

Appendix 3

Experiencing God Phenomenon Not that Extraordinary



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Only table of contents below in book v

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Preface: Pastor Blackaby, the Good and Saintly Man

Let not the serious criticism below deflect from my respect for *Pastor* Henry Blackaby, who led several churches in California and Canada and came to be respected throughout the SBC and in many Christian circles throughout the world.

Do not be mistaken: there are a host of small good Bible studies surrounding Blackaby's main insight, "Find where God is working and join Him there." Please, 'tis my view that most of the popularity of the workbooks does not revolve or even stem from his insight that he attempts to inculcate. Rather, it is the discussions that take place from the potpourri, the buffet, even the smorgasbord of *mini*-studies scattered throughout. Christians like fellowship, and the *variety* of *mini*-studies is the most attractive and memorable element. Other than Blackaby's main insight that he repeats dozens of times, ask anyone "What was the most memorable part?" and usually there is a struggle—then—*experiencing* God through the *mini*-studies and mostly the fellowship and discussions. That Blackaby ties the *buffet* to his singular and rather vacuous and—we show below—rather useless existential *insight* is the chief fault.

Most of the *mini*-studies have been given in thousands of other venues. So, like a collection of vacation photos, they have an immediate and easy value. In that, there is no real harm done, unless one truly tries to grapple with the existential element, and then there is a load of waywardness afoot, most of which Blackaby did not intend.

I taught the LifeWay quarterlies for years, and I suspect many of Blackaby's *mini*-studies could have originated from a few of them or from some a myriad of evangelical works or tracts. In other words, like old family vacation photos, most of the *mini*-studies have been around and taught from the pulpit and in Sunday schools for a hundred years. The novelty is that they are all spun around Blackaby's Burning Bush and "Join God" insight, and not very well at that, and the popularity is from the nostalgic look at old vacations photos.

Of course, if one was a new Christian, then the buffet *seems* fresh. Yet, because of the distraction of making them surround the existential insight, and most of them being pulled out of the context of their original sources—well, look see below. I thought of compiling a list of these few dozen *mini*-studies, but this appendix is too long already. Blackaby sold millions making a mint for his family and the SBC under the guise of *experiencing* God, and his main Burning Bush insight is the key to the whole book, surrounded by a load of things pulled from only God knows where. In other words, some are so common they could be simply Blackaby pulling up a bunch of old road signs from the well-travelled evangelical highway paved a century ago and re-paved ever since. A thousand books, pamphlets, and studies contain perhaps 75 percent of Blackaby's book.

Therein is one deception, or another cover up, where a new Christian or—as the Blackabys like to brag—a notable *athlete* gets a lot from *Experiencing God*, where the reality is—like an eighth reality to mock his seven—the new Christian is really getting less from Blackaby and a lot more from the century-old evangelical re-paved road. It's just that *Blackaby* re-paved as though he were the contractor, and it has become a great source of income. That is, the new Christian thinks Blackaby put all this together as part of a series of great revelations *around* his own Burning Bush metaphor and Blackaby's *experiencing* God through the dozens of *mini*-studies *others* put together on the evangelical highway over the last century.

And then prisoners are sold on it, too, as it is venerated to high heaven in Angola and was for a short time in TDCJ. More on that later.

But let me reinforce that Blackaby is a great *pastor*, and I do not believe he *intended* to deceive or cover up, nothing similar to how several TDCJ executives covered up their own clearly documented nefariousness, like Michael Upshaw, Marvin Dunbar and friends, perhaps even Bryan Collier. Blackaby's ministry is much larger than his *Experiencing God* industry.

For one superb example, he wrote a small book in 2003 that was reprinted in 2021, *The Solomon Promise: The Key to Healing America and Ourselves*.¹ We quote Blackaby in a moment where he adamantly disagrees with TDCJ's support of volunteer David Valentine's program that I exposed in 2011.

First, one should know that Blackaby became a trusted advisor to the presidents of the SBC North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board, the largest Protestant missionary organizations in the history of the world, and an advisor to LifeWay Christian Resources. For seven years, he was the president of the Canadian Baptist Theological College, and he has spoken in 111 countries. Blackaby earned a BD and a ThM from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary and has been awarded five honorary doctorates; he has not yet earned a doctorate. The fly leaf of the cover noted: "He has mentored numerous CEOs of *Fortune 500* companies and has been used powerfully by God to inspire churches, denominations, and Christian organizations to return to God in revival."

In many respects, the following would *not* have been necessary except for how the *Experiencing God* curriculum itself was abused by TDCJ and Warden Cain at Angola. When the curriculum became a criterion, a requirement in Angola for entry into its seminary program—it became a *state-sponsored* criterion—and the same happened when TDCJ Region 1 Dir. Michael Upshaw *ordered* all of us to do it, the curriculum took upon itself a state-sanction or a state-sponsored authority. Therein, it took on the unsightly nature of state-favored *religion*, and in Angola it was *another* way to please the kingly warden. A *prison* officially *favoring* a specific religious discipleship course for *prisoners*—goodness, that takes us back to the beginning of *penitentiary* 200 years ago when the prison was designed by Christians to *force* prisoners into penitence. That bears much closer scrutiny by experts not merely in sociology, penology, criminology, psychology, but also in theology and pastoral care.

TDCJ has had no concern with the professional side of religion and even tried to kill the chaplaincy in 2011.² After decades of abuse of the gentle chaplaincy through crazy hiring practices—many racist and selfish hiring practices—we introduce our criticism of Blackaby noting Blackaby's extraordinary mentorship of pastors and SBC executives. Blackaby had a heart of gold. Anyone sitting beside him on a plane flight could hardly fail to like him and appreciate his kindly manner, and always ready for a prayer.

A. Henry Blackaby on Church Splitters

In the context of my book on chaplaincy, when we were ordered to support David Valentine's program in prison that sought to teach prisoners while *in prison* how to be church starters in the free world, several of us balked. Valentine's only church start was when he led the ugly split of historic FBC Huntsville. Of all people, we should not be forced to support him. Therefore, see what venerated multiple honorary doctorate and pastor-to-pastors Blackaby has to say on church splitters:

Later, I was in another state talking with a large group of people. Several came up to talk with me after a meeting and told me what was happening in their church. They said that the church had taken a vote to begin a building program. The constitution of the church stated they must have a 75

¹ Henry Blackaby, with Richard Blackaby, *The Solomon Promise: The Key to Healing America and Ourselves* (Nashville: W Publishing, 2021; 140 pp.; first published 2003, *Holiness: God's Plan for Fullness of Life*).

² Maness, *How We Saved Texas Prison Chaplaincy 2011—Immeasurable Value of Religion, Volunteers, and Their Chaplains* (AuthorHouse, 2015; 394 pp.), www.PreciousHeart.net/Saved.

percent vote to proceed. They had a 72 percent vote. They said the pastor had thrown a fit and began to berate the people. He took 100 of the church members and was looking for a building to start another church a mile down the street.

When I heard that, I began to tremble. The Scripture warns that you cannot harm the body of Christ without God dealing with you severely (Acts 5:1–5).

I have listened to story after story of people who have suffered through church splits all over this nation. The people responsible for them do not have a fear of God at all! **They tend to comment that at least they started another church [That was what David Valentine did, and for which whistleblowing I was harassed, bold mine].** They did not start a church—they started a religious club! God did not have anything to do with the split. The Spirit of God is never involved in a church split. Never! He is the author of unity. God’s people can explain it away all they want so they feel good about it. But when you have a church split, you cancel your right to preach the gospel of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18–19). The church just demonstrated that the God who reconciles sinners to Himself cannot reconcile His own people with one another. What message does that present to the world? The tragedy is that there is no fear of God.³

Indeed—Blackaby put it more bluntly and directly than I did in my email to my supervising chaplain, who did nothing, then Dunbar ordered a disciplinary so he could *run* the disciplinary hearing described above. Dunbar supported the church-splitting Valentine, meaning that state of Texas supported the church-splitter; read the letter.⁴ From Blackaby, see how far Collier and Dunbar were from anything honorable or spiritual in supporting Valentine, and that paled in comparison to the exposure in less than a year’s time on how they orchestrated the largest cover up in TDCJ history over the Polunsky Prison Fiasco in late 2012.

Those are the people who pretend oversee the Seminary Scam.

There is no criticism of Blackaby’s *The Solomon Promise: The Key to Healing America and Ourselves*, which is a collection of three of his sermons, like “The Loss of the Fear of the Lord,” from which the above quote came. The other two sermons are “Looking at Sin God’s Perspective” and “A Highway to Heaven.” Blackaby’s son Richard lauded these messages in his foreword, saying they “emanated from” senior Blackaby’s personal experience, and “I heard him deliver these sermons.” Moreover,

As my father preached, people wept in prayer. I saw grown men lying prostrate on the floor, heaving with sobs as they lay exposed and broken before a holy God. I doubt written words can fully capture the feeling people expressed when the Holy Spirit gripped their hearts and assured them the message my father preached was absolutely true.⁵

Would that Dunbar had heard Blackaby, rather than church-splitter Valentine, and followed the path of honor rather than selfish ambition. Chaplaincy cannot survive much more of this, and I likely will not see the prison chaplaincy *profession* mature in TDCJ in my lifetime, if it survives at all.

³ Blackaby, *Solomon Promise* (2021; 140 pp.), 15–16.

⁴ Maness, *Faith-Based Housing Letter* (December 2011), www.PreciousHeart.net/Maness-Faith-Based-Housing.pdf, to Brad Livingston, Baptist Joint Committee, and Americans United.

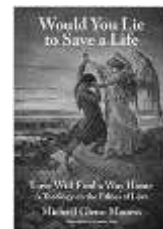
⁵ Blackaby, *Solomon Promise* (2021; 140 pp.), xiii–xiv.

B. Experiencing God Phenomenon and My Book

This Appendix is a vastly updated and expanded version of a section published in my book, *Would You Lie to Save a Life ... A Theology on the Ethics of Love*, chapter 4, “Love’s Unchanging and Universal Parts,” section E.3.d, “Blackaby’s *Experiencing God* Phenomenon.”⁶

Henry Blackaby’s *Experiencing God* workbook (2007) has continued popularity for strange and indiscernible reasons, ranking high in a few categories of Amazon.

Best Sellers Rank: #3,121 in Books
#1 in Christian Saints
#1 in Old Testament Bible Study (Books)
#8 in Christian Discipleship (Books)⁷



Are you kidding?—#1 in “Christian Saints” and in O.T. studies? What is #8 in discipleship? What a sad testimony to *saints* and *discipleship*. I asked the SBC publisher Lifeway for their statistics, and they refused. It was made supreme in Louisiana’s Angola maximum security prison when Warden Burl Cain went through it at his church, sponsored it for the prisoners, and it became the qualification for the prisoners desiring to enter the NOBTS seminary program to become prisoner ministers.⁸ In sum, it took off in 1990, became a cottage industry, and made a lot of money.

Oddly enough, Blackaby’s revised version came out in 2007 at the same time that my revised version was published, so Blackaby, et al, did not have a chance to incorporate my critique, not that they have paid attention to any criticism, or sought such. So far, no one in academia that I have found has written a serious book review of Blackaby’s *Experiencing God* or a serious critique of its theology, not even any in the largest body of evangelical scholars, the prestigious Evangelical Theological Society, of which I have been a member for decades—not one article!⁹ That’s not unusual, for tenured professors do not usually weigh in on non-academic elementary books. Yet, Blackaby is worthy of analysis by theologians because of his odd twist on evangelical theology—a *theology* that has affected a lot of people—and its odd existential drifting could be exposed further by experts in existentialism.

Comparing the old to the new versions reveals only a little, except the addition of Blackaby’s oldest son as co-author to the new. I was able to get a 2003 version which listed 224 pages, where the latest 2007 edition had 267 pages with an additional six unnumbered pages, including a neat two-pages of the names of God.¹⁰ On the 2003 publisher’s page, it was noted that this was the 26th printing, with Lesson 10 revised in 1993—very impressive. That means the *expanded* 2007 added at least 43 pages. The 2007 is mostly refined in format, raising the font size of section headings, adding three shades of tan/maroon highlighting, adding numbers to replace bullets, nice touches to make the reading easier. Each of the 12 units add a whole page with the image of Moses from

⁶ *Would You Lie to Save a Life: Love Will Find a Way Home, a Theology on the Ethics of Love* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 1990, revised 2007; 428 pp.), 109–112, www.PreciousHeart.net/love/.

⁷ See www.Amazon.com/dp/1415858381/, accessed 5-2-21.

⁸ Henry Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, and Claude King, *Experiencing God—Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, Revised and Expanded, workbook (Nashville: Sunday School Board of SBC, 1990; revised version Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2007; 274 pp.), noting that Henry Blackaby wrote the material, Claude King wrote the lessons; book version, Blackaby, Blackaby, and King, *Experiencing God—Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, Revised and Expanded (Nashville: B&H, 2008; 355 pp.).

⁹ See www.PreciousHeart.net/Seminary/JETS-EG-Zero.pdf.

¹⁰ Henry Blackaby and Claude King, *Experiencing God—Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2003; 224 pp.).

the cover and then overlaid that unit's scripture quote, which decreased the *expanded* pages to about 30, and the following facing page is the lead personal illustration from Blackaby's *experience* with God set off on its own page, which added a few pages to the *expanded* 2007, decreasing more of the actual material added to, perhaps, 15–20 pages.¹¹ The realistic painting of Moses is repeated in a brown-and-white image throughout, very much like the Moses from the Cecil B. Mille classic *The Ten Commandment* (1956). And a lot of the 2007 is spread out a bit more in a nicer and easier to read format. So, most of the *expansion* was in formatting. Though I did not go word-for-word, I would guess that 95–97% of the text is exactly the same.

Another difference is that the preface of the 2003 listed the extraordinary success of the *Experiencing God* workbook in a host of additional items, making it a veritably cottage industry in just 13 years since it first came out. When it first came out, too, the 2003 noted that at the 10th anniversary, it had sold “more than 3,000,000 copies” and “is now in 47 languages.” And “So many lives have been radically changed: in prisons, in the military, in all walks of life such as lawyers, judges, CEOs, professional athletes, and politicians. Thousands of churches, high schools, colleges, and seminaries have been greatly helped and radically changed.”¹² On the next page is a photo of the Blackabys with Henry and wife surrounded by their now adult sons and grandchildren, 22 in all, a marvelous family photo.

In the back of the 2003 is the form for the LifeWay Christian Growth Study Plan, course CG-0119, that one can submit for a certificate. This was popular for a long time, and I know not if LifeWay is still issuing. Though not present in the 2007, there is an “Experiencing God Group Covenant” that one could sign to commit to completing the study, praying others, being honest, maintaining confidentiality, being patient, and praying weekly for one's pastor.

The 2003 notes a thanks to Claude King who served as “the first editor, and who continues to remain faithful to the Lord ... and to those at LifeWay Christian Resources who continually improve and provide *Experiencing God*.”¹³ The 2007 notes that Henry Blackaby wrote the content, Claude King the leaning activities, and that Richard contributed material to the revised edition.¹⁴ Richard became president of the Blackaby Ministries in 2006, and Blackaby.org is highlighting the *Experiencing God* phenomenon along with other ministry resources. So, it is easy to see that Richard is continuing the legacy of his father by including his name as co-author on the cover with a note inside that Richard added a little bit somewhere, though it appears from a comparison that there was *very* little substance added. From their website, we see the whole family is involved in ministry in many respected posts, which is understandable and common throughout church history, when one's father becomes a superstar Christian mentor and pastor to pastors, the children follow.

