

What's Wrong With *Experiencing God*?

Extensive review of *Experiencing God*

[<http://knowtruth.tripod.com/sg9901.htm>]

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Dear Friend,

The keynote speakers list of spiritual qualifications was not lengthy. There were no references to his academic letters, theological acumen, skill at biblical living, or personal holiness.

Instead, he was simply introduced as "a man who hears from God." It was the ultimate sign of spiritual competency. The implication for the audience was clear: He listens to God; they should listen to him.

It's hard to think of anything that has captured the imagination of Christians recently as aggressively as the idea of hearing the voice of God. The notion is, to many, so obviously Christian, so undoubtedly Biblical, that its truth is beyond question.

To challenge it is akin to spiritual treason.^[1] For many, such an intimacy is central to personal relationship with the Almighty, the core of vibrant Christianity. Without it genuine closeness to the Savior is not possible.

It's not surprising, then, that a book promising to lead the believer into such intimacy would be a best-seller. The book is simply entitled *Experiencing God*, by Henry Blackaby and Claude King. It's subtitled, "How to Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God."^[2]

Christian Book Distributors (CBD), offering the largest selection of Christian products in the world, featured it prominently on page two of its Christmas sale catalog. It is available in hardcover, soft cover, and audiocassette. There are companion books: *Experiencing God Day by Day: The Devotional and Journal*, and the *Experiencing God Workbook*, adult and teen editions. There's even an *Experiencing God Bible*.

Experiencing God

This book is about experiencing God by doing His will. The two notions are inextricably connected, the central focus of the book. Everything else is written to serve these ideas.

The back jacket of *Experiencing God* characterizes the content this way. The "fullness of life lived in fellowship with the loving, personal God" entails learning to "hear and obey His voice." This involves the truth that "God reveals Himself to each one of us in special and exceptional ways" that are "unique" to each individual.

The backbone of Blackaby's instruction is his "Seven Realities of Experiencing God." The list is introduced in Chapter 6 and can be found on page 50. They are:

1. God is always at work around you.
2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.
3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.

4. God speaks by the Holy spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.
5. God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith in action.
6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.
7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you.

The remainder of the book details these elements and gives Blackaby's[\[3\]](#) Biblical justification for each one.

There is so much good in *Experiencing God*, both in intent and content, it's painful to take exception with it. In fact, at first glance it's hard to imagine anything amiss.

Our loving relationship with God is central to everything Blackaby writes. Of first importance, we should nurture the love relationship with God for which we were created (30, 79). "He wants you to experience an intimate love relationship with Him that is real and personal" (1), a relationship in which "God always takes the initiative" (85).

The emphasis on selfless surrender is very Biblical. "We must come to a denial of self and return to God-centeredness" (100). "To live a God-centered life, you must focus your life on God's purposes, not your own plans" (103). The prayers of surrender at the end of each chapter are, for the most part, priceless as tender calls to submission.

Blackaby encourages us to develop a servant's attitude. This calls for humility and obedience to Christ (39). As servants, we should be moldable and available for the Master's use (41). He invites us to carefully evaluate our relationship with God to make sure it is real, personal, and practical, as God intends (95).

Blackaby takes the will of God seriously. God doesn't give us options (22-23). We are never to question His will (48). We are to obey even when it doesn't make sense (23), because His will is always best (24-25).

On this topic, one of his most helpful guidelines is to watch where God is at work and join Him (Chapter 6). "Once you know where He is working, you can adjust your life to join Him" (72). There's a particularly fruitful illustration of this on pages 124-126.

There's so much to praise. As someone once said, however, the devil is in the details. The key to my concern about all of these good teachings is the way Blackaby applies them. These fine directives are pressed into service of another notion, one that is not Biblical.

The Assignment

The concept of divine "assignment" is central to everything Blackaby has written. He mentions it more than 100 times. This is what he means by "God's will" and by God "speaking."

"We do not find God's will--it is revealed," Blackaby instructs us (p. x). Such direction, according to Blackaby, is given in small steps on a short term basis. He doesn't give the whole blueprint. Instead of demanding the big picture, we should follow God's leadership "one day at a time" (33, 34, 36) to "be right in the middle of God's will for your life" (36).

"Your task is to wait until the Master gives you instructions" (141). This is the critical fourth step in the "Seven Realities of Experiencing God." Blackaby sums it up simply as "God speaks" (52). The Christian receives an "assignment" from God that is special and unique to each individual, the specific will of God for his own life.

