



EXPERIENCING GOD

**INTENTIONALLY AND CONSISTENTLY ENGAGING
WITH GOD IN DEEPER RELATIONSHIP**



D I M E N S I O N S O F D I S C I P L E S H I P G U I D E

LOGAN | RIDLEY | DEVRIES



DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

EXPERIENCING GOD

Author: Robert E. Logan

Contributors: Charles R. Ridley and David J. DeVries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Tara Miller's exceptional writing skills bring our thoughts and ideas to life. Above all others, she makes this book possible. Over many years, her creative collaboration makes it possible to give written resources to the Church so that people can discover and live out their God-given purpose.

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ISBN: 978-1-939921-05-5

Printed in the United States of America

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EXPERIENCING GOD

Experiencing God is one of eight discipleship guides for the Dimensions of Discipleship series. It doesn't matter which guide you start with—start wherever you'd like and move on to wherever God is leading you next. When we live in the dynamic rhythm and flow of a missional life, we need to take our cues from the Holy Spirit.

These eight guides are organized according to the tree diagram below; examine it to see how all of the pieces fit together. Experiencing God, at the root of the tree, focuses on the way we interact and dialogue with God, the way we become increasingly aware of his presence, and how we continue to form a more personal relationship with him. This root is necessary for all of the other areas, as they flow out of our experience of God.





Experiencing God means intentionally and consistently engaging with God in such a way that you open yourself to deeper understanding of him and deeper relationship with him. We are to use our minds, our bodies, our souls, and our emotions to love him.



He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Luke 10:27

We can engage with God through all of our senses and in many different ways: through music, through prayer, through scripture, through the natural world. The methods of experiencing God are infinite. The following five-part journey covers these five essential expressions of experiencing God:

- Increasing your awareness of God's love and presence
- Growing in the knowledge and grace of God
- Reflecting on and applying scripture in your everyday life
- Dialoguing authentically with God
- Worshipping God in spirit and in truth

Meet together with a group of three or four to talk through each of these expressions. Ask each other these questions. Wait for and listen to responses from the heart. Encourage, challenge, and affirm one another. Go at your own pace: you can do one a week or one a month, whatever pace works best for you. Be sure to allow enough time to live into these behaviors.



PART 1: INCREASING YOUR AWARENESS OF GOD'S LOVE AND PRESENCE



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU INTENTIONALLY BECOMING MORE AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND HIS LOVE FOR YOU?

Sometimes we feel a sense of God's presence on an emotional level and sometimes we don't. We know he is always there, regardless of how we feel. How can we connect to the love and presence of God even when he feels far away from us? The presence of God is what sustains and nourishes us when we have trouble or when difficult journeys are ahead of us.

Sometimes we sense his love and presence in the big things—the major changes and challenges in our lives—and sometimes we sense his love and presence in the small things—a gentle breeze or the sun on our face. Our goal in increasing our awareness of God's love and presence is not manufacturing emotion, but getting in touch with how God is already speaking to us and then recognizing his presence in our lives.

MEDITATION

Bede Griffiths, a Benedictine monk, details something he experienced as a boy. He was walking in the evening when he was suddenly dazzled by the beautiful song of a flock of birds. The beauty of their singing seemed to awaken senses he'd never used before. In an instant the world seemed magically transformed, and everything in it seemed to burst with what he calls a "kind of sacramental character. I remember now the feeling of awe which came over me," he wrote, "I felt inclined to kneel on the ground... and I hardly dared to look on the face of the sky, because it seemed as though it was but a veil before the face of God."

When have you experienced something like this? Take time to re-imagine that time in your mind, re-creating the sensory experience.

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.

**1 Kings 19:3-18**

³ Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. ⁴ Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died."

⁵ Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" ⁶ He looked around and there beside his head was some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again.

⁷ Then the angel of the LORD came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you."

⁸ So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God. ⁹ There he came to a cave, where he spent the night.

But the LORD said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁰ Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the LORD God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

¹¹ "Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the LORD told him. And as Elijah stood there, the LORD passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁴ He replied again, "I have zealously served the LORD God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

When are you most aware of God's presence and love?

When are you least aware of God's presence and love?

Under what circumstances are you most likely to seek out his presence?

How does God manifest his love for you?

How might you be able to best grow in experiencing God's presence and love?

What changes might be beneficial to you?

"There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful, than that of a continual conversation with God; those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it."
—Brother Lawrence



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



PART 2: GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE AND GRACE OF GOD



KEY QUESTION: IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU SEEKING TO GROW IN BOTH THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE GRACE OF GOD?

