One of the most meaningful statements or Scriptures from this unit’s lessons and your prayer response to God. Choose one from those you identified at the ends of the days’ studies. • Adjustments you have made in your thinking during this course (activity 5, day 2) • The quotation in day 2 that was most meaningful and why • An experience that required costly adjustment or obedience (activity 7, day 3) • How your church would be seen in regard to prayer and adjustments God may want your church to make (activity 9, day 5) 396.3. Declare the wonderful works of the Lord (small group). Allow time for testimonies. Say: If God has done something special in or through your life this week, please share what God has done so we can praise the Lord together. 4. Focus on God (small group). Ask: a. What have you come to know about God, His purposes, or His ways this week? b. What do you sense God wants you to do in response to this knowledge of Him? DVD Viewing and Discussion—45 minutes 1. View the DVD for session 8 (small group). Invite members to turn to the viewer guide at the end of unit 8 and view DVD session 8. 2. Discuss the message and testimony (small group). Ask and discuss the following questions or use your own. a. How does the need for medical supplies in Peru during a cholera epidemic demonstrate a crisis of belief? What are some things that give clear evidence God was at work in this assignment? b. What is the difference between a crisis and a crisis of belief? c. What are some examples from Henry’s message that illustrate faith and others that illustrate unbelief during a crisis of belief? 393.3. Apply the truth to your church. What are some things you sense God is saying to your church? How do you think your church should respond? Closure—5 minutes 1. Wait on the Lord (small group). Review any questions or concerns that may have come up during the session. Ask the group to pray for these concerns and seek answers to questions during the coming week. 2. Preview unit 9 (small group). The next unit will focus on obedience. Some of your members will find this to be a very difficult study as they evaluate their own level of obedience. You will need to give them a word of encouragement. Read Matthew 28:18-20. Point out that one of the church’s assignments is to help members obey. Mention that in the next session members will help, encourage, and pray for one another in the area of obedience. 3. Pray (quads). Ask members to join hands and pray about adjustments they sense they may need to make in response to God. 397 Encourage members to surrender absolutely to Christ’s lordship and to pray for one another as well. Tell them they are dismissed as they finish praying in their quads. Remind them to be quiet while others finish praying. AFTER THE SESSION Use the standard guide to evaluate the session. Session 9: Experiencing God Through Obedience SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVES This session will help members— • state all seven of the realities of experiencing God in order; • identify the importance and meaning of obedience; • explain why Christian maturity is often a slow process; • demonstrate their worship of God by sharing ways they have personally experienced God. Before the Session □ 1. Complete all the learning activities in unit 9 of the member book. □ 2. Pray now for God’s guidance as you prepare for this group session. Pray specifically for each member of your group. □ 3. Read “During the Session.” Select the activities that best suit the learning needs of your group. Adapt or develop other activities you sense will best help your group gain the greatest benefit from the unit of study. □ 4. Decide on the amount of time to allow for each activity. Record a time beside the activity to indicate when it should begin. Always be prepared to change your plans if the Holy Spirit leads you and the group in another direction. □ 5. Gather the following items and any other items you need for activities you may have developed on your own. • The “Seven Realities” poster • A dry-erase board or newsprint and suitable markers □ 6. Remove the unit posters from the previous session and save them for future use. Display the posters you have prepared for unit 9. □ 7. Optional: Select a hymn, chorus, or recorded song to use during the large-group time. Arrange for accompaniment or bring a player for the recorded song. □ 8. Prepare a one-minute preview of unit 10. Prepare to encourage members to pray especially for your church this week. □ 9. If you are using the DVD messages, do the following. 