How does God speak to us? "God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit. He uses the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church (other believers). No one of these methods of God's speaking is, by itself, a clear indicator of God's directions. But when God says the same thing through each of these ways, you can have confidence to proceed" (56).

In this way God reveals His purposes, His assignment to us so we can then be involved in His work. "You cannot discover these truths about God on your own," Blackaby writes. "Truth is revealed" (56).

Blackaby is intentionally vague on the manner of this communication. The method differs from person to person (135). In general, the goal of the Christian is to develop the ability to "sense" God's "leading."

Blackaby describes it this way: "I sensed God's call..." (p. xiii); "I prayed and sensed that God wanted me to..." (p. xiv); "I began to sense a great urgency from God..." (p. xiv); "We decided that God had definitely led us..." (42); "We began to sense God leading us..." (69); "...the direction you sense God leading you..." (10); "...[he] felt led of God..." (111); "Our church sensed that God wanted us to..." (120); "One of our members felt led to..." (121); "Review what you sense God has been saying to you..." (143).

This skill is vital. "Oh, don't let anyone intimidate you about hearing from God" (132), Blackaby warns. Instead, "Focus your attention on hearing God's call to an assignment" (77). "The servant waits on his master for the assignment. So be patient and wait" (117).

A failure to receive such assignments is a failure in one's love relationship with God (97). "Once you have an intimate love relationship with God, He will show you what He is doing" (69). "If the Christian does not know when God is speaking, he is in trouble at the heart of his Christian life!" (132, 137).

Virtually everything commendable about Blackaby's book is meant to serve this end. Certainly we should obey God's Word. But Blackaby means obey the assignment. In *Experiencing God*, practically every example of obedience is an anecdote about a personal assignment, not an application of the commands of Scripture.

Certainly we should seek God's will, not ours. Our lives should be God-centered, not self-centered. But Blackaby means we should only pursue those plans God tells us to pursue--the assignment.

Blackaby exhorts us to be faithful to the Word, to surrender, have faith, trust, and follow Christ even when we don't understand--all based on the assignment. Regardless of the chaos, the price, the difficulty, and the hardship it brings, we must follow our assignment, our personal, private revelation from God.

My question is simple. *According to the Bible*, does experiencing God's work in our lives depend on receiving personalized assignments from Him? Does intimacy with God depend on our ability

to "sense" His "leading"? Is this taught in Scripture? Is it modeled by the apostles or the early church?

There is only one way to answer these questions. Blackaby properly notes that "Scripture will be your source of authority for faith and practice. You cannot depend on human traditions, your experience, or the experience of others to be accurate authorities on God's will and ways" (6). I will hold Mr. Blackaby's own teaching to that standard.

The Imitation of Christ?

"When I want to learn how to know and do the will of God," Blackaby writes, "I always look to Jesus. I can find no better model than Him" (65). His comment refers to the quote from John 5:17, 19-20, at the beginning of Chapter Six:

My Father has been working until now, and I have been working....Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself; but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He himself does.

This is one of many examples where Blackaby patches together verses to make his point, but excludes relevant material from the context that changes the entire sense of the passage. His omission of verses 18, 21, 22, and 23 is unfortunate. Each is vital to our understanding and seriously qualifies the meaning of the passage, as this more complete citation of John 5:17-23 shows:[\[4\]](#)

(17) But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

(18) For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, *making Himself equal with God*.

(19) Jesus *therefore* answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. (20) For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel. (21) For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. (22) For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, (23) in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Note first of all verse 18 (omitted in Blackaby's quote). The Jews, understanding Jesus' comments to be a clear claim to deity, seek to kill Him. The word "therefore" in verse 19 indicates that what follows is meant to buttress this singular claim.

Note also the three prepositional phrases in parallel construction: "For the Father loves the Son...", "For just as the Father raises the dead...", and "For not even the Father judges anyone..."

These verses are a complete unit. If the Father showing Jesus "all things that He Himself is doing" is an example for us to model, then we're also to give life to whom we wish, judge the world on the Father's behalf, and demand that all people honor us as they honor the Father.

Obviously, that is not Jesus' teaching here. In context, these verses have to do with the divinity of Christ. He is unique as the incarnate Son of God and therefore has unique obligations, unique abilities, and a unique relationship with the Father.