God has placed a hunger within us to know him. We can try many different ways to dampen, ignore, or redirect that hunger, but it remains buried within us. It's part of the natural blueprint of who we are. God made us not only as feeling people but thinking people. We wonder, we question, we evaluate. Our minds hunger to know God and to understand him. Toward that end, we engage with him in much the same way we would engage with another person: we seek to know them and to understand them. We ask questions, we listen, we observe.

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.

“Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts.”—
Mother Teresa



2 Peter 3:18:

¹⁸ Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Colossians 2:1-9:

I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally. ² I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. ³ In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

⁴ I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments. ⁵ For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong.



⁶ And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. ⁷ Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

⁸ Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. ⁹ For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

In what ways are you seeking to know God more deeply?

What have you learned about God lately?

How are you growing in knowledge? How are you growing in grace?

Which qualities of God's character are you deepening your understanding of?

How do the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit each help you in your understanding of God?

How are you experiencing the mystery of God?

What effect does the knowledge of God have on your daily life?

In what ways might you continue to grow in this area?

What changes might be beneficial to you?

ASK GOD YOUR QUESTIONS

God is unafraid of our questions and unshaken by our doubts. He is not threatened or diminished in any way by our inquiries. Take some time to write out your questions to God. What do you wonder? What do you want to know? What really matters to you?



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



PART 3: REFLECTING ON AND APPLYING SCRIPTURE IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE

KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU REFLECTING ON AND APPLYING SCRIPTURE IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE?

One of the greatest gifts God has given us is his Word, the scriptures. Through the scriptures, we learn more about who God is, what he has done for us, and how we can serve him. All the genres are there: history, poetry, stories, songs, plays, philosophy, apocalyptic literature. It's left to us to figure out how we can best delve into this treasure trove of riches God has given to us.

Different strategies and approaches work best for different people. Some prefer to meditate for a long period of time on a short passage of scripture—reading and rereading it to fully experience the passage. Others prefer to read broad, large portions of scripture to see the overall narrative arc and context of the Word of God. Some don't prefer reading at all, but listening. After all, that's how most people have experienced scripture throughout history: they had it read to them.

Memorization is another helpful approach for many in that it allows internalization of the ideas to a greater degree.

One important point is to find out what works for you and do it. As you faithfully interact with scripture, you will meet God there, as the Spirit speaks to us through his Word. The second point is to not walk away from what you are learning, but apply it in your everyday life. Understanding without application is useless.

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.

"I think it would be well, and proper, and obedient, and pure, to grasp your one necessity and not let it go, to dangle from it limp wherever it takes you."
—Annie Dillard



2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.



CONDUCT A SURVEY

Interview others within the body of Christ about the ways they engage with scripture. Ask them about practices such as meditation on a particular verse, reading of large quantities of scripture, memorization of passages, and listening to scripture read aloud. What practices are most meaningful to them? When have they most powerfully experienced God through scripture?



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

How do you best interact with scripture?

What approaches have you tried?

In which ways do you experience two-way communication as you interact with scripture?

Which sections of scripture are you most drawn to and why?

How do you structure your time in scripture? (e.g. a few minutes each day? a larger portion of time once a week?)

Describe a typical time spent interacting with scripture.

When is the last time you made a change in your life based on something you learned in scripture? Describe that time.

When was one time God spoke to you clearly through the scriptures? How did you respond?

In what ways do you see yourself needing to grow in this area?

What changes might be beneficial to you?



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



PART 4: DIALOGUING AUTHENTICALLY WITH GOD

KEY QUESTION: HOW DO YOU DIALOGUE AUTHENTICALLY WITH GOD?

Our experience of God was never intended to be rote: a dutiful prayer asking for things and a routine reading of a chapter of the Bible a day. One of the revolutionary things about Jesus coming to earth incarnate was the communication that this whole worship thing is a relationship. With the death of Jesus, the curtain of the temple was ripped from top to bottom (that's the curtain separating the holy of holies from humanity). That barrier has been broken, and we can enter the presence of God through faith in Jesus, our mediator.

What we have now is not simply a set of duties or a book of rules. It's a real live relationship with another person. What do we do in relationships? We talk. We listen. We laugh. We spend time in each others' presence... sometimes without any agenda at all other than enjoying one another.

Now in the context of a relationship with the creator and Lord of the universe, how does that differ? Certainly, we worship. He is far above us. Yet he is also near, and we had best not remove the relational element. That forms the very core of our worship of God.

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below.

Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.

"The time of business does not differ with me from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were on my knees."—Brother Lawrence



Matthew 27:45-52

⁴⁵ At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. ⁴⁶ At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

⁴⁷ Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. ⁴⁸ One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. ⁴⁹ But the rest said, "Wait! Let's see whether Elijah comes to save him."