398 • Secure and set up the equipment for viewing. • Preview the session 9 DVD message (22:41 min.) and list one or two key ideas or questions you think will be of special interest to your group members. Use these ideas to introduce the DVD message. • Think about your own response to the DVD discussion questions in “During the Session.” During the Session Arrival Activity—5 minutes 1. Greet members as they arrive. Ask them to complete the unit review at the end of unit 9 while others are coming in and to make sure they have completed the learning activities that will be discussed in “Sharing Time.” 2. Open with prayer (small group). Paraphrase Psalm 119:3335 (day 1) to become a group prayer by using us, we, and instead of I, me, and my. Ask group members to express their agreement with this prayer by praying in unison, “We love You, Lord, so we will obey You.” Psalm 119:33-35 “Teach [us], O LORD, to follow your decrees; then [we] will keep them to the end. Give [us] understanding, and [we] will obey it with all our heart. Direct [us] in the path of your commands, for there [we] find delight.” Unit Review—15 minutes 1. Seven realities (pairs). Ask members to state the seven realities in order to their partners. Display the “Seven Realities” poster in case a person needs the diagram as a prompt. 2. God’s pattern (small group). Remind the group that these are not steps or a method to follow. These seven statements describe God’s pattern of working with His people. He always takes the initiative. We do not take the initiative in accomplishing God’s purposes. Say: We have studied these seven realities of God so you will be able to identify God’s activity in your life. Now when God takes the initiative to involve you in His work, I trust that you will know how to respond to Him by acting in faith, making the necessary adjustments, and obeying Him. 3. Q & A (small group). Move through as many of the following questions as time allows. a. How important is obedience (day 1)? b. What is the meaning of obedience (day 2)? c. When a person disobeys God, does God give him or her a second chance? Explain your answer (day 2). d. Why does God sometimes work slowly in a person’s life to bring the person to maturity(day 5)? e. Write responses to the following on a dry-erase board or newsprint. What are some of the things you would do when faced with a circumstance that seemed to close the door on God’s will (day 5)? 4. Poster discussion (small group). Focus attention on the statements on the unit posters you have displayed. Read each statement and ask members to comment on what that statement means to them. Ask what adjustments may be needed in their lives to relate correctly to God. Sharing Time—30 minutes 1. Scripture memory (pairs). Ask members to quote John 14:23 to each other and share what God may have said to them through this week’s memory verse. 2. Written responses (pairs). Ask members to turn in their books to the following learning activities and share responses with each other. Topics are listed in “Sharing Time” at the end of unit 9. • Statements that have influenced the way you love and obey God (activity 3, day 1) • Activity 4 in day 2 • Statements that have been meaningful to you (activity 1, day 3) • Names by which you have come to know God by experience (activity 3, day 4) • One of the most meaningful statements or Scriptures from this unit’s lessons and your prayer response to God. Choose one from those you identified at the ends of the days’ studies. 3. Focus on God (small group). Ask: a. What have you come to know about God, His purposes, or His ways this week? b. What do you sense God wants you to do in response to this knowledge of Him? 4. Declare the wonderful works of the Lord (small group). Allow time for testimonies. Say: If God has done something special in or through your life this week, please share what God has done so we can praise the Lord together. Prayer Time—15 minutes 1. Share requests and pray (pairs). Ask members to share with their partners one area of obedience they presently struggle 400 with or one act of obedience they know God is guiding them to do. Then ask members to pray for their partners and their specific need in the area of obedience. 2. Record prayer requests (small group). As pairs finish praying, suggest: Turn to the prayer section of your journal and record prayer requests or ways God led you to pray for your partner. Singing/Special Music—5 minutes Optional special music (small group). Sing a hymn or chorus or play a recorded song that relates to obedience or experiencing God at work. Use songs like “Trust and Obey,” “Living for Jesus,” or “Make Me a Channel of Blessing.” DVD Viewing and Discussion—45 minutes 1. View the DVD for session 9 (small group). Invite members to turn to the viewer guide at the end of unit 9 and view DVD session 9. 2. Discuss the message and testimony (small group). Ask and discuss the following questions or use your own. a. How does the need for medical supplies in Peru during a cholera epidemic demonstrate a crisis of belief? What are some things that give clear evidence God was at work in this assignment? b. What is the difference between a crisis and a crisis of belief? c. What are some examples from Henry’s message that illustrate faith and others that illustrate unbelief during a crisis of belief? 