Verses 26-27 clear up any question on this score: "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, *because He is the Son of Man*." "Son of Man" is a Messianic title from Daniel 7:13 that Jesus used often. As Messiah, Jesus has a singular role.

This is why Jesus never directs His disciples to follow His example in this. No subsequent writers--Peter, John, Paul, Luke--ever mention it. Why not, if this is such a vital example to follow? Because Jesus is unique in this regard. We are not to imitate those things pertaining to Jesus' divinity or His Messianic office.

I don't think Blackaby intentionally misconstrued this verse. It's just one of many examples of the reckless way he uses Scripture. Later in the Gospel of John we find another.

"My Sheep Hear My Voice"

The passage in John 10 where Jesus refers to His sheep hearing His voice is central to Blackaby's view. It also frequently misapplied by others. It's important to know precisely what Jesus has in mind when He uses these terms.

John records four mentions by Jesus of His sheep hearing or knowing His voice (10:3, 4, 16, 27). Verse six, where John explicitly states that Jesus' remarks about hearing His voice are a figure of speech, is key to understanding this passage.

Jesus begins by talking about shepherds and sheep (10:1-6). Unlike the thief and robber, the legitimate shepherd enters by the door and calls His own by name. They then follow Him as He leads them out. Jesus' point is lost on those listening, though, so He explains the details of the illustration.

He is the door of the sheep (7). Those who pass through Him find salvation and abundant life (9-10). He is also the good shepherd who, unlike the hireling, lays down His life freely for His sheep (11-13, 15, 17-18). The shepherd and the sheep know each other (14). When His other sheep hear His voice, they also become part of His flock (16).

Once again, the Jews fail to completely understand (19-21). What is the problem? Jesus' answer is crystal clear: "You do not believe because you are not of My sheep" (26).

Two key questions need to be answered from the text of John 10. First, what does it *mean* to hear Jesus' voice? Second, what *causes* us to hear His voice? Blackaby answers one way and Jesus answers another.

Blackaby seems to have a couple of things in mind when he mentions hearing God's voice. Gaining insight or applying a command from Scripture is one kind of "hearing" (164-168). Getting a personal "assignment" from God through a leading or a calling is another (168-170).

This is not what Jesus has in mind here, though. It's critical at this point to remember John's clarification. Jesus was using a figure of speech. The word "voice" can't mean voice. A thing is never a metaphor of itself. It's a picture of *something else*. Jesus must be referring in a figure to something else that the phrase "hear my voice" represents. What is it?

In context, Jesus' meaning is unmistakable. He says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me and I give eternal life to them" (27-28). Note the sequence: They hear His voice. They follow Him. Then He gives them eternal life. Hearing Jesus' voice is a figure of speech for responding to the message of salvation. It results *in* salvation; it's not the result *of* salvation.

Remember, the Jews have no trouble hearing Jesus' words. They know what Jesus is *saying*. They hear His instructions just fine. Their problem is *responding*.

Why don't the Jews "hear" in the sense that Jesus means, that is, respond and believe? Jesus tells us plainly. They don't "hear" because God is not "speaking" to them. They are not among the sheep the Father has given to the Son. That is Jesus' unambiguous teaching.

Now the second question: What enables us to hear? Blackaby claims, "Knowing God's voice comes from an intimate love relationship with God" (138), and again, "As you walk in an intimate love relationship with God, you will come to recognize His voice. You will know when God is speaking to you" (163).

But Jesus never suggests such a thing. According to Him in John 10, "hearing" His voice comes prior to salvation and is a result of the Father's work, giving the sheep to Jesus: "My Father, *who has given them to Me*, is greater than all" (29). It's a sovereign act of the Father that allows us to hear Jesus' voice. It's not the quality of our love relationship with Him, as Blackaby claims.

There's another damaging consequence of Blackaby's misreading of this text. According to Jesus' comments, hearing His voice is essential to salvation. Those who don't hear are not His. Rather they're outsiders, bereft of eternal life, lost. This is the unavoidable consequence of blending the wording of John 10 with Blackaby's definition of hearing Jesus' "voice."