¹¹ Blackaby and King, *Experiencing God* (2003; 224 pp.), 2, there is a note that Mike Wimmer is “described as ‘Norman’s own Norman Rockwell’” and “became one of the nation’s leading illustrators. He has done numerous book covers ... images used in major national advertising campaigns. When he was asked to paint the portrait of Moses for *Experiencing God*, Mike’s extensive research, talent and commitment led to a classic rendition of the prophet’s experience with God at the burning bush.” Except for the Rockwell line, the rest is repeated in the 2007 version.

¹² Blackaby and King, *Experiencing God* (2003; 224 pp.), 3.

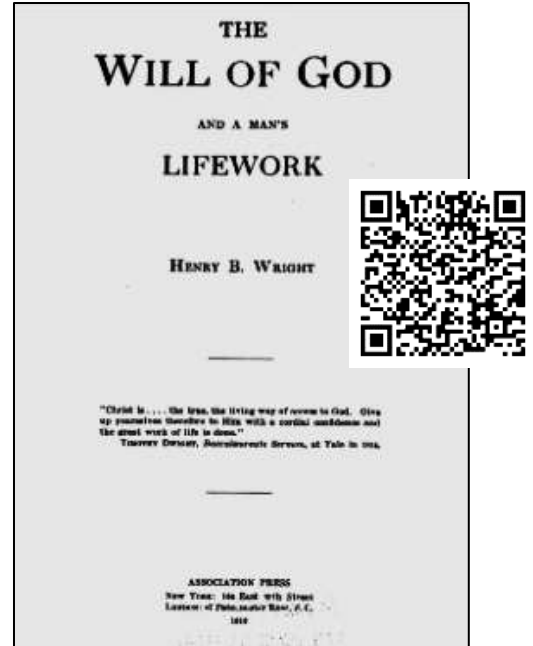
¹³ Blackaby and King, *Experiencing God* (2003; 224 pp.), 4.

¹⁴ Blackaby, Blackaby, and King, *Experiencing God* (2007; 274 pp.), 7.

C. The *Best* Biblical Study on the Will of God

At the outset and to contrast, let's look at the *best* study to date in the literature, that is, the best *biblical* study of the will God, the now forgotten and unprecedented masterpiece of Yale Professor Henry B. Wright, *The Will of God and a Man's Lifework*, who had a mighty influence on Yale divinity students and others through the 1920s.¹⁵ I have not seen another that comes close in covering the biblical landscape and presentation. You will see a global contrast between Blackaby and Wright. There are many other good works, and "ethics" itself plays a big role, which is the academic side of finding God's will and totally avoided by Blackaby.¹⁶

The work involved in going through it might exceed the available time of most.



¹⁵ Henry B. Wright (1877–1923), *The Will of God and a Man's Lifework* (New York: Associated Press, 1912, 1st 1909; 292 pp.), see my condensation, www.PreciousHeart.net/Will-of-God.pdf, that I shared with several prisoners in the 1990s. Download the whole here: www.Google.com/books/edition/The_Will_of_God_and_a_Man_s_Lifework/8WBABQDRkVJAC. Wright was the Yale professor of Roman history and Latin literature when he wrote this, and from 1914 to his retirement he was the Stephen M. Clement Professor of Christian Methods American at the Yale Divinity School. He is said to have been the inspiration behind Lutheran Professor Frank Buchman's founding of the Oxford Group, who believed that the root of all problems were the personal problems of fear and selfishness could be solved with a "surrender one's life over to God's plan." Oxford Groups became popular in the 1930s, and in about 1938 the group's veritable motto, "moral re-armament," became the movement's new name, which Buchman headed for 23 years until his retirement in 1961; in 2001, it was renamed Initiatives of Change. Interestingly, the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous met in 1935 through the Oxford Group which helped to codify most AA tenets in the first Twelve-step program (Wikipedia).

Today, the Henry B. Wright Professor of Systematic Theology chair is held Croatian Protestant theologian Miroslav Volf, who is today the founder and director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture and author of 20 books, including *Exclusion and Embrace, Revised and Updated: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2019, 1st 1996; 336 pp.), translated in nine languages, winner of the Grawemeyer Award in Religion, and one of *Christianity Today's* 100 most important religious books of the 20th century.

¹⁶ For instance, Nancy Armistead Allen, *The Will of God and Prayer* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1937; 125 pp.); Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, edited by Eberhard Bethge (New York: Macmillan, 1955; 384 pp.); Gerald Lewis Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God: Perspectives on the Theology of Tertullian* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979; 179 pp.); A. B. Davidson, *The Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament* (London: Charles Kelly, 1894; 330 pp.); H. Edward Everding and Dana W. Wilbanks, *Decision-Making and the Bible* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1975; 160 pp.); Arno Clemens Gaebele (1861–1945), *Listen!—God Speaks: God Has Spoken, God Still Speaks and God Will Speak Again* (London: Pickering & Inglis, c1936; 184 pp.); Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry (1913–2003), *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976–1983; Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999; 3,054 pp.), *The God Who Shows Himself* (Waco: Word, 1966; 138 pp.), and *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977, 1st 1957; 615 pp.); C. S. Lewis (1898–1963), *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1961; *continued on next page*)

Wright dedicates his work: “*To MY FATHER and MY MOTHER.*”¹⁷ Cool! Noteworthy and a credit to the Christian faith in the turn-of-the-century Yale, Wright reveals this: “It is assumed that all students have access to Speer’s *Man Christ Jesus* and his *Principles of Jesus*, to both of which frequent reference is made.”¹⁸ Wright was able to *credibly* assume his readers had *already* read and cherished these. Today, we cannot assume as much in any church.

I add Wright because my book, *Would You Lie to Save a Life*, built upon Wright and over 100 others in a focused study on one ethical dilemma and how to find God’s will in the crucible of hell on earth: in 1968 the North Koreans took hostage the crew of the USS *Pueblo*, and Capt. Lloyd Bucher was forced to choose between “lying to save a life” and the “truth.” How do you decide God’s will in dire straits? We tried to discern how to find God’s will in that dilemma, which includes good hermeneutics. In the aftermath, we determined that God’s absolute will, in absolute righteousness, is beyond us this side of heaven; no one is as competent as Jesus, but we have much guidance to get us close. It took me over 20 years, a dozen rewrites from a master’s paper at SWBTS in the 1990s. It is my magnum opus.

One serious problem Blackaby does not address is his *assumption* that everyone *can* find God’s absolute will in perfect compliance as Jesus did, though Blackaby is very fuzzy or intentionally distracting or simply covering up the complexity of matching Jesus’ competence.¹⁹ There is much

160 pp.); Hans Martensen, *Christian Ethics, First Division: Individual Ethics*, trans. by William Affleck, 4th ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1891; 436 pp.); Dwight Edwards Marvin, *Knowing God: a Collection of Religious Poems* (New York: Trinity, 1931; 168 pp.); Thomas Buford Maston (1897-1988), *Biblical Ethics: a Guide to the Ethical Message of the Scriptures from Genesis through Revelation* (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1967; Macon, GA: Mercer Univ., 1982; 300 pp.); Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1935; 264 pp.); J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 20th anniversary ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993; 286 pp.), *God’s Plans for You* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001; 223 pp.), and *Growing in Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994; originally, *I Want to Be a Christian* [Tyndale, 1977], 288 pp.); Hillery C. Rice, *Seeking to Know the Will of God* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1959; 128 pp.); Lao Russell, *God Will Work with You, But Not for You: a Living Philosophy* (Waynesboro, VA: Walter Russell Foundation, 1955; 266 pp.); Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1976, 50th anniversary ed. 2005; 288 pp.); Bruce K., Waltke, with Jerry MacGregor, *Knowing the Will of God* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1998; 167 pp.); Leslie Dixon Weatherhead, *The Will of God* (London: The Epworth press, 1944; Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944; 86 pp.), and thanks to my friend Brian R. Smith for a complimentary copy; Warren W. Wiersbe, ed., *Classic Sermons on the Will of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1998). A worthy dissertation would be to attempt a history of or a theological comparison of works on the will of God. For more on ethics and God’s will, see www.PreciousHeart.net/bibs/Ethics_Bib.htm.

¹⁷ Wright, *The Will of God* (1912; 292 pp.), iii, all caps and italics his.

¹⁸ Robert E. Speer (1867–1947), *Studies of the Man Christ Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1896; 249 pp.) who in this book, too, Speer said it “lays no claim to originality. It grew out of a study ... by Bushnell’s Character of Jesus Forbidding His Possible Classification with Men” (xii), and *The Principles of Jesus Applied to Some Questions of To-day* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1902; See also Speer’s *The Marks of a Man; Or, The Essentials of Christian Character* (New York: Association Press, 1907; 197 pp.), which has five chapters on virtues: 1. Truth, 2. Purity, 3. Service, 4. Freedom, and 5. Progress and Patience, and these composed the Merrick Lectures delivered at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Dec. 6–10, 1906.

¹⁹ My book gave an extended treatment on determining God’s will in love and the inability of attaining the competence of Christ, *Would You Lie To Save a Life? A Theology on the Ethics of Love* (1990; rev. 2007; 432 pp.), www.PreciousHeart.net/love/. Compare Hans Martensen, *Christian Ethics*, [continued on next page]

more to that, but “joining” God is an ability Blackaby has become famous for; yet, after going through his workbook, that “joining” remains nebulous, even ghostly. Greater problems arise from his book in what he *does* write and remain unsolved. “Just go with the flow” is too simple, but not far off from most of Blackaby’s airy phantoms of “obedience.” Blackaby spends more time at the Burning Bush and that *experience* than with what God said to Moses in the Ten Commandments. Blackaby might have assumed that, but the elementary nature of his whole book does not give a reason that anyone should assume that.

Read Wright’s masterpiece, and you will see a kindred spirit to the great Christian ethicists, none of which Blackaby gives a hint. It is painful to compare Blackaby to Wright. No hyperbole—if you read closely Wright’s preface, you will see more substance on “God’s will” than in most of Blackaby. For that reason, I have included all of Wright’s carefully crafted preface to tease readers to get Wright’s book, or download the free version from Google Books.

Notice to whom Wright wrote—Yale students. Notice the caveat, which in the context of the Seminary Scam is so portentous: if God’s will is “only partially apprehended it is capable of the most grotesque and dangerous distortion,” and then notice how Blackaby or Warden Cain or TDCJ had zero concern for the certain twists by prisoners. That is, an esteemed and respected professor of theology at turn-of-the-century Yale warns of misapplication, but TDCJ and Angola have zero concern. And in contrast to Blackaby’s solitary writing, notice Wright saying in 1909, “There exists ... a wide and for the most part sane literature on the general subject.... These outlines attempt to ... render usable to students the material already at hand rather than to make any original contribution to the subject itself. Hence the copious quotations from previous writers.” Did you see that? Wright notices many works *before* 1909 and makes no claim to originality; all of his work came from those he documents, a striking difference from Blackaby. Oh, please, see that from the title page to the close, more work was *compiled* in just one of Wright’s 25 “Studies” than in the whole of Blackaby, all made richer from the profusion of quotes from the greats at the turn of the 20th century. Wright also gives us more of the *Bible* to study than Blackaby, and it seems he gives us *every* scripture pertaining to God’s will. So, sit back and slowly savor Wright’s short and exquisite preface.

These studies were originally prepared by laymen to meet the needs of students in the Association Bible Classes for Seniors of the Academic and Scientific Departments of Yale University. It was hoped that they might prove helpful in giving to young men about to enter upon their life work in many different professions a conception of the highest ideals which these careers could embrace.

Largely as a result of the failure to distinguish clearly between the decision to do God's will and the act of volunteering there exists among many college students today an erroneous impression that the doing of God's will is synonymous solely with the Clerical and Missionary careers. The call of God is popularly interpreted as a call to the Professional Ministry; Law, Business, Teaching, Medicine, Engineering and like professions are distinguished as secular. They are regarded as fields into which man may enter without

First Division: Individual Ethics, trans. by William Affleck, 4th ed., Clark’s Foreign Theological Library VII (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1891; 436 pp.), 388, in the last section, “Stages and States of Holiness: The Christian Development of Character”: “This distinction is, however, only relative and changing. Especially the term perfect (oi té eloi), no doubt a biblical term (Matt. xix . 21 ; 1 Cor. ii . 6 ; Heb. vi. 1), can only be understood relatively ; for an absolute perfection is not reached on this earth, and the Apostle Paul , who yet certainly belonged to the number of the perfect, says of himself in his later life, ‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect’ (Phil. iii. 12).”

relation to God's will—realms in which more latitude is allowed to the individual in personal morals and in manner of life and within which he is largely released from responsibility for the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ and his Apostles, however, entertained no such conception of the so called “secular” professions. Our Lord and his followers were themselves laymen, not members of the professional clergy of the day. To them all honorable careers were ministries and service in these so called “secular” careers seemed to them to demand not less, but more, consecration to God than the organized church required of its leaders.

This great truth, which more than any other was the secret of the mighty advances of Christianity in the first centuries, has been long obscured; but during the last decade more than at any other time it has been rediscovered and applied in America and the result has been a great leavening and purification of our public and private life.

Professor Peabody's *Jesus Christ and the Social Question* and Professor Jenks *Studies in the Political and Social Significance of the Life and Teaching of Jesus*—the method of which has been largely followed in these outlines—are noteworthy in this regard.²⁰ Other studies which are to follow on the significance of the teaching of Jesus and his Apostles to the Physician, to the Teacher, to the Lawyer as well as a course on the scientific significance of Jesus' teaching, will do much to spread and apply the great and vital truth still further.

The present outlines are a modest attempt to give a basis in experience for all such practical and more general applications of Christianity to modern life. They do not, for an instant, seek to discredit the preaching ministry at home or abroad to which all other careers must ever look for higher leadership and inspiration. But they do insist and strive to demonstrate that this career is not the only field of human activity in which God's will may be done fully and completely. Every young man in America today ought undoubtedly to subscribe to the declaration, “I will be a clergyman at home or abroad *if God so directs.*” But just as surely should he at the same time subscribe to the declaration, “I will be a doctor, lawyer, businessman, teacher, or what not, at home or abroad, *if God so directs.*” The first declaration alone is not absolute but partial surrender to God's will. Only the two together comprise unconditional enlistment in God's service.

To make clear the great fact of God's will and its part in human life in a set of studies is no easy task, for the underlying truth is one of the most difficult in the world of ideas to grasp. Even when clearly apprehended by the individual, it is well-nigh impossible of demonstration by him to others as a mere intellectual proposition. It is a truth which must be imparted, not taught. Drummond fully realized this when he wrote, “The end of life is to do God's will. Now that is a great and surprising revelation. No man ever found that out. It has been before the world these eighteen hundred years, yet few have even found it

²⁰ Francis Greenwood Peabody (1847–1936), *Jesus Christ and the Social Question* (New York: Macmillan, 1900; 388 pp.; reprinted by Whitley, 2007). Peabody was a Parkman Professor of Theology than Plummer Professor of Christian Morals and Preacher to the University at Harvard Divinity School and one of the founders of the specialized study of social ethics. Jeremiah W. Jenks (1856–1929), *Studies in the Political and Social Significance of the Life and Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1908; 196 pp.; www.Google.com/books/edition/The_Political_and_Social_Significance_of/Vx4PAAAIAAJ). He was a professor of political economy and politics at Cornell University. What Wright meant was that he followed their style of writing, especially Jenks in format who gave 12 “Studies” with six daily lessons with the seventh being an overview.