393.3. Apply the truth to your church. What are some things you sense God is saying to your church? How do you think your church should respond? Closure—5 minutes 1. Wait on the Lord (small group). Review any questions or concerns that may have come up during the session. Ask the group to pray for these concerns and seek answers to questions during the coming week. 2. Preview unit 10 (small group). Ask members to pay special attention to the way a church comes to understand and do God’s will. 3. Pray (small group). Ask volunteers to pray prayers of commitment to the absolute lordship of Christ. After several have prayed, close by asking God to teach all of you, during the coming unit, how to know and do His will as a church. AFTER THE SESSION Use the standard guide to evaluate the session. Session 10: God’s Will and the Church SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVES This session will help members— • identify biblical concerns God has for His churches; 401 • distinguish between the way churches and individuals come to know the will of God; • apply biblical instructions for churches to their church life together; • demonstrate love for their church by praying for it and its leaders. Before the Session □ 1. Complete all the learning activities in unit 10 of the member book. □ 2. Pray now for God’s guidance as you prepare for this group session. Pray specifically for each member of your group. Pray for your church. Pray that this group session will be a significant time of growth for your members as they focus on Christ as the Head of His church. □ 3. Read “During the Session.” Select the activities that best suit the learning needs of your group. Adapt or develop other activities you sense will best help your group gain the greatest benefit from the unit of study. □ 4. Decide on the amount of time to allow for each activity. Record a time beside the activity to indicate when it should begin. Always be prepared to change your plans if the Holy Spirit leads you and the group in another direction. □ 5. Remove the unit posters from the previous session and save them for future use. Display the posters you have prepared for unit 10. □ 6. Optional: Select a hymn, chorus, or recorded song to use during the large-group time. Arrange for accompaniment or bring a CD player. □ 7. Prepare a one-minute preview of unit 11. □ 8. If you are using the DVD messages, do the following. • Secure and set up the equipment for viewing. • Preview the session 10 DVD message (32:03 min.) and list one or two key ideas or questions you think will be of special interest to your group members. Use these ideas to introduce the DVD message. • Think about your own response to the DVD discussion questions in “During the Session.” During the Session Arrival Activity—5 minutes 1. Greet members as they arrive. Ask them to complete the unit review at the end of unit 10 while others are coming in and to make sure they have completed the learning activities that will be discussed in “Sharing Time.” 2. Open with prayer (small group). Paraphrase Psalm 119:3335 (day 1) to become a group prayer by using us, we, and instead of I, me, and my. Ask group members to express their agreement with this prayer by praying in unison, “We love You, Lord, so we will obey You.” Psalm 119:33-35 “Teach [us], O LORD, to follow your decrees; then [we] will keep them to the end. Give [us] understanding, and [we] will obey it with all our heart. Direct [us] in the path of your commands, for there [we] find delight.” Unit Review—15 minutes 1. Seven realities (pairs). Ask members to state the seven realities in order to their partners. Display the “Seven Realities” poster in case a person needs the diagram as a prompt. 2. God’s pattern (small group). Remind the group that these are not steps or a method to follow. These seven statements describe God’s pattern of working with His people. He always takes the initiative. We do not take the initiative in accomplishing God’s purposes. Say: We have studied these seven realities of God so you will be able to identify God’s activity in your life. Now when God takes the initiative to involve you in His work, I trust that you will know how to respond to Him by acting in faith, making the necessary adjustments, and obeying Him. 3. Q & A (small group). Move through as many of the following questions as time allows. a. How important is obedience (day 1)? b. What is the meaning of obedience (day 2)? c. When a person disobeys God, does God give him or her a second chance? Explain your answer (day 2). d. Why does God sometimes work slowly in a person’s life to bring the person to maturity(day 5)? e. Write responses to the following on a dry-erase board or newsprint. What are some of the things you would do when faced with a circumstance that seemed to close the door on God’s will (day 5)? 4. Poster discussion (small group). Focus attention on the statements on the unit posters you have displayed. Read each statement and ask members to comment on what that statement means to them. Ask what adjustments may be needed in their lives to relate correctly to God. Sharing Time—30 minutes 1. Scripture memory (pairs). Ask members to turn in their books to the following learning activities and share responses with each other. Topics are listed in “Sharing Time” at the end of unit 9. • Statements that have influenced the way you love and obey God (activity 3, day 1) • Activity 4 in day 2 • Statements that have been meaningful to you (activity 1, day 3) • Names by which you have come to know God by experience (activity 3, day 4) • One of the most meaningful statements or Scriptures from this unit’s lessons and your prayer response to God. Choose one from those you identified at the ends of the days’ studies. 