



# EXPERIENCING GOD

## Community Group Leader Guide

Oct-Dec 2021

Thank you for leading a group for our fall series, *Experiencing God*. We look forward to growing and learning together during the coming weeks. While the series includes weekly sermons (Oct 24-Dec 26), the greatest impact may come through personal use of the study guide. It is not required, but it will be extremely beneficial.

Because the study guide is so extensive, groups will not want (or be able to) “answer each question” in a discussion format – there is simply too much information. For that reason, we’ve provided this overview to guide you through some shared learning with your group each week. *To clarify – there will NOT be a separate weekly “discussion guide” provided during this series – this document includes an overview for all weeks in the series, and both leaders and participants are encouraged to use the workbook* (available in the atrium or at Amazon). Please contact your staff coach if you have any questions about how to utilize this material with your groups.

*\*\*\*If anyone in your group needs financial assistance for the workbook (or you would like to help support others who need financial assistance), please talk with your staff coach for options.*

### From the authors<sup>1</sup>

*You may be asking yourself, “Why did I agree to teach this study? I need to learn how to know and do God’s will myself.” Your role in this small-group study is not that of a teacher. You are a leader of learning activities. You are a facilitator of the group learning process. If you sense God has led you to accept this assignment, you can trust [God] to equip and enable you to accomplish the task...*

*Group members will spend as much as two or three hours studying each unit of Experiencing God. The Holy Spirit will be their teacher. The content and learning activities will help members learn the basic truths and principles during the week. You will help them review what they have learned; share with one another what God has revealed of himself and his purposes; and apply these truths to their personal lives, their families, their work, and their church life.*

*Group members may ask some questions you cannot answer. Expect and welcome those questions and apply what you are learning. When you do not have an answer, invite the group to join you in praying and searching the scriptures. Together, ask God to guide you to his answer and his perspective. Then trust God to do it. When God sends an answer through one or more group members, you will all know God and God’s ways because of that experience.*

### Sermon Series and Weekly Themes *(The sermon series correlates to Units 1-8 in the workbook)*

Oct 24 – Welcoming the Refugee

Oct 31 – Knowing God’s Will

Nov 7 – Looking to God

Nov 14 – God Pursues a Love Relationship

Nov 21 – Love and God’s Invitation

Nov 28 – God Speaks to Reveal Himself

Dec 5 – God Speaks Again

Dec 12 – The Crisis of Belief

Dec 19 – Adjusting Your Life to God

Dec 26 – Where have YOU seen God at work?

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<sup>1</sup> This paragraph in italics (and some of the “per week suggestions” p3) is from Claude King, *The Experiencing God Leader Guide* (video-based curriculum), Nashville: Lifeway Press, 1999, 2007, 2018.

## **Group Sessions** (suggested outline for a 75-minute gathering; specific suggestions per week are listed below)

\* *If you only meet every other week, choose a brief highlight from each unit, and focus your time around sharing and prayer.*

- Arrival and Get Acquainted – 15 min
  - Unit 1 Review (p 29) has several suggested Get Acquainted questions which can be incorporated into the first few weeks.
- Unit Review – 15 min
  - Each Unit has a review page with main points, space for participant notes from the sermon, and questions related to workbook content. Unit 1-8 reviews are found on pages 29, 49, 67, 87, 111, 131, 153, and 177 of the workbooks.
  - Note that the Unit Review includes “DVD Message Notes.” We are not utilizing the DVDs for this series, but many of these points will be covered in the weekly sermon.
  - Options that will work most weeks as opening questions include:
    - “What stood out to you from Sunday’s sermon?”
    - “What is your big takeaway from this week’s material?”
    - “What questions did this material bring to mind for you?”
- Sharing Time – 30 min
  - In the right sidebar of each Unit Review, you’ll find suggested questions for the sharing time.
  - If your group has more than 6-8 people, we recommend breaking into smaller groups for the sharing. For instance:
    - If your group meets at the church building, the “smaller groups” might be table discussions.
    - You can encourage people to break into pairs/threes for one question, then mix up the groups for another question.
    - Or you might divide men and women for one session, and number off for another session.
  - With larger groups, you may also consider using the same smaller groups for the entire series, since people will share more deeply if they know each other better.
- Prayer Time – 15 min
  - At the beginning of each session, we encourage you to pray for the Holy Spirit’s blessing and presence to guide your discussion.
  - At the end of each session, we encourage you to pray for one another’s needs, concerns, and praises.

**Scripture Memory** – This study (and workbook) encourages participants to put scripture verses to memory. “Hiding God’s word in your heart” is one way to ensure God’s words become your response and increase the likelihood of “hearing God speak.” See suggestions below for encouraging scripture memory.

### **Per week suggestions**

*Our hope is that leaders are fully engaging in the workbook/study time throughout the week and spending a few minutes looking over each Unit Review to select specific sharing time questions.*

*Encourage group members to JOIN the study at any time, even if they are not able to start their workbook before the 31<sup>st</sup>.*

Oct 24 – Intro - Use this week’s group experience to welcome new members, share highlights from the 101 series or Sunday’s sermon, and introduce the new series. Encourage them to start using their workbooks/journals this week in advance of Oct 31. There is an illustration in the back cover that will be referred to weekly. There is also a “Group Covenant” on page 270 of the workbook that can encourage participants to invest fully in the process.

Oct 31 – Unit 1 - Introduce the scripture memory component and encourage them to utilize the cards at the back of the workbook. Some ways to practice memory work include:

- Keeping the small card in your wallet or purse for review throughout the day
- Review on a white board/large post-it with group, erasing or covering 1-2 words each time you say it.
- Have someone make up a tune to sing the verse.
- Challenge each other with prizes at group time.
- Pair and share – saying it to a partner is less intimidating to say it to the group.
- Read it aloud several times at group sessions.

Nov 7 – Unit 2 –

- Ask “What is the difference between self-centered and God-centered living?”
- Make a list of methods God used to speak in the Old Testament, through Jesus, and in the New Testament.

Nov 14 – Unit 3 –

- Ask participants to share a testimony of how they’ve seen God at work this week.
- Pray through Psalm 103 as an expression of gratitude to God.

Nov 21 – Unit 4 –

- Ask participants to reflect on the discipline of scripture memory? How has it blessed them? How has it challenged them?
- Worship God for the variety of ways he is made known to us, through the list of “names for God” at the back of the workbook (p 268-269)

Nov 28 – Unit 5 –

- Discuss the illustration of how God speaks through the Bible (p104) and the illustration of how God speaks through prayer (p108). Which method is more familiar to you?

Dec 5 – Unit 6

- Have some participants share some of their “spiritual markers” (p127, #6). See if someone can give a personal example of how this process is helping them in a specific decision now.
- Ask “What have you come to know about God or his purposes in relationship to the church?”

Dec 12 – Unit 7

- Discuss the case studies (pages 147-148) and ask members to discuss their responses. Gently call attention to any effort to base a response on only experience and ask members to base their answers instead on biblical truth.
- Write out and/or read aloud in full your most “meaningful scripture” from this week’s lesson.

Dec 19 – Unit 8

- Review the “Seven Realities” poster at the back of the workbook. Have a volunteer or two share where they currently “are” on the poster.
- Ask “Who is one Bible character you recall who was asked to make an adjustment and obeyed? What about one asked to make an adjustment and refused?”

Dec 26 – If your group meets between Dec 26 – January 5, share stories or testimonies in response to the overall Experiencing God study. (Weekly discussion guides for the January series will be provided by mid-December)