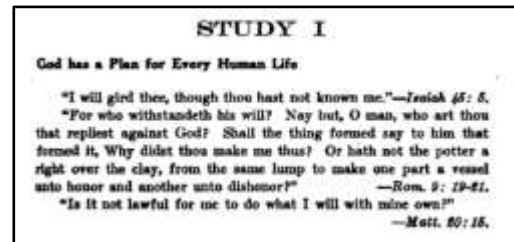
out today.”²¹ If only partially apprehended it is capable of the most grotesque and dangerous distortion especially regarding the gifts promised as the issues of obedience. There exists, however, a wide and for the most part sane literature on the general subject and on its particular phases which has never been brought together and arranged for daily study. These outlines attempt to systematize and render usable to students the material already at hand rather than to make any original contribution to the subject itself. Hence the copious quotations from previous writers.

To nearly fifty Bible students and Christian workers in all parts of the country, who were kind enough to review the book before it went to press, in the light of their own experience and of the needs of their constituents, and whose suggestions played a very important part in the final revision, the author desires to express his sincere gratitude. The names of John G. Magee and Joseph W Roe would have appeared on the title page as joint authors of the studies, had they permitted it. To the inspiration of their lives and to their many suggestions the idea and plan of the book owes much.

In conclusion, I would that these studies might be privileged to do a little something toward dissipating a prevalent idea that the doing of God’s will is synonymous with a narrow, difficult and disagreeable life work. He who has willed to do God’s will completely, as it has been revealed in nature and humanity, and as it will daily be revealed in the path of duty, has for the first time fully found himself. The issues of such a life—and of such a life only—are freedom, joy and peace.

Taunton, Mass., July 24, 1909²²

We don’t see that kind of succinct clarity often today. Wright’s *Will of God* is arranged in five chapters with 25 Studies, and each Study has six “Days” with scriptures and quotes, and the Seventh Day reviews the previous six. The mere table of contents alone takes us on a journey more substantive than Blackaby, especially when it is understood that each Study is saturated with directly applicable scripture verses.



A. Introductory - Studies I-IV

Study I. God Has a Plan for Every Human Life

Study II. Jesus and the Will of God

Study III. Apostles and the Will of God

Study IV. Principle of Surrender of the Self Is ... Fundamental in Other Departments of Life and Crucial to Doing God’s Will

²¹ Henry Drummond (1851–1897), *The Ideal Life: Addresses Hitherto Unpublished*, with Memorial Sketches by Ian Maclaren and Sir W. Robertson Nicoll (Cambridge: University Press, John Wilson and Son [first New York: Dodd, Mead, 1897]; 320 pp. [reprinted, *The Ideal Life: Listening for God’s Voice, Discerning His Leading* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2014; 233 pp.; 187–199)], 229, in chapter XI, “The Man After God’s Own Heart—A Bible Study on the Ideal of a Christian Life” (227–243), based on Acts 13:12, www.Google.com/books/edition/The_Ideal_Life/EPczAQAAMAAJ. Drummond’s family celebrated his life by publishing this collection, prefaced with memorials by evangelist W. Robertson Nicoll and theologian Ian Maclaren. See Sir George Adam Smith, *The Life of Henry Drummond* (New York: Doubleday and McClure, 1898; 541 pp.). Drummond was an explorer, the Rocky Mountains, Yellowstone, Central Africa, and the New Hebrides from 1879 to 1891.

²² Wright, *The Will of God* (1912; 292 pp.), v–vii.

B. The Decision to Do God's Will - Studies V–XIX

- Study V. Relation of the Act of Surrender of Self to Other Religious Rites and Spiritual Experiences
- Study VI. Alternatives to Doing God's Will as a Life Purpose
- Study VII. Spiritual Crisis Involved in Facing the Issue of Surrender of Self: Its Symptoms and Its Course
- Study VIII. To Find Out and To Do God's Will for One's Life Is an Achievement Possible for Any Person
- Study IX. God's Will May Be Done in Any Honorable Trade or Profession, Either at Home or Abroad
- Study X. The Necessity for Absolute Surrender of Self

INTERLUDE: The Necessity of Surrendering Self

C. Finding Out of God's Will - Studies XI–XIX

- Study XI. Finding Out of God's Will: Willingness To Do God's Will Is the Necessary Condition for Knowledge of It
- Study XII. Universal Will of God for All Persons
- Study XIII. Particular Will of God for Each Individual Person (Career, Mate, etc.)
- Study XIV. How to Know the Particular Will of God: the Four-Fold Touchstone of Jesus and the Apostles
- Study XV. The Four-Fold Touchstone: a. First Test—**Purity**
- Study XVI. The Four-Fold Touchstone: b. Second Test—**Honesty**
- Study XVII. The Four-Fold Touchstone: c. Third Test—**Unselfishness**
- Study XVIII. The Four-Fold Touchstone: d. Fourth Test—**Love**
- D. Issues of Facing the Problems of Doing God's Will - Studies XX–XXV**
- Study XIX. Issues of Rejection and Disobedience
- Study XX. Issues of Obedience: a. Knowledge
- Study XXI. Issues of Obedience: b. Protection from Harm & Provision
- Study XXII. Issues of Obedience: c. Assurance as to One's Duty and Power
- Study XXIII. Issues of Obedience: d. Constant Companionship
- Study XXV. Issues of Obedience: e. Eternal Life

Each of the 25 Studies is introduced with a pertinent scripture or two. Then each day's lesson is one or two pages long, beginning with about a dozen scripture references, seemingly all the pertinent scriptures. Another jewel is that for every day's lesson, there are several quotes from a variety of great Christians.

These lessons are not presented in a workbook form, with elementary hints and prods. The 25 studies with their 150 lessons are presented as a door for further study. One will get as much out of it as one invests; the more verses one actually looks up, and the more of the bibliography one searches out, the richer Wright's *Will of God* will fulfill its purpose. To my knowledge, no other compares, not even close.²³

D. Experiencing God in Angola and in TDCJ

Soon after Warden Burl Cain arrived at Angola in 1995, he sponsored the *Experiencing God* workbook for prisoners, and he facilitated NOBTS to give prisoners a college-level curriculum leading to a bachelor's degree in Bible; in 2015 they celebrated 20 years.²⁴

Interestingly, Cain told *Christianity Today*'s Chris Frink several things in 2004.

When Cain took over as warden in 1995, his then-wife balked. "She said, 'There are demons over this place. I don't want to be here,'" Cain recalls. "I said, 'I'm going to run them off, with God's help.'" ...

"the mindset in the Louisiana Department of Corrections when I became a warden in 1981," says Cain.... "They told me that one inmate can't have any power over another. Therefore he can't preach or even lead a Bible study."

That mindset is still found in many other prison systems fighting gang problems and violence, he says. "We just quit thinking that negative stuff that these wardens had been thinking all these years."

Not long after he took over at Angola, Cain brought in *Experiencing God*, a Southern Baptist Convention program based on Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King's book of the same name.... designed to help Christians cope with difficult situations. Cain had gone through the program at his church; he asked facilitators there to come to Angola.

"The first thing you know, 1,600 inmates had gone through *Experiencing God*," he said. "It helped the prisoners accept they're in prison and that it's God's will that maybe they don't get out—and that while you're here you do your best for him."²⁵



²³ However, if you do find, please share it with me.

²⁴ See Marilyn Steward, "NOBTS Angola Prison Celebrates 20 Years of Changing Lives with New Facility," NOBTS News (9-8-15), www.NOBTS.edu/news/articles/2015/nobts-angola-prison-celebrates-20-years-of-changing-lives-with-new-facility.html.

²⁵ Chris Frink, "Breaking Into Prison: A Gospel Invasion Helps Bring Peace to One of the Nation's Most Violent Penitentiaries," *Christianity Today* 48, No. 5 (May 1, 2004): 36-39, www.ChristianityToday.com/ct/2004/may/4.36.html, with a sidebar, "Controversial Cain: Warden Burl Cain Has Had a Few Tangles in the Courts Himself," which was a sidebar (p. 38), www.ChristianityToday.com/ct/2004/may/5.39.html.

Goodness, even for 2004, a mere nine years after Cain arrived, 1,600 is an astounding number. That's about 200 prisoners a year, or 50 a quarter, and every quarter for eight or nine years! If it *pleases* the Senior Warden, we can see *part* of the reason already. Be nice to the see those records, but another characteristic of Cain's claims is a notorious lack of records, and many of his claims contradict the historical record, much like TDCJ's managers on its religious programs. There is also an astounding declaration by Cain on prisoners, too, given the larger context: "God's will ... they don't get out," which is true for many, but a hard saying, nevertheless.

Also, notice that Cain led Angola to "quit thinking the negative stuff," just like that, and *voila*, the most scandal-ridden warden in history jettisons what his non-scandal-ridden warden predecessors in Louisiana have believed, and most of the U.S for over a century, TDCJ included! Cain is the mentor-model-source for the largest mandated religious change in TDCJ *not* initiated from a lawsuit.

Cain is very persuasive, even a genius it seems. If you listen closely, he is the most humble and best warden in penal history, who listens to God, hearing God in the shower, and waits for God to tell him his next move—very much like Jesus—and the epitome of Blackaby's *Experiencing God*, very existentially driven. Cain regales evangelicals as their best brother and the "father" of his prisoners.

And so anyway, it just shows. I didn't build anything. I didn't do anything. This is a God thing, because God chose the worst prison with the worst reputation in this country to see that he could change, that people like that could change and really become moral people....

That's our dream. That's a dream that God gave us. I got the missionaries. We send missionaries from our prison to other prisons in the shower: God spoke to me in the shower. I got the hospice program on Sunday morning. Now, God never spoke to me 'til I went to this prison. Now, God talks to me.

Somebody say, "Whatcha going to do next?"

And I'll say, "I don't know. He hadn't said yet." But he does. And he will. And it's amazing, because what happens is, it just comes in your mind what to do next. And so, you know then, that God's blessin' what we do.²⁶

God speaks to Cain. You might want to ride along with him, for that is a remarkable man. He regales crowds and makes so much sense to so many. Is he the best warden in penal history? He's convinced the conservative evangelical right while appearing to be a credible humble servant of God, just listening to God, as Blackaby taught him and 1,600 prisoners.

If you cannot smell a fish, blow your nose.

And when you listen to God, then you *must* be *right*, and any criticism is of the devil. Extraordinary claim and very persuasive to the naïve.

E. Salvation Army Bible Studies Better for Prisoners

Some will not like this, because they really do not know: I found the Salvation Army's basic Bible studies much more useful to the sincere prisoner, especially the one who did not grow up in church.²⁷ They are rich and actually guide the student into the Bible without any of the strained

²⁶ See Appendix 1.7. Warden Cain at 2015 Prestonwood Baptist's "Stronger" Men's Conference 2015 at Prestonwood Baptist Church, Plano, Texas 3-28-2015; see <https://youtu.be/Tc0eiCgKHt8>, 22:15f; see www.PrestonwoodMensConference.org, accessed 3-1-21.

²⁷ See <https://easternusa.salvationarmy.org/use/correctional-ministries/>, for one good list, though I am not sure if it comprehensive: *The Life of Christ* (Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), *The Christian Life*, *The Early Church* (Acts, Paul's Epistles, General Epistles, Revelations), *Early Beginnings* [continued on next page]

jumps and rationalizations of Blackaby. Truly, an Angola prisoner should go through all of the Salvation Army studies before the *Experiencing God* workbook, even in spite of Blackaby's obvious weaknesses. The Salvation Army leaves the *feeling* and *hearing of God's voice* stuff to God. TDCJ does not keep statistics on the Salvation Army series, either, as TDCJ does not track much of anything volunteers actually do for chaplaincy, and the numbers collected from the chaplains have not been used one time in the last 30 years for any strategic analysis on how to help the chaplains.²⁸

Now, 30 years later, Blackaby's *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* workbook has turned into a cottage industry making a lot of money, revised and expanded with a new preface and impressive list accoutrements.²⁹ There is a caveat footnoted in the first session where \$202,000 was sought for mission work at the Vancouver World's Fair: Blackaby warned not to let money get in the way, "Throughout ... I give illustrations that sometimes mention amounts of money. Don't get caught up in the amounts.... Focus instead on the faith required or the miraculous timing and provision of the Lord in regard to the need."³⁰

F. Burning Bush, Ten Commandments, Ethics, and Existential Drift

1. Moses and Seven Realities

In short, Moses becomes the example for how determine the will of God, and the Old Testament super-prophet's *experiences* are the origin for Blackaby's Seven Realities on how to live the New Testament life. In other words, the mind and *stories* of Moses rather than the mind of Christ become the method for finding assignments as God *speaks* to us. With a lot of evangelical language and doctrine espoused—and *just* espoused—the brunt is an existential nether land of *feeling* that erases a lot of Protestant and Catholic theology. Subtly, it's a new kind of "theology of feeling" with biblical condiments added to make it look like an evangelical salad, but the lettuce is old and the tomatoes are squashy.

(Genesis), *History of a Nation* (Israelites in Egypt, wilderness, promised land, law, the priesthood), *Survey Course* (walk through the whole Bible); advanced courses require the above first and include *The Advent of Jesus Christ*, *Footsteps to Calvary*, *Tabernacle Types and Teachings*, *The Priesthood Old and New*, *The Greatest Plan* (salvation), and *A Brief Study of the Psalms*. Magnificent, proven, individually graded, postage paid (at least used to be), and not on any TDCJ list for staff chaplains.

²⁸ See the vast statistics ignored by TDCJ in the appendices of Maness' *How We Saved Texas Prison Chaplaincy 2011—Immeasurable Value of Religion, Volunteers, and Their Chaplains* (AuthorHouse, 2015; 394 pp.), www.PreciousHeart.net/Saved, on how we saved the entire TDCJ chaplaincy from death in the 2011 and how the chaplaincy recovers its operating costs several times over and is the most productive program in RPD. See www.PreciousHeart.net/chaplaincy for the largest archive of prison chaplaincy data in Texas history, and like U.S. history too.

²⁹ Blackaby, *Experiencing God—Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, Revised and Expanded, workbook (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2007; 274 pp.), 5, for a list: "Experiencing God" trade books, dedicated webpage at www.LifeWay.com/eg, videos, day-to-day devotions, at-home special, audio devotional CD set, a documentary, *The Musical*, *Seven Truths* Bible study (an intensive look at the theological core in Moses), young adult version, youth edition, *Seven Steps ... for Teens*, and more.

³⁰ Blackaby, *Experiencing God* (2007; 274 pp.), 7, in same footnote, it closed with "In the [Vancouver] case above, the amounts merely indicate the size of the faith required when the people compared the proposed budget to their previous experience."