Indeed, Blackaby makes this very application when he says, "Those who do not have the relationship ('do not belong to God') do not hear what God is saying (John 8:47)" (138). In the verse Blackaby quotes, Jesus is castigating the Jews for unbelief, calling them the sons of Satan (8:44). Blackaby places a tremendous burden on the believer who questions his spirituality--and even his salvation--if divine messages aren't forthcoming.

This is not Jesus' meaning. Blackaby's understanding of hearing the voice of God is completely foreign to the text of John 8 and 10. To Jesus, hearing God is not a skill to be developed. It is not an advanced discipline opening the lines to personalized assignments from the Father. It's not a fruit of a deepening love relationship with God. It's a figure of speech.

Hearing Jesus' voice is not getting an assignment, it's getting saved. It's the result of the Father drawing the non-believer into Jesus' arms.

"God Speaks" in Acts

The life and teaching of Jesus do not support Blackaby's ideas. What about the life of the early church?

In Acts we have a focused look at a relatively short period (30 years) of Bible history in which there are radical manifestations of supernatural activity. Acts offers a best-case scenario for providing an inductive argument for the view that Christians ought to be receiving assignments from God--private, subjective revelations of God "speaking" to them. What do we find?

I went through Acts verse by verse looking for concrete examples of the kind of assignments Blackaby describes in *Experiencing God*. I've listed below every time God gave a special directive of any sort.

An angel rescues the apostles from prison and tells them to preach the Gospel (5:19-20). Philip is sent to the Gaza road by an angel (8:26). Philip is directed to the Ethiopian eunuch by the Spirit (8:29). While traveling on the Damascus road, Saul hears the audible voice of Jesus directing him to Damascus (9:4-6). Ananias has a vision in which the Lord instructs him to visit Saul (9:10-16). Cornelius is instructed by an angel in a vision to send for Peter (10:3-6). Peter is instructed by the Spirit to visit Cornelius (10:19-20). Peter is ordered by an angel to follow him out of prison (12:7-8). Paul and Barnabas are sent out by the Holy Spirit on their first missionary journey (13:2). The Holy Spirit forbids Paul to speak the word in Asia (16:6-7). Paul is directed through a vision to Macedonia (16:9-10). Jesus appears to Paul in a vision and tells him to preach the Gospel in Corinth (18:9-10). Paul is told through prophecy not to enter Jerusalem (21:4). Jesus tells Paul in a vision to leave Jerusalem (22:18, 21).

What are the means of these revelations? How does God communicate these assignments? The majority (five) are communicated through visions. Three times an angel is the messenger. Four times the Spirit speaks. One is a prophecy. One other is the voice of Jesus.

There are five other examples of supernatural revelations that are predictive in nature, but do not dictate any direction--they give no assignments. In fact, in one case (Agabus' prophecy of imminent famine) the Christians determine *on their own* to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren in Judea. These examples can be found in Acts 11:27-30, 20:23, 21:11, 23:11, and 27:22-26.

At first glance this list seems formidable, but the initial impression is misleading. The events represent a very small amount of activity considering the 30 year time span of Acts. God's specialized "assignments" to the leaders of the early church are limited to only 14 from the time of Pentecost.[\[5\]](#)

Two are jailbreaks. Two are about Saul's conversion. Two are about Cornelius' conversion. Two are about the Ethiopian eunuch's conversion. Two are about Paul's stay in Jerusalem ("Don't enter" and "Get out"). The remaining four are about Paul's missionary journeys (initially commissioned, directed away from Asia, directed to Macedonia, told to preach boldly in Corinth).

Notice a couple more significant facts. First, there is no mention in the entire Biblical record of the early church when God gave an assignment through some inner "sensing." Completely absent from the text are phrases like, "I feel led...", "I think God is telling me...", "I feel God is calling me...", "I believe it's God's will that...", "I've received lots of confirmation...", "I'm sensing the Lord's direction...", or "I have a peace about it..."

The kind of language Blackaby uses to describe the way God's assignments are given is completely absent from the Biblical record. There is no record of knowledge of God's will based on "sensing" or internal promptings--*not a single one*. The rare times God gave special directives, He communicated in a clear and supernatural way. More than half the time He used a vision or an angel.

This last is especially odd, given the contemporary references to "hearing the voice of God." In many Christian circles if you said, "God spoke to me" it wouldn't even raise an eyebrow.

Announce you had a vision, though, and heads would turn. Admit angels were visiting and you may get a visit from concerned friends who thought you'd gone off the deep end. Yet there is abundant Biblical precedents for the latter and virtually none for the former.