3. Focus on God (small group). Ask: a. What have you come to know about God, His purposes, or His ways this week? b. What do you sense God wants you to do in response to this knowledge of Him? 4. Declare the wonderful works of the Lord (small group). Allow time for testimonies. Say: If God has done something special in or through your life this week, please share what God has done so we can praise the Lord together. Prayer Time—15 minutes 1. Share requests and pray (pairs). Ask members to share with their partners one area of obedience they presently struggle 400 with or one act of obedience they know God is guiding them to do. Then ask members to pray for their partners and their specific need in the area of obedience. 2. Record prayer requests (small group). As pairs finish praying, suggest: Turn to the prayer section of your journal and record prayer requests or ways God led you to pray for your partner. Singing/Special Music—5 minutes Optional special music (small group). Sing a hymn or chorus or play a recorded song that relates to obedience or experiencing God at work. Use songs like “Trust and Obey,” “Living for Jesus,” or “Make Me a Channel of Blessing.” DVD Viewing and Discussion—45 minutes 1. View the DVD for session 9 (small group). Invite members to turn to the viewer guide at the end of unit 9 and view DVD session 9. 2. Discuss the message and testimony (small group). Ask and discuss the following questions or use your own. a. How does the need for medical supplies in Peru during a cholera epidemic demonstrate a crisis of belief? What are some things that give clear evidence God was at work in this assignment? b. What is the difference between a crisis and a crisis of belief? c. What are some examples from Henry’s message that illustrate faith and others that illustrate unbelief during a crisis of belief? 393.3. Apply the truth to your church. What are some things you sense God is saying to your church? How do you think your church should respond? Closure—5 minutes 1. Wait on the Lord (small group). Review any questions or concerns that may have come up during the session. Ask the group to pray for these concerns and seek answers to questions during the coming week. 2. Preview unit 10 (small group). Ask members to pay special attention to the way a church comes to understand and do God’s will. 3. Pray (small group). Ask volunteers to pray prayers of commitment to the absolute lordship of Christ. After several have prayed, close by asking God to teach all of you, during the coming unit, how to know and do His will as a church. AFTER THE SESSION Use the standard guide to evaluate the session. Session 11: Kingdom People SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVES This session will help members— • identify ways a local church can be a world-missions strategy center; • apply Kingdom principles and truths to your church; • define koinonia and explain ways it can be reflected in relationships with other Christians and churches; • write and explain the application of four essentials of koinonia; • demonstrate a desire for the full expression of koinonia in your church by praying for your church and by taking an action that will enhance koinonia. Before the Session □ 1. Complete all the learning activities in unit 11 of the member book. □ 2. Pray now for God’s guidance as you prepare for this group session. Pray specifically for each member of your group. 405 □ 3. Read “During the Session.” Select the activities that best suit the learning needs of your group. Adapt or develop other activities you sense will best help your group gain the greatest benefit from the unit of study. □ 4. Decide on the amount of time to allow for each activity. Record a time beside the activity to indicate when it should begin. Always be prepared to change your plans if the Holy Spirit leads you and the group in another direction. □ 5. Gather the following item and any other items you need for activities you may have developed on your own. • Optional: A copy of “Experiencing God Course Evaluation” for each member (print from CD-ROM file EG_Evaluation.pdf) □ 6. Remove the unit posters from the previous session and save them for future use. Display the posters you have prepared for unit 11. □ 7. Prepare a one-minute preview of unit 12. □ 8. If you are using the DVD messages, do the following. • Secure and set up the equipment necessary for viewing. • Preview the session 11 DVD message (24:09 min.) and list one or two key ideas or questions you think will be of special interest to your group members. Use these ideas to introduce the DVD message. • Think about your own response to the DVD discussion questions in “During the Session.” During the Session Arrival Activity—5 minutes 1. Greet members as they arrive. Ask them to complete the unit review at the end of unit 11 while others are coming in and to make sure they have completed the learning activities that will be discussed in “Sharing Time.” 2. Open with prayer (small group). Lead in a prayer for guidance that your church truly might become a world-missions strategy center. Unit Review—15 minutes 1. Q & A (small group). As time permits, ask volunteers to answer the following. a. How can a local church be a world-missions strategy center (day 1)? b. What is koinonia (activity 2, day 2)? 