2. Burning Bush Greater than Ten Commandments?

See how important *feeling* is—Blackaby asks you to “join God” over 40 times: “Watch to see where God is working and join Him!”—including on the back cover next to painting of the Burning Bush!³¹ But the Burning Bush was the call of Moses and not his most important moment with God. The most intimate and important moment happened later when God opened himself to Moses like God has not to any other human in history in Exodus 33:18–23:

³¹ Blackaby, *Experiencing God* (1990), 21-23; *Experiencing God* (2007; 274 pp.), 16, twice on same page; 26 “revelation becomes an invitation to **join Him**” and “revelation became Moses’ invitation to **join Him**”; 31 “watch to see where God is working, and **join Him**” and “see where God was at work on their campus and to **join Him**”; 34 “we watch to see what God is already doing around us and **join Him**”; 38 “God’s revelation of His activity is an invitation for you to **join Him**” and “He lets you see where He is working, you know God wants you to **join Him**”; 47 “Then God confronts you with an opportunity to **join Him** in something He wants to do”; 78 “God Invites You to **Join Him**”; 80 “He will show you where He is working so you can **join Him**” and “When you see the Father at work around you, that is your invitation to adjust your life to Him and **join Him** in that work” and “When God reveals to you what He is doing around you, that is your invitation to **join Him**”; 81 “We believed He would show us where He was at work, and that revelation would be our invitation to **join Him**” and “when we **join Him**, He I completes His work through us” and “God’s revelation is my invitation to **join Him**”; 85 “When He let us see where He was working, we immediately realized that was our invitation to **join Him**”; 99 *strikingly* odd, “God reveals His purposes so you will know what He plans to do. If you are to **join Him**, you need to know what God is going to do. What you plan to do for God is not important”; 100 “God reveals His purposes so you will know what He plans to do. Then you can **join Him**”; 102 “He wants me to know what He is about to do so I can **join Him**”; 117, “When the Son saw the Father’s activity, that was the Father’s invitation for the Son to **join Him**”; 134 “When God invites you to **join Him** in His work, He has a God-sized assignment for you”; 140 “When God calls a person to **join Him** in a God-sized task, faith is always required. Obedience indicates faith in God” and “We forget that when God speaks, He always reveals what He is going to do—not what He wants us to do for Him. We **join Him** so He can do His work through us”; 159 “When God invites you to **join Him**, the task will have such God-sized dimensions that it will cause you to experience a crisis of belief”; 164 “When God invites us to **join Him**, we will have to make major adjustments. Such a response can be costly”; 179 “Was this our invitation to **join Him** in what He was doing? The church agreed this was God’s invitation, and we knew we had to obey”; 180 “God always takes the initiative to come to you and reveal what He is doing or what He is about to do. When He does, this will be His invitation for you to **join Him** in His activity”; 185 “When God had a plan to call Nineveh to repentance, He asked Jonah to **join Him** in His work”; 187 “When we hear God invite us to **join Him**, we often want Him to give us a sign: ‘Lord, prove to me this is You, and then I will obey.’ When Moses stood before the burning bush and received his invitation to **join God**, God told him he would receive a sign that God sent him.... God’s affirmation that He had sent Moses would come after Moses obeyed, not before”; 188 “When God calls you to **join Him** in a God-sized task, faith is always required”; 189 “Jesus invited 70 disciples (72,NIV) to **join Him** in the Father’s work. They obeyed and experienced God doing through them something only God could do”; 202 “When a church sees where God is at work, that is its invitation to **join Him**”; 245 “Yes, God will call you to **join Him**”; 254 regarding a married couple, “What do you sense He desires from you that has not yet come to pass? How have you sensed God leading you both to **join Him** in His work?”; 255 “One of the most exciting things you can do is to look to see where God is working in your spouse’s life and **join Him**!”; 261 Blackaby, “As Marilynn and I have watched our children mature, we have realized our greatest single contribution to God’s kingdom is teaching our children to watch to see where God is at work around them and then **join Him**”; and 265 “I trust that you have been challenged to watch to see where God is at work and then to **join Him**.”

¹⁸ Then Moses said, “Now, please show me your glory.”

¹⁹ The Lord answered, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will announce my name, the Lord, so you can hear it. I will show kindness to anyone to whom I want to show kindness, and I will show mercy to anyone to whom I want to show mercy. ²⁰ But you cannot see my face, because no one can see me and live.

²¹ “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. ²² When my glory passes that place, I will put you in a large crack in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³ Then I will take away my hand, and you will see my back. But my face must not be seen.”

I like the Burning Bush, too, for it was a shock and a call like no other in history. But 30 chapters later, God’s glory passed by Moses and God takes away his hand—that is a *meeting* with God! As close to heaven and to God Almighty as any person ever obtained, save Jesus.

So, we *must* ask: What would Blackaby’s hermeneutic derive from the greatest and most intimate *meeting* with God in the Bible, save for Jesus?

Often more ghostly than not. “Trust me, sweet darling” is almost as substantial, and perfect for a psychopathic prisoner and a dream for the psychotic.

While Moses was obedient—a crucial concept to Blackaby and Christians for millennia—Moses was never a New Testament Christian, and his reception of the Ten Commandments (twice) were much more significant than the Burning Bush. That is, Blackaby begins with and anchors his entire work on Moses at the Burning Bush and leaves the Ten Commandant out, except for a half-hearted mention late in the book.³² Grapple with this: Blackaby’s whole book is about *listening* to God, *joining* God, while leaving out completely the greatest message that God spoke to Moses—the Ten Commandments!

The Burning Bush over the Ten Commandments? Come on, now.

Of course, monks are still taking care of what they believe is the original Burning Bush in St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mt. Sinai, or Jubal Musa. Its remarkable long history includes the Chapel of the Burning Bush—the holiest place there—erected by the Empress Helena in AD 330, the mother of Constantine the Great, as she sought out biblical sites and went on pilgrimages to many herself. The monastery was built in 530 by the Emperor Justinian in honor of St. Catherine of Alexandria who was viciously killed in 305 by the Emperor Maxentius and is the oldest working monastery in the world with one of the oldest continually operating libraries. There are about 200 other historical sites within the vicinity.³³ Even Joan of Arc was said to have a vision of St. Catherine.

Interestingly, Bruce Feiler noted that the Burning Bush at the monastery is a rare species in the area that gives a red fruit, hence leading some to see the *red* of the *burning* bush, except that the monastery’s bush bears no fruit.

Helena erected a small church and a tower at the site to protect monks who were already flocking to the area to pray. Helena dedicated the facility to Mary, because the church elders believed the burning bush symbolized the annunciation: Just as the bush was filled with fire, but remained unburned, so Mary conceived the savior, but remained a virgin. . . .

The Monastery of the Burning Bush, as it was called, existed for close to six hundred years but didn’t thrive until 1000 C.E., when it became associated with . . . Saint Catherine. Born to a high-ranking official in Alexandria in the third century C.E., Catherine (née Dorothea) was a woman of

³² Blackaby, *Experiencing God* (2007; 274 pp.), 185, one time: “When God gives you Ten Commandments, are you obeying them? When Jesus tells you to love your enemies, are you doing that?”

³³ Also called Monastery of St. Katherine, <http://st-katherine.net/en/the-monastery/>, and a UNESCO World Heritage Area.

exceptional intelligence and beauty. Numerous suitors sought to marry her, but Catherine wanted someone with unchallenged qualities of wisdom and virtue. Her mother, secretly Christian before the religion was accepted in the region, introduced her to an ascetic, who said, “I am acquainted with a unique man who incomparably transcends all those attributes you have mentioned and countless others.” Through prayers and visions, Catherine met and mystically married Christ. One of her suitors, Emperor Maximinus, tried to persuade her to renounce the marriage, and when she refused, he ordered her killed. She was attached to four wheels studded with steel blades and sharp spikes that were supposed to mutilate her, though on the day of the execution an angel released her from the device, which spun out of control, mutilating bystanding pagans. Catherine would become the patron saint of clockmakers, carnival ride attendants, automakers, and anyone who works with wheels.

Eventually, Maximinus was able to behead Catherine, whose remains were secretly deposited on a mountain in the Sinai. According to tradition, Catherine’s body came to rest not on Jebel Musa, but on nearby Jebel Katarina, the tallest on the peninsula. In 1025, a monk went to visit the remains and ... inadvertently broke off three of her fingers, which he then carried to Europe and which miraculously began to heal the sick... and churches in her honor were built in London, Paris, and Venice. Soon a growing number of pilgrims began flocking to the Sinai to see her remains, and the monks, to protect her and to ensure their share of the income that pilgrims would bring, moved her body to a golden casket in the basilica and renamed their abbey the Monastery of Saint Catherine.³⁴

Goodness, sex and making money have plagued the church from the beginning. So, in a way, Blackaby is still in good company with those who have been venerating the Burning Bush for centuries, though the monks have no idea the exact place from which the Ten Commandments were hewn.

3. Blackaby’s Salad of “Seven Realities for Experiencing God”

Look at Blackaby’s Seven Realities for Experiencing God, and it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to the hodgepodge. Those with a bit of schooling wonder at their discontinuity. “Seven Realities” places them in a group, like the Seven Wonders of the World, but the *group*-part is impossible to discern; they do not relate to each other in equal awe, stature, structure, or even in any kind of perceivable legend. They are just a hodgepodge that Blackaby forces and thus strains common sense.

³⁴ Bruce Feiler, *Walking the Bible: A Journey by Land through Five Books of Moses* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005; 496 pp.), 233–234. Feiler is the author of six consecutive *New York Times* bestsellers, and over a dozen books, *Abraham: A Journey to the Hearts of Three Faiths* (William Morrow, 2005; 234 pp.), *To Where God Was Born: A Daring Adventure Through the Bible’s Greatest Stories* (William Morrow, 2007; 448 pp.), *America’s Prophet: Moses and the American Story* (New York: William Morrow, an imprint of HarperCollins, 2009; 362 pp.). He is a columnist for the *New York Times* and a frequent commentator on radio and television.

1. God is always at work around you.
2. God peruses 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 way.
5. God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.
6. You must make major adjustments to 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.³⁵

Chart 1. Blackaby's Seven Realities for Experiencing God

At the beginning, Blackaby's hermeneutical technique for determining, declaring, and lifting his seven sermon points into "Seven Realities" blows us off the page. Why *seven*? Why *these* seven? He tries to untangle them by throwing scripture verses at them, but the real trouble is how he *derives* them from Moses and the Burning Bush; perhaps it is more accurate to say Blackaby *anchors* them in the life of Moses. It is a strange hermeneutic to derive a spiritual reality from biblical stories, but that doesn't faze Blackaby.

The first three are not the only *realities* for the Christian; they are among many such *realities* of God's providence about which many have written huge tomes.³⁶ The first three are far from unique; they are common ground. With a little tweaking, the first three might be included in a list of the Twelve Wonders of the Theological World, next to the Plan of Salvation, the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, and such. But such a "big twelve" would degrade and oversimplify the great doctrines of the church, both Protestant and Catholic. The first three are watered down views of greater doctrines by Blackaby—minus the doctrine—and in many ways are the most simplistic forms of Christian norms and very common, like vacation photos. Goodness, the first three could be a convolution of John 3:16; for the evangelical going to Sunday School since elementary school they are as common as sunshine in a Texas summer. "Realities" says Blackaby, but the common

³⁵ Blackaby, *Experiencing God* (2007; 274 pp.), 21.

See Avery T. Willis and Henry Blackaby, *On Mission with God: Living God's Purpose for His Glory* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002; 267 pp.) which interprets the Blackaby's seven realities in the lives of Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, Peter, Paul, and John, again showing the hodgepodge nature of the "realities" imposed upon the lives of these seven where if one had *not* gone through Blackaby's book the term "realities" would appear odder still. Why imposed those seven? Why not six or twenty? And Jesus too? We should be determining *from* Jesus, not imposing *upon* Jesus. Willis was a distinguished missionary who wrote the premier discipleship course, *MasterLife: Developing a Rich Personal Relationship with the Master* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998; 288 pp.) that includes four six-week studies, and after serving as a SBC missionary in Indonesia, Willis became a V.P. of overseas operations for the SBC International Mission Board. By itself and viewing the "seven realities" as mere observations or sermon points of each of the seven characters, Willis' *Mission with God* is another decent contribution to the discipleship literature. As an addition to the *Experiencing God* cottage industry, because of the esteem of Willis, it adds credibility to Blackaby's main insight for those not interested in looking deeper into Blackaby's confusing hermeneutics.

³⁶ Compare John Feinberg's massive *No One Like Him—a Theology of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001; 879 pp.) and John Frame's likewise massive *The Doctrine of God—a Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002; 864 pp.).

man asks: Why are you calling the sunshine a “reality”? What in God’s name is “God is always at work around you”? Who does *not* know that? The sun shines on cloudless days in the summer.

Oranges are *orange* colored too. Of course, go to the grocery store, and get all you need. Where under heaven is God *not* at work? Blackaby has trouble there.

Blackaby is trying to make the sunshine complex! In fact, the Muslim and Hindu and Jew and even the American Indian believe that *reality*—God is always at work around you! The sky is blue, too! There is a trickiness to Blackaby there, for his rationale for making his key thought more complex than normal people perceive is in the word “work” and the nonsense of God’s absence. That is, we do not *perceive* God’s presence, so we have to be told that *perceiving* God’s presence has a convoluted path through his 13 lessons. “Faith” that God is everywhere takes a hike. Blackaby later tries to shoelace his attempts to get us to “see God’s work” so we can go and “join God there,” etc., and other inflations. But once you see the sunshine, that God really is everywhere, then “going there” makes no sense.

Burning Bush—oh my, come on now. To me, Blackaby degrades the meaning to Moses and to us as he plows up the highway of *faith*. See that Blackaby *begins* his study by making the sunshine complex.

The second reality convolutes and makes complex John 3:16, like Blackaby is trying to obscure the entire Gospel of John. Who knows? I seriously doubt Blackaby intended to obscure. But he appears to lead the student along to unveil his dubious “join God” nether land feeling. Blackaby is trying to decode the biblical story of Moses at the Burning Bush and other passages, which actually distracts from the real message of the story of Moses who receives the Law of God. Looks a lot like there is a grand and hidden truth in “join God” that most of the church missed for millennia—until Blackaby—*voila*, the easy Bible verses and plain stories have these new ways to “join God,” if, if, *if* you just have faith and are obedient. Moses received the Law of God, but the story is sidetracked to discern how Moses *joined God* over how God chose Moses, even against his wishes, and then gave the Law that Jesus fulfilled.

Look closely at Blackaby’s Seven Realities. The last four throw us into the hermeneutical nether lands where hodgepodge rules. The fourth reality sort of introduces the last three, but you must look closely to see that. A Reality? “God speaks by the Holy Spirit” and also speaks through just about everything else under the sun. The wind, sky, fire, and water, too, we can certainly suppose in Blackaby’s “circumstances.” Deceptive or just trying to make complex? Or just not as good a Bible teacher as many have made him out to be? When you listen to Blackaby on video, he is such a nice and kind man. Yet, you must wait until Units 5 and 6 to see how Blackaby focuses upon “circumstances” to see his odd after-the-fact existential validations.