Second, there is no evidence that any of these directives are sought. There is no indication of any Christians, including Apostles, "waiting" for God's direction. In the New Testament we find no pleading with God or laboring in prayer for God to show them His will or give them His assignment.

But there's yet another serious problem.

No Divine Assignment

For balance we must also note other important decisions not directed by God. There are many examples in Acts when the disciples make decisions marking significant events in the life of the early church. They are the kind many would think require a word from the Lord. They entail decisions about the how, when, where, why, and who of ministry. Yet there is no evidence of any directive from God, and no indication the disciples even sought one. They simply weighed their options in light of circumstances and then chose a judicious course of action consistent with the prior general commands of the Lord.

Notable examples include Philip's ministry in Samaria (8:5), resolving the complaint about the Hellenistic widows (6:1-6), and Barnabas and Saul establishing a teaching ministry for a year in Antioch (11:26). Elders are appointed in the new churches (14:23). The Jerusalem council resolves the problem of the Judaizers and the Galatian heresy (15:7-29). Paul embarks on his second and third missionary journeys (15:36, 18:23). Paul sets up shop as a tentmaker and starts a ministry in Corinth (18:3). Paul establishes a discipleship training program for two years at the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). Paul has a healing ministry on the island of Malta for three months (Acts 28:9-11).

According to Blackaby's teaching, each one of these decisions are illicit because none was a special "assignment" from God. Rather, each was the result of a unilateral decision by the disciples using wisdom to respond to the circumstances confronting them.

And these are just the tip of the iceberg. *Altogether I found 70 such instances in the book of Acts alone, contrasted with the 14 occasions of specialized direction during that same time.* [\[6\]](#)

Even more can be found in the epistles. Paul chastises the Corinthians for not working out their own legal differences (1 Cor. 6:3-6). He does not counsel them to seek a decision from God. Instead he asks, "Is there not among you *one wise man* who will be able to decide between his brethren?"

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul gives the most thorough instruction to be found in the Bible on the issue of marriage. He details pros and cons of single life over married life. He solemnly notes the moral obligations of both. He then leaves the decision in the hands of the believer. There is no hint in this passage that a believer must "hear from the Lord" even on the weighty matter of choosing a spouse.

Peter gives explicit instruction about the use of spiritual gifts in ministry (1 Peter 4:10-11). He doesn't say to wait for one's calling--nor does any other passage of Scripture. Instead, given that

each believer has a spiritual gift, Peter enjoins him to employ it in works of service as a good steward, doing all to God's glory.

Blackaby is simply mistaken whenever he teaches that the Biblical directive or even the Biblical pattern is to receive an assignment from God. The exact opposite is the case: It is neither taught nor is the pattern modeled.

Led by the Spirit?

What, then, does the Scripture mean by being led by the Spirit? The simplest way to answer that question is to look up the verses using the term. The only two references in the Epistles to being led by the Spirit mean something specific. Paul does not use the term the same way Blackaby does.

The concept appears in Romans 8:12-14 (take special note of v. 9). Being led by the Spirit in this passage is not referring to individual guidance, but empowerment to live holy lives. The Holy Spirit works to convict of sin, "leading" a Christian into righteous living--in Paul's words, "putting to death the deeds of the body."

Paul has the same meaning in view in Galatians 5:16-26. Regarding the role of the Spirit in our lives, Paul writes, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh....If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law." The biblical meaning of being "led by the Spirit" has to do with righteous conduct and resisting sin, not getting assignments from God.

Does the Holy Spirit speak to our hearts? That depends entirely on what one means by the word "speak."

The Scripture identifies different ways the Holy Spirit subjectively works in us. We could say God "speaks" when He comforts us, teaches us, convicts us, or leads us out of sin. There is an ineffable sense in which God communicates with us giving solace, wisdom, insight, and understanding.

However, the Bible doesn't teach we must "hear" God before we can make decisions. It's just not there. When the text says, "Listen to the voice of the Lord," the word "listen" is synonymous with "heed." It's much like a mother saying, "Listen to me when I tell you to do something." It's an appeal for obedience.

I'm not claiming there's no subjective element in knowing God. The Bible and the normal Christian life are filled with examples of believers having a deep personal communion with God. My principal concern is where we get our information about God.