406 c. What is love as described in 1 Corinthians 13? And what is love not (activity 9, day 2)? d. How will people know that we are disciples of Jesus (John 13:35 and day 2)? e. What are ways koinonia can be reflected in relationships between churches (day 3)? f. What are the four essentials of koinonia, and how would a church function to maintain each of these essentials (day 4)? g. What are some things that can threaten or compete with your love for God (activity 2, day 4)? h. How does interference with Christ’s love threaten koinonia in a church (activity 8, day 4)? i. What are some things that happen in a church that can take the place of a real and personal encounter with God (activity 6, day 5)? j. What are some things or people in which church members may be tempted to place their trust (activity 8, day 5)? 2. Poster discussion (small group). Focus attention on the statements on the unit posters you have displayed. Read each statement and ask members to comment on what that statement means to them. Ask what adjustments may be needed in their lives to relate correctly to God. Sharing Time—20 minutes 1. World-missions strategy center (small group). Ask members to turn to day 1. • Ask: What do you sense God is doing or wants to do to use our church as a world-missions strategy center? • Ask: Has God added members to our body whom He wants to use to touch our world for Christ? If so, who? How? If God calls specific individuals to mind during this time of sharing, enlist members of the group to call them this week and ask probing questions (see unit 4, day 5) to learn whether God is already at work in their lives and now wants to involve the rest of the church with them. 2. Written responses (pairs). Ask members to turn to the following learning activities and share responses with each other. Topics are listed in “Sharing Time” at the end of unit 11. • The last three questions in the unit review • One of the most meaningful statements or Scriptures from this unit’s lessons and your prayer response to God. Choose one from those you identified at the ends of the days’ studies. 407.3. Scripture memory (pairs). Ask members to quote 1 John 1:7 to each other and share what God may have said to them through this week’s memory verse. 4. Focus on God (small group). Ask: a. What have you come to know about God, His purposes, or His ways this week? b. What do you sense God wants you to do in response to this knowledge of Him? 5. Declare the wonderful works of the Lord (small group). Allow time for testimonies. Say: If God has done something special in or through your life this week, please share what God has done so we can praise the Lord together. DVD Viewing and Discussion—45 minutes 1. View the DVD for session 11 (small group). Invite members to turn to the viewer guide at the end of unit 11 and view DVD session 11. 2. Discuss the message and testimony (small group). Ask and discuss the following questions or use your own. a. What changes in his life did Kyle Hebert (an Angola Prison inmate) describe that give testimony to God’s greatness to change lives? b. What truths about God’s kingdom have your heard that reveal what God wants to do in our world? c. What are some characteristics of a healthy Kingdom citizen? What would he or she do? Prayer Time—15 minutes 1. Share requests and pray (small group). Rather than take time to hear requests, ask members to pray aloud for the prayer concerns that have grown from their study this week. The prayers may focus on the members’ personal response to God and other Christians, or they may relate to your church and its response to God’s kingdom principles. 2. Record prayer requests (small group). After the group finishes, suggest: Turn to the prayer section of your journal and record prayer requests or ways God led you to pray for yourself or for our church. Closure—10 minutes 1. Wait on the Lord (small group). Review any questions or concerns that may have come up during the session. Ask the group to pray for these concerns and seek answers to questions this week. 408.2. Preview unit 12 (small group). Ask members to pay special attention to the essentials of maintaining koinonia. 3. Course evaluation (small group). If you decided to request an evaluation of the course, distribute copies of “Experiencing God Course Evaluation.” Ask members to place this in their books at the beginning of unit 12. Ask them to complete the evaluation for your benefit, so that you will learn how to improve the smallgroup experience next time you lead this study. Mention that they do not have to write their names on them. Tell them you will collect the evaluations at the next session. 