Within the 13 Units, each unit composed of five days (or sections) of separate lessons, there are several good *mini*-studies, common to many Sunday school lessons that LifeWay puts out in quarterlies bought by most of the SBC’s 50,000-plus churches.³⁷ In the hodgepodge, there are a lot of good and often taught evangelical Bible studies, none of which he references, as though he was the first to articulate. The commonness of so many of the *mini*-studies—good ones—is why I say for prisoners the Salvation Army curriculum is much better and more superior than the “join God” nether land that can spawn or feed a prisoner’s religious fanaticism or a prisoner’s delusions of grandeur more easily than good Bible studies.

The seventh and last *reality* on coming “to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you” is a mouthful and covered in Unit 9 in another nicely laid

³⁷ See <https://churches.sbc.net/>.

out hodgepodge of Bible *mini*-studies.³⁸ There are principles that could be considered and added like “realities” that Blackaby could have as easily inflated like a balloon into his big seven. More easily said, one cannot easily determine *how* Blackaby comes to this collection. There is no continuity for even the simple mind. Rather, it is like a shotgun blast of a dozen biblically-based pellets. Your *experience* of obedience leads you to know God, *dah*, and so one would do better just to read and re-read Philippians. At the end of Unit 9, we get it, we *really* get it—obey! Pellets everywhere. So, what again is the *seventh* reality thingy about again?

I thought you came to know God *through* Christ in prayer and in loving God and loving others as best you can, and God comes to you in his spirit affirming in your heart that you are his child. But in Unit 9, we have Moses again, and Jesus inviting the 70 disciples “to join Him in his Father’s work,” and the *experience* of God made confusing again.³⁹

5. Why No Ethics? ... Who Is Blackaby Catering To?

Henry Blackaby’s *Experiencing God* study *attempted* and *claimed* to show ways to find God’s will: essentially, “Watch to see where God is working and join Him!” with a load of character-counting virtues and basic Bible *mini*-studies attached.⁴⁰ In that free-will responsiveness and ability, Blackaby has articulated in a rough and unsophisticated fashion how *teleology* is an integral part of his book. For *teleology* as the “use of ends” is usually subjected to “inherent rightness” in far-right evangelicalism decision making ethical theory.⁴¹ The search for the “will of God” is the study of Christian “ethics” in seminaries far and wide, though Blackaby does not use the term *ethics* one time. Though typical of very elementary Bible studies, Blackaby and his fans have made him not only wealthy but also a kind of saint or scholar on “Experiencing God” without any real analysis, and I suspect some adulation came from some who had not even read the book as they ride the coat-tails of religious political fame.

If Blackaby had any concern with *adding* to the literature, he could have referenced a few of his sources, other works he liked among the numerous “will of God” books, and of course some relationship to formal ethics. Even in the expanded version, he and his crew stand alone,

³⁸ Blackaby, *Experiencing God* (2007; 274 pp.), 178–197, Unit 9, “Experiencing God Through Obedience,” with mini-study sections title, “If You Love Him, You Obey Him” (John 14 & 1 John 2), “Importance of Obedience” (Deut. 28), “What Is Obedience” (Matt. 21, Jonah 1 & 2), “Obedience Is Costly” (Rom. 8), song “Trust and Obey,” “Affirmation” (Ex. 3), “Moses Obeyed and God Accomplished” (Ex. 7, 14, & 17), “Disciples Obeyed and God Accomplished” (Luke 10), “You Come to Know God” (Ex. 31, Judg. 6, Ps. 23, Jer. 23, & John 1), “Why Does God Seem to Work so Slowly” (John 16), “Why Doesn’t God Give Me a Big Assignment?” (Luke 22); “What Is Happening When I Obey and the Doors Close” (Acts 16: “let God work out the details of His timing, p. 194), “How Can I know Whether the Word I Receive Is from God, My Selfish Desires, or Satan?” (Matt. 4, two paragraphs with the answer being “know the ways of God so thoroughly that if something doesn’t measure up to God’s ways, you will recognize it is not from Him” p. 195), “Does God Have One Plan for My Life for Eternity?” (does not try to answer, no scripture, only, “God will never give you an assignment He will not enable you to complete,” p. 195). Blackaby closes Unit 9 with an example of his own obedience to the *feeling* of the Spirit who led him not to cancel a visit to Howard Payne University and Coggin Avenue Baptist Church and the *struggles* he went through to *obey*—what a fine, obedient man!

³⁹ Blackaby, *Experiencing God* (2007; 274 pp.), 188–189.

⁴⁰ Blackaby, *Experiencing God* (1990), 21–23; *Experiencing God* (2007; 274 pp.), 16, twice on same page, and in 40-plus other renditions throughout.

⁴¹ I see teleology and “ends” throughout the New Testament, especially in the Golden Rule, and have written substantially on that in my book, *Would You Lie To Save a Life? A Theology on the Ethics of Love* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 1990; rev. 2007; 432 pp.), www.PreciousHeart.net/love/.

unaccountable and without any credit or serious debt to anyone for his allegedly novel and bizarre method. Yet, for those who have gone to church most of their adult life, who love the Bible and have been studying the Bible most of their life—even millions who have *not* gone to seminary and had the honor of advanced studies—we have seen dozens of Blackaby’s *mini*-studies in other literature far and wide for over a hundred years.

Blackaby seems to cater to blue-collar Christians, hoping none of them look on Amazon, LifeWay, Baker, Zondervan, or Westminster for Christian books on Christian ethics. This is extremely odd, or purposefully deceptive, or a simple cover up. Ask the Blackabys.

6. Embarrassing Hermeneutics ... Dare We Ask?

Hermeneutics is the science of biblical interpretation, and it’s a big word that one never finds in popular biblical literature for good reason. We do not fault Blackaby for not using the term. However, Blackaby’s hermeneutical principles are far from clear; the greatest problems arise with how he determines from Moses the “Seven Realities” from the *story* of Moses at the Burning Bush and not applying it elsewhere.⁴² It appears that Blackaby had a couple of sermons that meant a lot to him and he expanded on those; as mere individual sermon points, they might have had traction in his churches. For us, his points would have had better traction if he had stayed closer to the plain sense of scripture rather than convolute the simple reading of the text. We all learned that the simplest message of the text is often the best, and the farther you depart from the simplest message the more shifting becomes the sand.

Remember, 1,600 prisoners and many lifers at Angola went through this course, according to Warden Cain, and more prisoners than not are given to extremes in everything, including delusions of grandeur and all manner of religious baloney. If Blackaby’s method is *truly* picked up by prisoners, what then? Blackaby’s method of drawing out spiritual realities from stories presses the imagination more than any us truly want. A hermeneutic that *stretches* the Burning Bush as critical and at the same time *excludes* the actual message from God in Ten Commandments becomes an anti-biblical hermeneutic—at least—if not an *anti*-OT Law hermeneutic, which Blackaby would certainly reject. If in the light Blackaby would reject, then we have trouble with the rest.

What happens when we apply the “Blackaby method” to Job’s not-so-friendly friends, to Ezekiel’s visions, and even to Saul’s visit to the witch of Endor? What kind of *realities* could we *discover* by the same hermeneutical technique? Worst, what kind of *realities* would a psychopathic or psychotic prisoner discern? Applying a load of N.T. verses and a load of evangelical talking points—and vacation photos—to make his Seven Realities a *method* is just that: it’s backward, taking his “realities” and building from there, instead of looking at scripture, and building from scripture. Get it? Building *from* Scripture is much preferred by most Christians, especially Baptists. Blackaby’s hermeneutic is contrary to the expository preaching taught at SWBTS and NOBTS, even from the SBC Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary where Blackaby earned his MDiv.

⁴² Compare Albert Immer, *Hermeneutics of the New Testament*, Trans. by Albert H. Newman, and Newman was the first professor of church history at SWBTS when it chartered in Fort Worth (Andover: Warren G. Draper, c. 1913 [1877]; 395 pp.), <https://books.google.com/books?id=rY3AAAAMAAJ>; and Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics—A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974: 1st c1890; 518 pp.), www.Google.com/books/edition/Biblical_Hermeneutics/fHBCAQAAAMAAJ.

Blackaby works hard to *name* and *claim* his loose inductions and deductions and make them sound Kosher to the naïve.⁴³ But his hermeneutical method is strange, hard to figure, and mostly backward. He has sold it millions. But it is a method we do *not* want prisoners to emulate.

It is almost embarrassing to have to say that Moses is not our example for the New Testament life, that no one will *ever* have a relationship with God as Moses did—nor want one. The main reason is that we have a better relationship through Christ, being raised with Christ into a new life totally unknown to Moses. Don't miss the word *totally*, because it sure escaped Blackaby. In other words, God spoke to Moses as God spoke to a few others in the O.T., and God will never again repeat the same kind of O.T. *giving of the Law* that Blackaby totally avoided. How then is Moses' *experience* a model for us? And though the Law for the Israelites, they struggled with it as their model for centuries, developing Judaism that turned into its own monster by the time Christ came and fulfilled the Law.

Sad, in all of Blackaby's hullabaloo about "God speaks," he left out as critical the most important words that God spoke in the O.T. after Creation—the Law! We repeat that! Think on that. Ponder that. But clarifying that would distract Blackaby, require resourcing the great theologians, so it is just better to cover up—which puts Blackaby in the company of several in TDCJ who cover up a lot in chaplaincy and have covered up for decades in selfish oversight.

Ah, *we*—all Christians—are raised with Christ. God does not speak to anyone today as he spoke to Moses. The risen Christ spoke to Paul on the Damascus road and to others, but then Christ ascended to heaven and ... dare I go on? See a few of the Salvation Army studies for clearer and cleaner *Bible* studies, or, the hundreds of quarterlies that LifeWay puts out, which give good examples of expository *Bible* studies.

7. *Experiencing God* as an Existential Drift in an Evangelical Dress

In Blackaby's view, how does one distinguish between what God is doing and the Devil's work dressed up as an angel of light? That is a profoundly serious question. Prisoners have odd thought processes; so do a few in free-world churches. Blackaby squeezes in a sentence but avoids that like it is a non-issue.⁴⁴

"*Experiencing God*" is an existential title backed up with a load *mini*-studies that lack any real cohesion, and the singular insight of "look for where God is working and go and join Him there" is blown up into some kind of existential world impossible to navigate. Look closely at the chapter titles, and one can see that Blackaby himself strains to make the book cohesive.

"Existential" refers to experience and existence for the derivation of insights into life and philosophy and how we *perceive* the world. Existentialism is exceedingly wide and encompasses a complex set of philosophies that are usually considered non-biblical by fundamentalists and by many evangelicals. Some of the philosophies are not biblical at all. Sometimes existentialism is

⁴³ See www.scribbr.com/methodology/inductive-deductive-reasoning: "The main difference between inductive and deductive reasoning is that inductive reasoning aims at developing a theory while deductive reasoning aims at testing an existing theory. Inductive reasoning moves from specific observations to broad generalizations, and deductive reasoning the other way around.... A conclusion drawn on the basis of an inductive method can never be proven, but it can be invalidated.... The conclusions of deductive reasoning can only be true if all the premises set in the inductive study are true and the terms are clear."

⁴⁴ Blackaby, *Experiencing God* (2007; 274 pp.), 195, in Unit 9, "Experiencing God Through Obedience," a small two-paragraph section, "How Can I know Whether the Word I Receive Is from God, My Selfish Desires, or Satan?" (Matt. 4), that gives the answer: "know the ways of God so thoroughly that if something doesn't measure up to God's ways, you will recognize it is not from Him," and so we should not get bogged down with deceptiveness of self or Satan. Not a lot of help for prisoners!

abysmally negative—as in Friedrich Nietzsche’s *God is dead*, and becomes essentially anti-Christ. Nevertheless, an evangelically ostracized Nietzsche keeps many from reading his powerful insights into human nature that reveal many truths with which even an evangelical would agree, while abhorring the “God is dead” baloney. In spite of hard reading and unevangelical-like moments, masters like Paul Tillich and Søren Kierkegaard in an existential vein have helped articulate many golden biblical truths about life and love.

Blackaby’s insight—as he explains it—of “go and join God” have few places of true applicability, of true usefulness, outside the Garden of Eden, or a utopia where absolute “rightness” was easy to find, and perhaps in Mayberry RFD.

In crisis, it is useless. Blackaby’s insight is slim on substance for utility in the foxhole, having more air than something practical. It sounds nice in a church parlor. But it is useless in the dark hour, and very easily leads one away from the more responsible and more practical biblical principles. Blackaby’s singular insight lacks the nourishment of baby food in comparison to the Golden Rule. On the other hand, the Great Commands, the Golden Rule, and the Great Commission are practical to the uttermost, something everyone can use. “Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness” has much more potency for *thinking* how to do God’s will than most of Blackaby’s book (Matt. 6:33).

Yet Blackaby’s “look for where God is” is near WWJD in vacuity of substance and in simple-minded naïveté, even deceptive simplicity. Who *can* do what Jesus would do? Equality in competence with Jesus is quite a boast, and to *claim* it quite frankly blasphemous.⁴⁵ It is made acceptable by being buttressed by his Bible *mini*-studies that Blackaby saddles upon his insight, but the studies do not remain in the same corral of reason. Blackaby’s insight “look for where God is working” is a wild horse made to look like a tame gilding. Blackaby places his wild horse in a corral with other good horses, and he becomes slightly deceptive when the wild horse is placed on the cover of his book—*Experiencing God*. It’s like his book is designed to help a person *experience* God. Blackaby’s lead principle is a wild horse with no true bridle, just an existential world to *look* at and *see* where God is working, so that the disciple can *go* and *join* God there—a purebred existential wild horse placed in a corral of a few detached Bible *mini*-studies, furthermore, sanctified by a huge evangelical publishing house.

The two Great Commands and the Golden Rule are far less ghostly, but only horse fodder in Blackaby, instead of the statuesque Clydesdale work horses they have been for millennia.

Because of Commander Bucher and his murdering hijackers in 1968, we pressed this and ask another hard question. What is the *experience* of God? What *is* the experience *outside* of the existential group dynamics and the existential thrust of the singular insight? Blackaby does not even appear to be aware of group dynamics, much less attempt to articulate the *experience* advertised—a truly wild horse. Blackaby’s use of “experiencing God” borders on piracy and gets close to false advertisement. That is, the “join God” is hardly an *extraordinary* insight. On actually finding love and God’s will, it is sorely lacks energy in the battlefield foxhole and in most other places of stress—except, perhaps, in a Mayberry RFD church parlor.

The Golden Rule and the two Great Commands require personal responsibility for initiative and demand unique choices in love—they are radically *non*-existential; they are packed to the gills with free-will responsibility and real-world in-the-foxhole practicality. But Jesus’ words do not get priority in Blackaby, who at the time was a leading Southern Baptist on spirituality. In practice, Blackaby’s singular insight *removes* responsibility and detracts from Jesus’ words.

⁴⁵ For more on WWJD, see www.PreciousHeart.net/love/Love-Chap-02.pdf, chapter 2 of my book, *Would You Lie to Save a Life?* mentioned above.

What or where is the *where* that Blackaby is referring to? Who knows? Blackaby does not give a clue on how to distinguish between the existential rain, wind, fire, or air in the actual work of God and the deceitful work of Satan beyond the mere observation of some isolated and obviously simple religious activity. Just *trust in whatever your eyes see*, I guess, and exempt yourself from responsible initiative based upon biblical principles. And like the name-it-and-claim-it baloney, if you are having trouble finding where God is working, it is because of your lack of faith or failure to fully obey. Circle the wagons, cowboy!