⁵⁰ Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit. ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart,



⁵² and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead.

Isaiah 6:1-8

It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. ² Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³ They were calling out to each other,

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven's Armies!
The whole earth is filled with his glory!"

⁴ Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke.

⁵ Then I said, "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD of Heaven's Armies."

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷ He touched my lips with it and said, "See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven."

⁸ Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?"

I said, "Here I am. Send me."

EXERCISE: WHOLE LIFE WORSHIP

To worship God fully, with your whole life, make a list of all the areas of your life that need to come into submission to him (e.g. your relationships, your money, your sexuality, your work life, etc.) What areas of your life are you currently keeping separate from your worship of God? How might you go about integrating those areas?



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What is your understanding of “whole life worship”?

How do you bring your whole self before God?

What else does God want you to bring to the table that you’ve not yet brought?

In what ways do you feel like you bring your true self before God? In what ways is that hard?

When have you processed your disappointment or anger with God?

When have you experienced awe of God?

In what ways could you further open yourself up to experiencing the presence of God in worship?

What changes might be beneficial to you?

“It is impossible to meet God without abandon, without exposing yourself, being raw.”—Bono



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



PART 5: WORSHIPPING GOD IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

KEY QUESTION: HOW DO YOU WORSHIP GOD IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH AS PART OF YOUR EXPERIENCE OF WHOLE LIFE WORSHIP?

We are people designed to worship. If we do not worship God, we will worship something: success, material possessions, another person. How can we worship God in spirit and in truth as he wants to be worshipped?

When people hear the word “worship,” they often think of a Sunday morning worship service—something corporate with a large group and singing. That can certainly be part of worship, but worship is much larger than that. In the Old Testament, God set out specific parameters for how we are to approach him in worship and what offerings we are to make to him. Now with the coming of Jesus, a new way of worship has been opened up to us.

“A man can no more diminish God’s glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word ‘darkness’ on the walls of his cell.”
—C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

It’s not a matter of “getting things right” in a religious approach to God, but a matter of approaching God in a manner of “spirit and in truth,” in the way Jesus described it to the woman at the well. For each of us that will look different, just as all of creation is varied.

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.



John 4:19-24:

19 “Sir,” the woman said, “you must be a prophet.”²⁰ So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?”

²¹ Jesus replied, “Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. ²³ But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship



the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way.

²⁴ For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

Exodus 33:8-11

Whenever Moses went out to the Tent of Meeting, all the people would get up and stand in the entrances of their own tents. They would all watch Moses until he disappeared inside. 9 As he went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and hover at its entrance while the LORD spoke with Moses. 10 When the people saw the cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, they would stand and bow down in front of their own tents. 11 Inside the Tent of Meeting, the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Afterward Moses would return to the camp, but the young man who assisted him, Joshua son of Nun, would remain behind in the Tent of Meeting.

“If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship, the song of the Church triumphant would have no symphony, it would be played like an orchestra in which all instruments played the same note.” —C.S. Lewis

JOURNAL:

What does worshipping in spirit and in truth look like for you? Describe what you look like (where, when, doing what) when you are fully engaged with God in worship.



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What is your understanding of “worship in spirit and in truth”?

What does that mean for you? What does it not mean?

How do you prepare yourself before coming before God?

How do you see God as you worship him?

What qualities do you sense in God as you worship him?

How do you respond to those qualities?

What changes might be beneficial to you?



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



WHAT'S NEXT?

So you've completed this guide. What now? Is there another dimension of discipleship you need to zoom in on? If so, which one?

Because the *Dimensions of Discipleship* guides aren't meant to be used in any particular order, it's up to you to do some listening to the Holy Spirit. Take a look at the big picture and decide where God is leading you next. With a holistic system, it's always a surprise. No matter which guide you choose next, you're engaged in an ongoing action-reflection process as you continue living incarnationally and missionally.

Maybe what's next isn't another *Dimensions of Discipleship* guide. Here are a few other options:

You can move on to a similar series: *The Journey Together Now* guides. You can find out more about these downloadable guides at www.loganleadership.com.

If you have a friend or mentor you've been going through these guides with—or if you'd like to begin discipling someone, you can start an online coaching relationship at www.mycoachlog.com: a tool to help you stay on track, reflect on what God is doing, and celebrate progress.

You may be ready to engage in a more formal coaching relationship with someone who can challenge you to the next level of missional living and leadership. Check out www.loganleadership.com for information on coaching.

No matter what's next for you, continue to grow in the ways you follow Jesus into your continuing journey of discipleship.