4. Set a date (small group). Ask members to bring their calendars to the next session or check available dates four to six weeks away. Explain that in the next group session you will decide on a possible date for an informal get-together to give out diplomas and spend time sharing and praying together. 5. Pray (small group). Ask a member to pray that your church will experience all the dimensions of koinonia that God wants for it and that it truly will be a world-missions strategy center. AFTER THE SESSION Use the standard guide to evaluate the session. Session 12: Experiencing God in Your Daily Life SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVES This session will help members— • identify evidences of a departure from intimacy with God and determine God’s remedy; • identify ways to join God’s activity in their spouses’ lives; • identify ways to join God’s activity in their children’s lives; • identify ways they can encourage other Christians to love and good deeds; • demonstrate their commitment to continue experiencing God in their daily lives. Before the Session □ 1. Complete all the learning activities in unit 12 of the member book. □ 2. Pray now for God’s guidance as you prepare for this group session. Pray specifically for each member of your group. □ 3. Read “During the Session.” Select the activities that best suit the learning needs of your group. Adapt or develop other activities you sense will best help your group gain the greatest benefit from the unit of study. 409 □. Decide on the amount of time to allow for each activity. Record a time beside the activity to indicate when it should begin. Always be prepared to change your plans if the Holy Spirit leads you and the group in another direction. □ 5. Gather the following items and any other items you need for activities you may have developed on your own. • A dry-erase board or newsprint and suitable markers • Extra copies of the course-evaluation form distributed last week for members who forgot to return theirs □ 6. Remove the unit posters from the previous session and save them for future use. Display the posters you have prepared for unit 12. □ 7. If you did not enlist help during session 11, call and enlist members to bring light refreshments for the break period. □ 8. Contact the church office or the appropriate person and check the church calendar for possible dates for your final get-together. Checking with the church will enable you to avoid any conflicts with other events that might involve your small-group members. □ 9. If you are using the DVD messages, do the following. • Secure and set up the equipment necessary for viewing. • Preview the session 12 DVD message (26:55 min.) and list one or two key ideas or questions you think will be of special interest to your group members. Use these ideas to introduce the DVD message. • Think about your own response to the DVD discussion questions in “During the Session.” Think about how you will respond after “Prayer Time” if people have been deeply touched by the Lord. □ 10. Discuss with your church’s discipleship-training director (or the person responsible for planning discipleship courses) to find out when another study of Experiencing God will be offered. Also find out what future training opportunities have already been scheduled so you can share this information with your group in the next session. Prepare a copy of these scheduled training events for each member, or you may want to write them on a poster for display. During the Session Arrival Activity—5 minutes 1. Greet members as they arrive. Encourage them to work with a partner and complete the unit review at the end of unit 12. Ask them to be sure they have completed the learning activities 410 that will be discussed in “Sharing Time.” Collect completed copies of the course evaluation that you distributed in the previous session. If members have not completed theirs, ask them to finish while others arrive. 2. Opening prayer (small group). Call on a member to begin the session with a prayer of thanksgiving for the koinonia God has developed in the group. Unit Review—15 minutes 3. Q & A (small group). As time permits, ask volunteers to answer some of the following: a. What are some evidences that you have departed from your intimacy with God (activity 1, day 1)? b. What are some ways you can join God’s activity in your spouse’s life (activities 7 and 8, day 2)? c. What are some ways you can join God’s activity in your children’s lives (day 3)? d. What are some ways your church could encourage your Christian influence in your workplace and that of others (day 4)? e. What are some things you can do to increase the likelihood that you will continue to experience God (day 5)? Sharing Time—30 minutes 1. Scripture memory (pairs). Ask members to quote Hebrews 10:24-25 to each other and share what God may have said to them through this week’s memory verse. Ask: What are some ways we can “spur one another on toward love and good deeds”? 