G. “Experiencing God” Mocked by TDCJ Leaders

1. Good Character vs. How Upshaw *Ordered* Experiencing God

Interestingly enough, Henry’s son and co-author of the revision, Richard Blackaby, notes this on character:

Unless you have the humility to hear feedback, to receive criticism, to seek counsel, you will not be a successful leader.⁴⁶

If one reads the *Experiencing God* workbook, there is a lot about character that determines a lot about discovering the will of God. A good character prepares one to follow God. These words by the son and current president of Blackaby Ministries deserve notice, for TDCJ does not allow feedback, much less seek it from its chaplains or anyone else. When Brad Livingston and Bryan Collier negotiated the Seminary Scam, and manager Marvin Dunbar ordered the faith-based housing on all units, none of them sought any counsel from any chaplain, warden, much less from any of the vast number of stakeholders outside of their small circle of sycophants.

In 2012, the nefarious Region 1 Director Michael Upshaw ordered a meeting with all the region 1 chaplains—ordered us all to come to his office on state time—and at the meeting *ordered* all of us sign up for the Experiencing God Weekend that Mark Hollis was sponsoring. I did not know why then, as it seemed so strange and was neck deep exposing the Polunsky Prison Fiasco. Upshaw *ordered* all of us to do a Baptist workbook at the same time supporting the horde of policy violations going on at Polunsky: that is the looniest piece of wicked hypocrisy imaginable. Upshaw could not care less about religion or God as he sponsored contraband, cleaned the contraband, cleared the numerous violators, including the wardens and Regional Chaplain Vance Drum. No *Experiencing God* there.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Richard Blackaby and Stanley E. Patterson, “Reflections on Spiritual Leadership: Interview with Richard Blackaby,” *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 7, No. 1 (Spring 2013; 18–23): 23, www.Scribd.com/document/337472560/Spiritual-Leadership-Blackaby-interview.

⁴⁷ Maness, *TDCJ Book of Secrets on the Longest Cover Up in TDCJ History: Case of the Enchanting Chaplain* (2013; 700 pp.), www.PreciousHeart.net/OIG/pdf, see how Upshaw’s cleaned contraband, cleared violators, and promoted all, copies to Livingston, OIG, and Texas AG. I documented a snippet of that on pg. 45 of *Book of Secrets*, “Just as Upshaw tried to do some chaplaincy, himself, in ordering all chaplains and wardens to his office for a Baptist pow-wow on Experiencing God Weekends, *without ordering*, but *all were ordered there* for only that, and Upshaw said, ‘I expect all chaplains to Mike your dates before you leave.’ Cute that was.” And pg. 177, “Reg. 1 Director Michael Upshaw also *ordered* all senior wardens and their chaplains to his HQ in about February for a two-hour session led by Mark Hollis (214-275-1141) at which Valentine was present too, that Valentine helped cheerlead, which closed with Upshaw’s *expectation* that all chaplains will ‘inform Mr. Hollis of your dates for the Experiencing God Weekend’ – another unconstitutional use of mandated state time to *order* a Baptist program. And Mr. Upshaw plays, perhaps, a critical part in my dilemma below, one way or another, which makes some of the investigation worthy of a closer look.”

Mark Hollis was a SWBTS representative and long-time friend, and he told me afterward that he did not have the resources to supply all the weekends that Upshaw ordered. He was half hoping many chaplains would not follow through. Upshaw did not even consult the provider! Who cares? Politics stink. When politics and selfish interests drive religion, they cheapen religion too.

2. Institutional Favor Taints the Genuineness of Faith

How important is the *Experiencing God* 13-week lesson? Warden Cain himself went through it, then led his church to sponsor prisoners in *Experiencing God* classes, and then they made the *Experiencing God* workbook the first step to becoming an Angola “prisoner minister.” Must be some kind of a study. Because the *warden* of Angola did it and sponsors it, then the anyone who takes it has some favor. Who cannot see that? Warden Cain had much more authority, freedom, and power in Angola than any TDCJ senior warden had. Even a sterling character brings forces that taint the genuineness of faith in those seeking to *please* the King of Angola, who very much like the Kings of old could affect the life and work and living quarters of a prisoner who was very much like the peasant of old. Yet, if less than sterling, then the forces of influence that taint the genuineness of faith in those seeking favor is much greater, one could even say *taint* in proportion to the deficit.

Of course, everyone sees that, except the most naïve, even if some found a helpful measure of discipleship in the Bible *mini*-studies. Though *Experiencing God* has made Blackaby a fortune, and the popularity alone has carried it further than its substance merits, it remains a mere hodge-podge of *mini*-studies starting with Moses and does not set well with a New Testament ethic. It is sad that the worst shortcoming is not obvious. The anchor to the study is Moses’ relationship with God and Blackaby’s Seven Realities of a New Testament ethic; from there Christ is unfolded, which is kind of backward. Moses did not know Christ, and Christ fulfilled the Law, which is a much more important doctrine to grapple with than Blackaby’s “join God.”

H. Comparing Blackaby and Bill Bright

1. Self-Centered vs. God-Centered Life Similarity

Notice this similarity to Bill Bright, which Blackaby was aware of in 1990 when he first wrote his *Experiencing God* workbook. Interestingly, Unit 2, Day 1, begins with the “God-centered Life,” and an uncannily familiar chart:

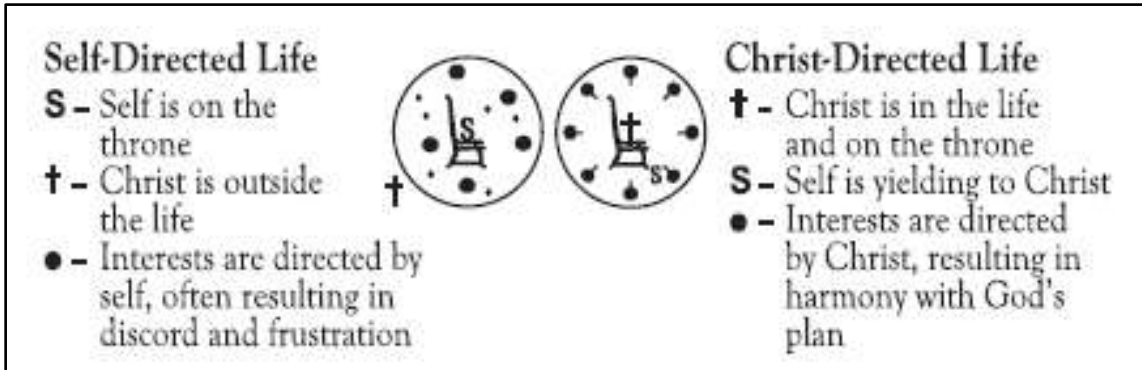
A Self-Centered Life

- * Is focused on self
- * Is proud of self
- * Is self-confident
- * Depends on self
- * Affirms self
- * Seeks to be acceptable to world
- * Looks a circumstances from from human perspective
- * Chooses selfish, ordinary living

A God-Centered Life

- * Places confidence in God
- * Depends on God and His ability
- * Focuses on God and His activity
- * Is humble before God
- * Denies self
- * Seeks first the kingdom of God
- * Seeks God’s perspective in every circumstance
- * Chooses holy and godly living⁴⁸

Several God-centered actions are all-encompassing and impossible for even the holiest Christian. Blackaby makes no reference to *try*, though we must admit that he implies *try*. Yet, the reality—if I may impose an *eighth* reality—is the impossibility of being 100 percent as capable as Christ in any one of those, even part of the time, much less in Blackaby’s implication of *most of the time*. No one is that good except Jesus, unless Blackaby is claiming a competence equal to Jesus! While a God-centered life is standard fair for Christians, even an Evangelical mantra, Blackaby’s categorical claims distract from—dare I say—reality, and without a clarification they confuse the thinking Christian. Notice “focuses on God and His activity” and seeks “God’s perspective” which sounds holy *a priori* but in reality is a claim above any biblical ability. Those observations aside, look see at Bright’s marvelously simple tract.



Bright’s two circles have been copied and reworked *ad infinitum*, colorized, and used worldwide to such an extent that they are not only in the public realm but also a view of the Evangelical reality, like a Ninth Reality to mock Blackaby further. Only these are plain and devoid of the Blackaby hyperbole.

Whether or to what extent Blackaby co-opted Bright is a sidebar for others to ponder, but it is not the only thing co-opted or reworked by Blackaby.

⁴⁸ Blackaby, *Experiencing God* (2007; 274 pp.), 32.

⁴⁹ Bill Bright, “Four Spiritual Laws: the Basic Series,” (Center for Mission Mobilization. CampusMinistry.org, no date; from Campus Crusade for Christ), 9, www.CampusMinistry.org/docs/tools/FourSpiritualLaws.pdf. Bright has never had an issue with anyone reprinting his Four Spiritual Laws or adapting them or reprinting them for decades.

2. Blackaby Replaces *Facts* with *Feelings* for Train's Engine

Perhaps the most basic Evangelical statement that is erased by Blackaby is the classic evangelical tract, "The Four Spiritual Laws." Bill Bright (1921–2003) wrote the 2x4-inch tract in 1956 not long after he founded Campus Crusade for Christ in 1951 at the University of California, Los Angeles, perhaps one of the most successful evangelical enterprises ever. In 1996 he was awarded the prestigious Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion (excess of \$1 million), and he donated the money to promote the spiritual causes.

Today Campus Crusade serves on over 650 university campuses in the U.S. and approximately 470 campuses overseas.... His Four Spiritual Laws booklet—a four-point outline written by Bright in 1956 ... has been printed in nearly 200 languages. Although religious tracts have been published for centuries, Bright's booklet became what is likely the most widely disseminated religious booklet in history, with approximately 1.5 billion distributed.... In 1972, Bright organized a week-long event in Dallas for 85,000 youths officially known as EXPLO 72, but dubbed by the press as the "Religious Woodstock." Campus Crusade's EXPLO 74 in Korea drew nightly crowds of up to 1.5 million persons. Six years later, crowds from two million to almost three million attended the Here's Life Korea World Evangelism Crusade.... Bright's ministry now includes nearly 13,000 full-time and an estimated 101,000 trained volunteer staff members working in 165 nations around the globe. The organization's budget exceeds \$270 million and was recognized in 1993 by Money magazine as America's "most efficient religious group" in terms of percentage of contributions actually reaching ministry programs. Bill and Vonette's combined annual gross salary, however, excluding housing, is currently \$43,402.⁵⁰

Bright exhibited a dedication similar to Billy Graham in long-standing integrity and clarity.

In the back of the "Four Spiritual Laws" is a drawing of a choo-choo train: "Facts" are the engine, "Faith" the coal car, and "Feeling" the caboose with the caveat "Do Not Trust Your Feelings."⁵¹ That is wise and clear, as Jeremiah 17:9 notes, "The heart is deceitful above all things," especially the heart of many prisoners, almost all desperate and several psychopathic. Blackaby affirms many Evangelical truths, yet he very clearly pulls the "caboose of feeling" to the front of the train, often making "feeling" the engine, while mixing in plenty of required words on faith and obedience to dress his salad.

⁵⁰ See www.TempletonPrize.org/laureate-sub/bright-press-release.

⁵¹ See www.CampusMinistry.org/docs/tools/FourSpiritualLaws.pdf, p. 12, for one rendition, with hundreds for only God knows how long used all over the world for Gospel evangelism. The four spiritual laws are: 1. God loves you and offers a plan for your life; 2. Man is sinful and separated from God and cannot know and experience God's love or plan for his life; 3. Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin, and through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life (usually illustrated with a uncrossable chasm with the cross as the bridge); and 4. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and then we can know and experience God's love and plan. Each "law" is supported by a few quotes of scripture, and after the first there are simple instructions on accepting Christ, a drawing depicting the ordered Christ-directed or -centered life versus the self-centered, the classic prayer, a ditto on the biblical promises of God, and then the admonition: "The promise of God Word, the Bible—not our feelings—is our authority. The Christian lives by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word." Then illustration of the train is explained.

But, goodness, the Blackaby enterprise has made a lot of money from this, and LifeWay has too.⁵² Now, compare the \$500k assets and \$200k salary of Blackaby's son to Bill Bright's, and sincerely ask, "Who *heard* God?"

I. What Others Say on *Experiencing God*

1. Greg Gilbert, Pastor, Third Avenue Baptist, Louisville

Greg Gilbert, Senior Pastor of Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, gave a review of the *Experiencing God* book, which expands on the workbook. While commending it as a fellow Evangelical, he had concerns.

I should raise a few cautionary notes.... Blackaby's teaching throughout *Experiencing God* is heavily tilted toward discerning some particular "assignment" or "task" from God for a person's life. His illustrations often begin with words like, "One of our churches believed that God was calling them to . . ." or "Our association was convinced that God wanted us to" (pp. 23, 41). He writes on page 24, "Whenever God gives you a directive, it is always right." What, though, is the nature of such directives? How does God give them? Blackaby's conception of these "tasks" or "directives" seems to be a subjective impression on the mind about God's will for a particular circumstance. God communicates directly to the mind of the Christian and tells him, almost audibly it seems, what should be done. "When God speaks to you in your quiet time, immediately write down what He said," (p. 172).

Though "not without merit," as Gilbert notices, still that leads to affirming the ridiculous too, noting thusly:

there have been hundreds of times in history when people have claimed the same authority (i.e. that it is a word from God) to do ridiculous or horrible things. In the Great Awakening of 1740-41, John Davenport, for example, claimed that God wanted him to lead the people of his church in a riot in his city and to burn thousands of books in the town square. The result was disastrous.... But I stand with Jonathan Edwards when he writes, "Many godly persons have undoubtedly in this and other ages, exposed themselves to woeful delusions by an aptness to lay too much weight on impulses and impressions," (in Iain Murray's *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 241). His advice? "I would therefore entreat the people of God to be very cautious how they give heed to such things.... (in Edwards's *Distinguishing Marks*, p. 282 in the Yale edition).

Another danger in Blackaby's book, I think, is his teaching about looking for a word from the Scriptures about a particular circumstance in one's life. Blackaby tells the story of a young couple.... According to Blackaby, "She sensed the Holy Spirit saying that she would have to leave the comforts and security of home to go with her husband" to New York (pp. 168-9). Reading the Bible like this, to find a "word" from God directed to a particular personal circumstance, obscures the fact that the Bible has a definite meaning in itself. The meaning of the Bible does not change from person to person and from circumstance to circumstance.... George Whitefield, the great preacher in the Great Awakening and Edwards's friend, admitted that even he had fallen into this kind of error. Prior to the birth of his only son, Whitefield announced that the boy would be a great preacher and that he would be great in the sight of the Lord. Four months after his birth, though,

⁵² Henry Blackaby's son, Richard, has been president of the Blackaby Ministries International for awhile with a Form 990 compensation in 2016 of \$160,212, 2017 of \$180,842, and 2018 of \$200,282, and to the best of my knowledge that does not include royalties from any of their LifeWay publications, which is an extraordinary income for a non-profit whose net were stayed at a mere \$500,000-plus for the same three years while his income grew by \$20k a year. Factors in the V.P. Rick Fisher's 2018 compensation of \$121,340 and tally the difference from their assets. Makes one question this idea of "non-profit" quite a bit. But who says its about the money? It's just the voice of God.

the child died. Whitefield recognized his mistake and wrote: “I misapplied several texts of Scripture. Upon these grounds, I made no scruple of declaring ‘that I should have a son, and his name was to be John,’” (in Iain Murray’s *Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 241–2)....