We should seek God's "voice" in the place Scripture tells us to: the Word. Spiritual maturity is not the ability to hear God's voice. It's the ability to know, understand, and apply Scripture in every circumstance.

God in a Box

Does this put God in a box? Not at all. I'm not dictating what God can or can't do. He can intervene in any way He chooses. However, we must base our teaching and conduct on the Scriptures, not on what might be possible for a sovereign God.

Blackaby claims his model is Biblical. I'm putting that to the test. I'm showing what seems to be the pattern of Scripture--especially in the New Testament, which is the most reliable guide for the church today. The Bible simply does not teach Christians to seek personalized guidance or assignments from God.

J.I. Packer notes: "God may reveal Himself and give guidance to His servants any way He pleases. It is not for us to set limits on Him. But it remains a question as to whether or not we are entitled to expect 'hotline' disclosures on a regular basis. The correct answer is no. All the Biblical narratives of God's direct communications with men are exceptional on their face, and the Biblical model of personal guidance is quite different." [\[7\]](#)

A Fundamental Question

Most people teaching error do not do so maliciously. Usually they have the best intentions, but having a good heart is not enough. Even someone who has a loyalty to truth can still undermine truth.

Many of Henry Blackaby's ideas in *Experiencing God* are like that. I've addressed only a few of the serious problems with this work. There are more.

I'll close with a fundamental question. Must I hear the voice of God and receive personalized direction--special assignments for my life--in order to experience an authentic love relationship with God? Blackaby answers "yes" (132, 137). The Bible answers "no."

Experiencing God involves only three things. First, it requires accurate information about God (true knowledge). Second, we must live according to that truth (active faith). Third, we experience the effects of truth as God transforms our lives and the lives of others we touch (sanctification and ministry).

Contrary to what is taught in *Experiencing God*, you are not substandard if you don't "hear God's voice." The Bible does not teach that receiving personal revelations from God is ordinary, expected, or necessary for optimal Christian living. There are dozens of references to pursuing truth and sound doctrine, but none to hearing the voice of God *in that sense*.

It's perilous to construct doctrine from historical material alone. However, this is largely Blackaby's approach. It's more sound to first develop one's theology from the less ambiguous material in the Epistles. Then one can look for applications of those principles in the historical texts like Acts, the Gospels, or the Old Testament.

Blackaby can find no support for his doctrine of hearing the voice of God in the place where all essential disciplines of Christian living must appear: the Epistles. Search for verification in the writings of any disciple. You'll find nothing but silence. Why are the Apostles unanimously reticent on a capability that's allegedly at the core of the Christian life?

The Bible never teaches us to wait for an assignment before making decisions, nor did the disciples model this concept. Instead, the Scripture gives page after page of assignments.

Yes, God gave special directions under certain circumstances, and He still can today. However, in the Bible such things are rare and generally happen with key leaders of God's people. Even then it is not through an internal "sense" of God's "leading," but by an unmistakable, supernatural revelation.

The greatest movement of God's Spirit in the last 1000 years was the Reformation. It wasn't started by a voice from God or by an assignment. It was started by a verse of Scripture: "The just shall live by faith." Martin Luther was simply listening to the only Word of God we are ever enjoined to hear, know, and obey--the Bible.

I have more to say about other serious problems with Experiencing God than space permits, even with this special-length edition of Solid Ground. Therefore, I have posted [additional material](#) where I also publish answers to common questions about my own critique.

Yours for the Kingdom,

Gregory Koukl
President, Stand to Reason

I've actually been called a heretic for calling it into question. A heretic is someone who denies a cardinal doctrine of the faith.

1. Henry Blackaby and Claude King, *Experiencing God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994).
2. Though the book is co-authored, it is written from the perspective of Henry Blackaby, so I will refer to the authors collectively simply as "Blackaby."
3. All Scripture references are from the *New American Standard Bible* unless otherwise noted.
4. I did not include the casting of lots in Acts 1:15-26 for two reasons. First, this was not an example of the Holy Spirit speaking with an assignment from God. Second, opinions are divided whether this was directed by God or merely the disciple's misguided effort. The text doesn't indicate. Many think Paul was Judas' replacement.
5. [The full list of 70 examples can be found on the Stand to Reason web site at www.str.org under "Divine Direction in Acts."
6. J.I. Packer, *Hot Tub Religion* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1987), 117.

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