2. Written responses (small group). You will need plenty of time for the very important prayer time at the end of this session. Limit the sharing of written responses to the time you have available. If necessary, stop this activity before all are finished so you will have adequate time to pray for one another. Ask members to turn in their books to the following learning activities and share responses with one another. Topics are listed in “Sharing Time” at the end of unit 12. • One of the most meaningful statements or Scriptures from this unit’s lessons and your prayer response to God. Choose one from those you identified at the ends of the days’ studies. • How you would evaluate your intimacy with God (activity 2, day 1) • What you sense you should do next (activity 2, day 5) DVD Viewing and Discussion—45 minutes 1. View session 12 (small group). Invite members to turn to the viewer guide at the end of unit 12 and view DVD session 12. 411. 2. Discuss the message and testimony (small group). Ask and discuss the following questions or use your own. a. How does Don and Lena’s testimony illustrate that each step of obedience can lead to increasing experiences of God’s greatness? b. What have the truths or illustrations about experiencing God with your family or in your workplace inspired you to consider doing with your family or in your workplace? Prayer Time—15 minutes 1. Share requests and pray (quads or small group). Ask members to respond to this question: What is the most meaningful thing we can pray about for your spiritual growth and walk with the Lord? After one person shares, ask the other members of the quad to stand around the person and pray for his or her request. Some members may want to place their hands on the shoulders of the person to express their support as they pray. After praying for this person, ask a second person to share. Then pray for him. Continue until all members have been prayed for. Closure—5 minutes 1. Set a date (small group). Select a date for your final get-together. 2. Pray (small group). Stand in a circle and join hands. Close with a period of thanksgiving to God for all the wonderful things He has done during this course of study. Ask members to pray about one thanksgiving at a time, but encourage them to pray as many times as they want. After the Session 1. Add to your spiritual journal a final list of specific ways you want to continue praying for your group members and for your church. 2. Provide a final get-together for your group. Plan a cookout, a covered-dish meal, or a dinner at a local restaurant. Involve the group members in planning and preparing for the event. Mail invitations or call members to remind them of the date and time. At the meal ask members to give an update on what God is currently doing in their lives. Allow members to share up-to-date prayer requests on assignments they sense God has given or on adjustments they are making. Close the session with a time of conversational prayer as members pray for one another. 3. Take some time, perhaps on a personal half-day retreat, to evaluate your group study of Experiencing God. Use the following questions to start your thinking. Make notes for yourself on this 412 page or in your journal. Begin your evaluation with a time of prayer for the Lord’s perspective. • How has God used this course and small-group study to influence or improve your relationship with Him? • What has God done in the life of your church as a result of this study? • How have the spiritual leaders of your church responded to the changes in the members who have studied with you? • What do you think was the most meaningful experience during the study? • What would you do differently in a future study of the course? (Consider things such as enlistment of participants, size of group, meeting time and place, learning activities, prayer times, and other details.) • What should you do next? Lead another group? Study or teach another course? Begin or facilitate a new ministry? Complete the previous person’s review before you proceed. 4. Review group members’ responses to “Experiencing God Course Evaluation.” Make summary notes on the things you think you would change with the next small group you lead through this study. 5. Gather the following materials and store them for use with future small-group studies of Experiencing God. • The “Memorizing Scripture” poster • The “Seven Realities” poster • The “God Speaks Through the Bible” and “God Speaks Through Prayer” posters • The unit posters from units 1-12 • Components of the leader kit • Notes you may have written that are not included in this leader guide • Other materials you prepared for group sessions 6. Spend a period in prayer and fellowship with God thanking Him for all He has done in and through your life and in your church during the past 13 weeks. 7. If God has done something that you sense is very significant in the life of your church as a result of this study, consider sharing a brief testimony with us. Write or type a one-page testimony on 8 1/2-by-11-inch paper describing what God has done. On the back of the page include the following information. • Your name, address, and phone number • Your church’s name, address, and phone number 413 • Your pastor’s name 414

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