What is the alternative, then, to seeking subjective impressions and directives from God? I would recommend a small book by Jim Elliff called *Led by the Spirit* (contact them at www.CCWonline.org). Elliff gives wonderful and sound advice about how Christians should go about discerning the will of God.⁵³

Good point. In that light, how much more do *delusions* apply to imprisoned felons, many criminal psychopaths, most with serious psychological disorders. And every prison staff chaplain of any experience has met the new convert prisoner with delusions. I remember vividly one young prisoner who came to me after a chapel service; he felt “called to ministry” and wanted to get ordained, so he could “preach the word.” He had never been baptized or attended church regularly in the free world. He was in prison for rape—repented—and came to chapel. “Have you read the Bible?” I asked. “No,” he said. “Well, Mr. Jones, that would be a good place to start.” He nodded and said that was be a good idea, and I gave him a Bible. I never saw him again. Ridiculous is an understatement there, but he *appeared* serious in the moment. I respected his delusion and woeful misunderstanding, and that illustrates the desolation of a lot of young men in prison as well as how easily they are deluded and need of solid basic instruction. And that does not address the more serious career criminal psychopath who sees religion as *another* opportunity for scamming others for selfish agendas.

2. Greg Koukl, Founder, Stand to Reason

Greg Koukl starts his long article focusing upon “hearing the voice of God,” which is a central biblical topic and a perennial Christian concern. In a novel way, Koukl began with how Blackaby was introduced to an audience, as “a man who hears from God.” Clearly, if *that* is all, then we better pay heed! Of course, Blackaby’s Seven Realities are the core, “There is so much good in *Experiencing God*, both in intent and content, that it is painful to take exception with it. In fact, at first glance it is hard to imagine anything amiss.”⁵⁴

Loving God is central, and one can have a relationship with God. So, “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.” Koukl observes that Blackaby uses “assignment” more than 100 times: “This is what he means by ‘God’s will’ and by God ‘speaking.’”!

“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.

⁵³ Greg Gilbert, “Book Review: *Experiencing God*, by Henry Blackaby,” *9 Marks* (5-22-01), www.9marks.org/review/experiencing-god-henry-blackaby/, accessed 4-22-21. Gilbert was at the time Senior Pastor of Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, and the author of a few books; see www.ThirdAvenue.org/staff and www.Crossway.org/articles/author/greg-gilbert/.

⁵⁴ Greg Koukl, “Henry Blackaby’s Experiencing God: A Critique,” *Stand to Reason* (4-16-13), www.STR.org/w/henry-blackaby-s-experiencing-god-a-critique, accessed 4-22-21. He founded Stand to Reason in 1993, has spoken on more than 70 college and university campuses, and hosted a radio show for 27 years. He has debated atheist Michael Shermer on national radio and written seven books, including *The Story of Reality—How the World Began, How It Ends and Everything Important that Happens in Between*, with foreword by Nancy Pearcey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Kindle Ed., 2017).

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.”

Indeed, vague is an understatement on Blackaby’s most important concept. Koukl follows with a bit of heavy lifting with a series of quotes in a sidebar.

“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.

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?

Bravo! Exactly! Then Koukl proceeds to use Blackaby’s own teaching to further prove this dubious and ephemeral *feeling* from God, all in love, and therefore can be used to justify almost any action. Koukl exposes Blackaby’s false use of listening to how God “speaks” through several well-known passages in the New Testament. Koukl is quite good and closes thusly.

Most people teaching error do not do so maliciously. Usually they have the best intentions, but having a good heart is not enough.... Many of Henry Blackaby’s ideas in *Experiencing God* are like that....

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.”...

Contrary to what is taught in *Experiencing God*, you are not substandard if you do not “hear God’s voice.” The Bible does not teach that receiving personal revelations from God is necessary, ordinary, or to be expected for optimal Christian living. Godly Christians can go their entire life without such experience. There are dozens of verses about pursuing truth and sound doctrine, but none supporting hearing the voice of God in that sense.

It is perilous to construct doctrine from historical material alone. However, this is largely Blackaby’s approach. It is more sound to first develop one’s theology from the less ambiguous material in the Epistles.... 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.... Why are the Apostles unanimously reticent on a capability that is allegedly at the [Blackaby's] 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....

The greatest movement of God's Spirit in the last 1000 years was the Reformation. It was not 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.

Koukl is clear in his focus upon the New Testament.

3. Douglas Beaumont—Popular Catholic Christian Apologists

Beaumont wrote a short good piece outlining several more problems, including these two powerful questions: "Does God speak today like He spoke then? And to whom?" and "Did Christ have crisis of faith or make major adjustments for the Father?"

[Blackaby] "Your job as a servant is to follow Jesus' example: Do what the Father is already doing—watch to see where God is at work and join Him!"

[Beaumont] Besides the fact that this is most certainly not how Jesus did it, the New Testament does not teach that Christians must try to figure where God is at work around them so that they can then join Him. They can know that God is at work right where they are. This can be done at home, in the workplace, in school, or in any place God has put them.⁵⁵

In so many words, we have been saying this since 2007 in my book, *Would You Lie to Save a Life?—a Theology on the Ethics of Love*.

4. Reformed Page – Author Unknown

Even though the author is unknown, he/she presented another unique criticism. Goodness, right between the eyes, too.

There is certainly nothing wrong with books that ... point out biblical principles that will help Christians grow ... with the Lord. There is a problem, however, with books that draw special attention to their special or unique ability to help Christians grow spiritually. This seems to be the approach of *Experiencing God*. Though Blackaby quotes a lot of Scripture, special attention is often drawn to his principles. On page five, for example, he states, "I invite you to interact with God throughout the reading of this book so He can reveal to you the ways He wants you to apply these principles in your own life, ministry, and church" (italics ours). Notice that it is "this book" and "these principles" that help the reader. This should be a warning flag to the reader because attention is drawn to Blackaby's book and not to the Scriptures (xiii). Blackaby gives several testimonies of people who claim that they got their spiritual lives together as a result of following his book: "I wish I had known these truths forty years ago. My life and ministry would have been totally different" (xiii); "My whole life and attitudes have changed since I began this study" (Ibid.); "This is the most wonderful time in my Christian life. I never knew I could have an intimate and personal relationship with my heavenly Father" (Ibid.).... Christians, though, need to be aware of teachers who present their principles as the key to a higher level of Christianity.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Douglas Beaumont, "Experiencing God—A Critical Review," (1-9-17), www.DouglasBeaumont.com/2017/01/09/experiencing-god-critical-review/, accessed 4-22-21.

⁵⁶ Author unknown, Indian Hills Community Church, "A Critique of Henry Blackaby's *Experiencing God*," (3-4-11), <https://reformbama.wordpress.com/2011/03/04/a-critique-of-henry-blackabys-experiencing-god/>, accessed 4-22-21.

5. Gary Gilley, Pastor, Southern View Chapel, Springfield

Gary Gilley is brutal, “Experiencing God is a book that is full of errors, Biblically unsupportable assertions, incredible statements, and story-theology (views based upon anecdotal accounts rather than upon Scripture).” He outlines more:

- (a) The last four of the Seven Realities either contradict Scripture, or at best, cannot be supported or proven by Scripture;
- (b) “If you have trouble hearing God speak, you are in trouble at the very heart of your Christian experience” (p. 87). What does this mean? Does God speak to all Christians individually? If so, how? What Scripture is used to support this (Blackaby uses none)?;
- (c) After praying to God, Blackaby advises, “Reflect on your feelings. ... How did you feel as you walked and talked with God” (p. 62). What passage from the Bible tells us to reflect on our feelings in order to evaluate our prayer life?;
- (d) “Knowing God only comes through experience as He reveals Himself to me through my experiences with Him” (p. 5). Doesn’t the Bible reveal God to us? Are our experiences necessary, and more importantly, are our experiences reliable when it comes to experiencing God?⁵⁷

Gilley proceeds to explain each of these errors by Blackaby. Yet, if it is not clear by now, notice for the umpteenth time Blackaby’s core: “God reveals Himself to me through my experiences with Him.” In the light of all, reflect on the meaning of that statement: if God *is* revealing to Blackaby like that, we *should* write down those God-inspired words, too, and add them to the Bible after the Book of Revelation.

J. Did Blackaby Get His “Obedience” Theses from Henry Drummond?

Did Blackaby get his main concepts of circumstances and obedience from Henry Drummond’s last message, “How to Know the Will of God,” in his 1897 *The Ideal Life: Addresses Hitherto Unpublished*, or adapt it? Perhaps not, and we know Blackaby was aware of the main theme of obedience that permeates the Reformed and evangelical literature for hundreds of years. Yet, Drummond’s exquisite message reflects so many of Blackaby’s key themes, minus the “join God” stuffing. Further, in a reprint in 2014, the publishers reworked the title to market it better: *The Ideal Life: Listening for God’s Voice, Discerning His Leading*.⁵⁸ Blackaby does not plagiarize, and I do not *really* believe he copied the concepts. But there is an uncanny similarity in the *concepts* of “circumstances” and the criticality of “obedience”—only Drummond is clearer.

Above, Professor Wright was wise to quote Drummond, too, from chapter XIV of this book, “The Man After God’s Own Heart,” another superb message that fittingly prepares one for the last

⁵⁷ Pastor Gary Gilley, “A Book Review of *Experiencing God*,” SoundWitness.org (3-8-2008), www.SoundWitness.org/evangel/book_review_experiencing_god.htm and www.SoundWitness.org/evangel/Downloads/book_review_experiencing_god.pdf, accessed 4-23-21. Gilley is pastor of Southern View Chapel, Springfield, IL.

⁵⁸ Henry Drummond (1851–1897), *The Ideal Life: Addresses Hitherto Unpublished*, with Memorial Sketches by Ian Maclaren and Sir W. Roberson Nicoll (Cambridge: University Press, John Wilson and Son [first New York: Dodd, Mead, 1897]; 320 pp. [reprinted, *The Ideal Life: Listening for God’s Voice, Discerning His Leading* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2014; 233 pp.; 187–199)]), 302–320, chapter XV, “How to Know the Will of God,” based on John 7:17; see whole here, www.Google.com/books/edition/The_Ideal_Life/nXNTAAAAYAAJ. See Sir George Adam Smith, *The Life of Henry Drummond* (New York: Doubleday and McClure, 1898; 541 pp.). Professor and Pastor Drummond was a great explorer, including the Rocky Mountains, Yellowstone, Central Africa, and the New Hebrides from 1879 to 1891.

chapter of this posthumous and previously unpublished collection from Drummond that his family collected to celebrate his life.

We placed Drummond's message below, "How to Know the Will of God," one of the exquisite *short* statements on hearing God's voice and finding God's will. Though some portions seem to appear in Blackaby, Drummond's main points work against the more nebulous key message of "join God" in Blackaby. Savor this 120-plus year-old message.

Henry Drummond, "How to Know the Will of God" (1897)

THERE is an experience which becomes more and more familiar to everyone who is trying to follow Christ—a feeling of the growing loneliness of his Christian life. It comes from a sense of the peculiarly personal interest which Christ takes in him, which sometimes seems so strong as almost to make him feel that his life is being detached from all the other lives around him, that it is being drawn out of the crowd of humanity as if an unseen arm linked in his were taking him aside for a nearer intimacy and a deeper and more private fellowship. It is not, indeed, that the great family of God are to be left in the shade for him, or that he is in any way the favorite of heaven; but the sanctifying and, in the truest sense, humbling realization that God makes Himself as real to each poor unit as if he were the whole; so that even as in coming to Christ at first he felt himself the only lost, so now in staying with Christ he feels himself the only found. And it is, perhaps, true that without any loss in the feeling of saintly communion with all those throughout the world who say "Our Father" with him in their prayers the more he feels that Christ has all of him to Himself the more he feels that he has Christ all to himself. Christ has died for other men but in a peculiar sense for him. God has a love for all the world, but a peculiar love for him. God has an interest in all the world, but a peculiar interest in him. This is always the instinct of a near fellowship, and it is true of the universal fellowship of God with His own people.

But if there is one thing more than another which is more personal to the Christian—more singularly his than God's love or God's interest—one thing which is a finer symbol of God's love and interest it is the knowledge of God's will—the private knowledge of God's will. And it is more personal just inasmuch as it is more private. My private portion of God's love is only a private *share* in God's love—only a part—the same in quality and kind as all the rest of God's love, as all the others get from God. But God's will is a thing for myself. There is a will of God for me which is willed for no one else besides. It is not a *share* in the universal will, in the same sense as I have a share in the universal love. It is a particular will for me, different from the will He has for anyone else—a private will—a will which no one else knows about, which no one can know about but me.

To be sure, as we have seen before, God had likewise a universal will for me and every man. But this is more than that. In the Ten Commandments, in conscience, in the beatitudes of Christ, God tells all the world His will. There is no secret about this part, it is as universal as His love. It is the will on which the character of every man is to be formed and conformed to God's.

But there is a will for career as well as for character. There is a will for *where*—in what place, viz., in this town or another town—to become like God as well as *that* I am to become like God. There is a will for where I am to be, and what I am to be, and what I am to do to-morrow. There is a will for what scheme I am to take up, and what work I am to do for Christ, and what business arrangements to make, and what money to give away. This is God's private will for me, for every step I take for the path of life along which He points my way, —God's will for my *career*.

If I have God's will in my character, my life may become great and good. It may be useful and honorable, and even a monument of the sanctifying power of God. But it will only be a *life*. However great and pure it be, it can be no more than a life. And it ought to be a *mission*. There should be no such thing as a Christian life, each life should be a mission.

God has a life-plan for every human life. In the eternal counsels of His will, when He arranged the destiny of every star, and every sand-grain and grass-blade, and each of those tiny insects which live but for an hour, the Creator had a thought for you and me. Our life was to be the slow unfolding of this thought, as the corn-stalk from the corn, or the flower from the gradually opening bud. It was a thought of what we were to be, of what we might become, of what *He* would have us do with our days and years, or influence with our lives. But we all had the terrible power to evade this thought, and shape our lives from another thought, from another will, if we chose. The bud could only become a flower, and the star revolve in the orbit God had fixed. But it was man's prerogative to choose his path, his duty to choose it in God. But the Divine right to choose at all has always seemed more to him than his duty to choose in God, so, for the most part, he has taken his life *from God*, and cut his career from himself.

It comes to pass, therefore, that there are two great classes of people in the Christian world to-day: (1) Those who have God's will in their character; (2) Those who have God's will likewise in their career. The first are in the world to live. They have a *life*. The second are in the world to minister. They have a *mission*.

Now those who belong to the first class, those who are simply living in the world and growing character, however finely they may be developing their character, cannot understand too plainly that they are not fulfilling God's will. They are really outside a great part of God's will altogether. They understand the universal part, they are molded by it, and their lives as *lives* are in some sense noble and true. But they miss the private part, the secret whispering of God in the ear, the constant message from earth to heaven, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" They never have the secret joy of asking a question like this, the wonderful sense in asking it, of being in the counsels of God the overpowering thought that God has taken notice of you, and your question—that He will let you do something, something peculiar, personal, private, which no one else has been given to do—this which gives life for God its true sublimity, and makes a perpetual sacrament of all its common things. Life to them is at the best a bare and selfish thing, for the truest springs of action are never moved at all, and the strangest thing in human history, the bounding of the career from step to step, from circumstance to circumstance, from tragedy to tragedy, is unexplained and unrelated, and hangs, a perpetual mystery, over life.

The great reason possibly why so few have thought of taking God into their career is that so few have really taken God into their *life*. No one ever thinks of having God in his career, or need think, until his life is fully molded into God's. And no one will succeed in knowing even what God in his career can mean till he knows what it is to have God in the secret chambers of his heart. It requires a well-kept life to know the will of God, and none but the Christlike in character can know the Christlike in career.

It has happened, therefore, that the very fact of God's guidance in the individual life has been denied. It is said to give life an importance quite foreign to the Divine intention in making man. One life, it is argued, is of no more importance than any other life, and to talk of special providences happening every hour of every day is to detract from the majesty and dignity of God, that, in fact, it reduces a religious life to a mere religious caprice, and the thought that God's will is being done to a hallucination of the mind.

And there is another side to the objection, which though less pronounced and definite, subtly dangerous still—that there does indeed seem to be some warrant in Scripture for getting to know the will of God; but that, in the first place, *that* probably means only on great occasions which come once or twice in a lifetime; and, in the second, that the whole subject is so obscure, that all things considered, a man had better walk by his own common sense, and leave such mysteries alone.

But the Christian cannot allow the question to be put off with poor evasions like these. Every day, indeed, and many times a day, the question rises in a hundred practical forms. “What is the will of God for me?” What is the will of God for me to-day, just now, for the next step, for this arrangement and for that, and this amusement, and this projected work for Christ? For all these he feels he must consult the will of God, and that God has a will for him in all such things, and that it must be possible *somehow* to know what that will is, is not only a matter of hope, but a point in his doctrine and creed.

But in order to vindicate the *reasonableness* of such expectations as these, it may simply be affirmed as a matter of fact that there *are* a number of instruments for finding out the will of God. One of them is a very great instrument, so far surpassing all the rest in accuracy that there may be said to be but one which has never been known to fail. The others are smaller and clumsier, much less delicate, indeed, and often fail. They often fail to come within sight of the will of God at all and are so far astray at other times as to mistake some other thing for it. Still they are instruments, and notwithstanding their defects, have a value by themselves, and when the greater instrument employs their humbler powers to second its attempts, immediately become as keen and as unerring as itself.

The most important of these minor instruments is *Reason*, and although it is a minor instrument, it is great enough in many a case to reveal the secret will of God. God is taking your life and character through a certain process, for example. He is running your career along a certain chain of events. And sometimes the light which He is showing you stops, and you have to pick your way for a few steps by the dimmer light of thought. But it is God’s will for you then to use this thought, and to elevate it through regions of consecration, into faith, and to walk by this light till the clearer beam from His will comes back again.

Another of these instruments is *experience*. There are many paths in life which we all tread more than once. God’s light was by us when we walked them first and lit a beacon here and there along the way. But the next time He sent our lines along that path He knew the sidelights should be burning still and let us walk alone.

And then there is *circumstance*. God closes things in around us till our alternatives are all reduced to one. That one, if we must act, is probably the will of God just then.

And then there is the *advice* of others—an important element at least—and the welfare of others, and the example to others, and the many other facts and principles which make up the moral man, which, if not strong enough always to discover what God’s will is, are not too feeble oftentimes to determine what it is *not*.

Even the best of these instruments, however, has but little power in its own hands. The ultimate appeal is always to the one great Instrument, which uses them in turn as it requires, and which supplements their discoveries, or even supplants them if it chooses by its own superior light and might and right. It is like some great glass that can sweep the skies in the darkest night, and trace the motions of the furthest stars, while all the rest can but see a faint uncertain light piercing for a moment here and there the clouds which lie between.

And this great instrument for finding out God's will, this instrument which can penetrate where reason cannot go, where observation has not been before, and memory is helpless, and the guiding hand of circumstance has failed, has a name which is seldom associated with any end so great, a name which every child may understand, even as the stupendous instrument itself with all its mighty powers is sometimes moved by infant hands when others have tried in vain.

The name of the instrument is *obedience*. Obedience, as it is sometimes expressed, is the organ of spiritual knowledge. As the eye is the organ of physical sight; the mind, of intellectual sight, so the organ of spiritual vision is this strange power, obedience.

This is one of the great discoveries the Bible has made to the world. It is purely a Bible thought. Philosophy never conceived a truth so simple and yet so sublime. And, although it was known in Old Testament times, and expressed in Old Testament books, it was reserved for Jesus Christ to make the full discovery to the world, and add to His teaching another of the profoundest truths which have come from heaven to earth—that the mysteries of the Father's will are hid in this word "obey."

The circumstances in which Christ made the great discovery to the world are known to everyone.

The Feast of Tabernacles was in progress in Jerusalem when Jesus entered the temple to teach. A circle of Jews was gathered round Him who seem to have been spell-bound with the extraordinary wisdom of His words. He made no pretension to be a scholar. He was no graduate of the Rabbinical schools He had no access to the sacred literature of the people. Yet here was this stranger from Nazareth confounding the wisest heads in Jerusalem and unfolding with calm and effortless skill such truths as even these temple walls had never heard before. Then "the Jews marveled, saying, 'How knoweth this man letters, never having learned?'" What organ of spiritual knowledge can He have, never having learned? *Never having learned*—they did not know that Christ *had* learned. They did not know the school at Nazareth whose teacher was in heaven—whose schoolroom was a carpenter's shop—the lesson, the Father's will. They knew not that hidden truths could come from God, or wisdom from above.

What came to them was gathered from human books or caught from human lips. They knew no organ save the mind; no instrument of knowing the things of heaven but that by which they *learned* in the schools. But Jesus pointed to a spiritual world which lay still far beyond, and tells them of the spiritual eye which reads its profounder secrets and reveals the mysteries of God, "My doctrine is not Mine," He says, "but His that sent Me"; and "My judgment is just," as He taught before, "because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent Me." And then, lest men should think this great experience was never meant for them, He applies His principles to every human mind which seeks to know God's will. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

The word doctrine here is not to be taken in our sense of the word doctrine. It is not the doctrine of theology. "Any man" is to know if he will do His will. But it is God's teaching—God's mind. If any man will do His will, he shall know God's mind; he shall know God's teaching and God's will.

In this sense, or indeed in the literal sense, from the first look at these words it appears almost as if a contradiction were involved. To *know* God's will, it is as much as to say, *Do* God's will. But how are we to *do* God's will *until* we know it? To know it; that is the very dilemma we are in. And it seems no way out of it to say, *Do* it and you shall *know* it. We want to know it, in order to do it; and now we are told to do it, in order to know it! If any man *do*, he shall *know*.

But that is not the meaning of the words. That is not even the words themselves. It is not, If any man *do*, he shall know; but if any man *will* do. And the whole sense of the passage turns upon that word *will*. It means, “If any man is *willing* to do, he shall know.” He does not need to *do* His will in order to know, he only need be willing to do it. For “will” is not at all the sign of the future tense as it looks. It is not connected with the word *do* at all, but a separate verb altogether, meaning “is willing,” or “wills.” If any man wills, or if any man is willing, to do, he shall know.

Now notice the difference this makes in the problem. Before, it looked as if the doing were to come first and then the knowing His will; but now another element is thrown in at the very beginning. The being willing comes first and then the knowing; and thereafter the doing may follow—the doing, that is to say, if the will has been sufficiently clear to proceed.

The whole stress of the passage therefore turns on this word *will*. And Christ’s answer to the question, How to know the will of God? may be simply stated thus: “If any man is willing to do God’s will he shall know,” or, in plainer language still, “If any man is sincerely *trying* to do God’s will, he shall know.”

The connection of all this with obedience is just that being willing is the highest form of obedience. It is the spirit and essence of obedience. There is an obedience in the world, which is no obedience, because the *act* of obedience is there, but the spirit of submission is not.

“A certain man,” we read in the Bible, “had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, ‘Son go work to-day in my vineyard.’ He answered, ‘*I will not*’: but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered, ‘I go, sir’: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father?” Obedience here comes out in its true colors as thing in the will. And if any man has an obeying will, a truly single and submissive will, he shall know of the teaching, or of the leading, whether it be of God.

If we were to carry out this principle into a practical case, it might be found to work in some such way as this. Tomorrow, let us say, there is some difficulty before us in our path. It lies across the very threshold of our life, and we cannot begin the working week without, at least, some notice that it is there. It may be some trilling item of business life, over which unaccountable suspicions have begun to gather of late and force themselves in spite of everything into thought and conscience, and even into prayer. Or, it may be, some change of circumstance is opening up, and alternatives appearing, and demanding choice of one. Perhaps it is some practice in our life, which the clearing of the spiritual atmosphere and increasing light from God is hinting to be wrong, while reason cannot coincide exactly and condemn. At all events there is something on the mind—something to do, to suffer, to renounce—and these are alternative on the mind to distinguish, to choose from, to reject. Suppose, indeed, we made this case a personal as well as an illustrative thing, and in view of the solemn ordinance to which we are shortly called, we ran the lines of our self-examination along it as we proceed—the question rises, How are we to separate God’s light on the point from our own, disentangle our thoughts on the point from His, and be sure we are following His will, not the reflected image of ours?

The first process towards this discovery *naturally* would be one of outlook. *Naturally* we would set to work by collecting all the possible materials for decision from every point of the compass, balancing the one consequence against the other, then summing up the points in favor of each by itself, until we chose the one which emerged at last with most of reason on its side. But this would only be the natural man’s way out of the dilemma. The spiritual man would go about it in another way. This way, he would argue, has no religion in it at all, except perhaps the acknowledgment that reason is divine; and though it might be quite possible and even probable that the light should

come to him through the medium of reason, yet he would reach his conclusion, and likely enough a different conclusion, quite from another side.

And his conclusion would likewise be a better and sounder conclusion, for the insight of the non-religious method would be impaired, and the real organ of knowing God's will so out of order from disuse, that even reason would be biased in its choice. A heart not quite subdued to God is an imperfect element, in which His will can never live; and the intellect which belongs to such a heart is an imperfect instrument and cannot find God's will unerringly—for God's will is found in regions which obedience only can explore.

Accordingly, he would go to work from the opposite side from the first. He would begin not in out-look but in in-look. He would not give his mind to observation. He would devote his soul to self-examination, to self-examination of the most solemn and searching kind. For this principle of Christ is no concession to an easy life, or a careless method of rounding a difficult point. It is a summons rather to learn the highest and most sacred thing in Heaven, by bracing the heart to the loftiest and severest sacrifice on earth—the bending of an unwilling human will till it breaks in the will of God. It means that the heart must be watched with a jealous care, and most solemnly kept for God. It means that the hidden desires must be taken out one by one and regenerated by Christ—that the faintest inclination of the soul when touched by the spirit of God, be prepared to assume the strength of will and act at any cost. It means that nothing in life should be dreaded so much as that the soul should ever lose its sensitiveness to God; that God should ever speak and find the ear just dull enough to miss what He has said; that God should have some active will for some human will to do, and our heart not the first in the world to be ready to obey.

When we have attained to this by meditation, by self-examination, by commemoration, and by the Holy Spirit's power, we may be ready to make it our daily prayer, that we may know God's will; and when the heart is prepared like this, and the wayward will is drilled in sacrifice and patience to surrender all to God, God's will may come out in our career at every turning of our life, and be ours not only in sacramental aspiration but in act.

To search for God's will with *such* an instrument is scarce to search at all. God's will lies transparently in view at every winding of the path; and if perplexity sometimes comes, in such way as has been supposed the mind will gather the phenomena into the field of vision, as carefully, as fully, as laboriously as if no light would come at all, and then stand and wait till the wonderful discerning faculty of the soul, that eye which beams in the undivided heart and looks right out to God from every willing mind fixes its gaze on one far distant spot, one spot perhaps which is dark to all the world besides, where all the lights are focused in God's will.

How this finite and this infinite are brought to touch, *how* this invisible will of God is brought to the temporal heart must even remain unknown. The mysterious meeting-place in the prepared and willing heart between the human and divine—where, precisely, the will is finally moved into line with God's—of these things knoweth no man save only the Spirit of God.

The wind bloweth where it listeth. "We hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." When every passion is annihilated, and no thought moves in the mind, and all the faculties are still and waiting for God, the spiritual eye may trace, perhaps, some delicate motion in the soul, some thought which stirs like a leaf in the unseen air and tells that *God* is there. It is not the stillness, nor the unseen breath, nor the thought that only *stirred*, but these three mysteries in one which reveal God's will to me. God's light it is true does not supersede but illuminate our thoughts. Only when God sends an angel to trouble the pool let us have faith for the angel's hand and believe that some power of Heaven has stirred the waters in our soul.

Let us but get our hearts in position for knowing the will of God—only let us be willing to know God’s will in our hearts that we may *do* God’s will in our lives, and we shall raise no questions as to how this will may come and feel no fears in case the heavenly light should go.

But let it be remembered, as already said, that it requires a well-kept life to will to do this will. It requires a well-kept life to *do* the will of God, and even a *better* kept life to *will* to do His will. To be *willing* is a rarer grace than to be *doing* the will of God. For he who is *willing* may sometimes have nothing to *do*, and must only be *willing to wait*: and it is easier far to be *doing* God’s will than to be *willing to have nothing to do*—it is easier far to be *working* for Christ than it is to be willing to *cease*. No, there is nothing rarer in the world to-day than the truly willing soul, and there is nothing more worth coveting than the will to will God’s will. There is no grander possession for any Christian life than the transparently simple mechanism of a sincerely obeying heart. And if we could keep the machinery clear, there would be lives in thousands doing God’s will on earth even as it is done in Heaven. There would be God in many a man’s career whose soul is allowed to drift—a useless thing to God and the world—with every changing wind of life, and many a noble Christian character rescued from wasting all its virtues on itself and saved for work for Christ.

And when the time of trial would come, and all in earth and heaven was dark and even God’s love seemed dim: what is there ever left to cling to but this will of the willing heart, a God-given God-ward bending will, which says amidst the most solemn and perplexing vicissitudes of life,

“Father, I know that all my life,
Is portioned out by Thee,
And the changes that are sure to come
I do not fear to see;
But I ask Thee for a present mind,
Intent on pleasing Thee.”

Might be a stretch of irony here, yet only those who know prisons and evangelicals, especially right-wing evangelicals, will appreciate this. Regardless if Blackaby borrowed the concept from Drummond, if you have read both Blackaby and then Drummond’s short message above, then it is ironic for Blackaby to be bested on “*knowing* God’s will” by Drummond who believed and defended theistic evolutionist, which Blackaby certainly did not. Almost as bad as a chaplain besting a crooked TDCJ manager, though there are no repercussions for Drummond.



Appendix 3
Experiencing God Phenomenon
Not that Extraordinary
www.PreciousHeart.net/Seminary/Experiencing-God.pdf



from *When Texas Prison Scams Religion*

First Edition 2021, Second Edition 2022

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