



Experiencing God

by Tim Chester

Experiencing God

A Good Book Guide

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Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mums and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- ↔ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader's Guide** contains **guidance on questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional “follow-up” questions.
- 🗣️ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that's not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. 🗣️ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's word—in line with His concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's word.

Why study *Experiencing God*?

Knowing God should not only affect our beliefs and behaviour—what we think and do. It should also affect our emotions—how we feel. Previous generations talked of “experiential faith”—faith that is expressed in every area of our lives.

But when someone asks the question: “Have you had an experience of God?” it provokes mixed reactions in many of us.

The word “experience” may set alarm bells ringing for some Christians, as they imagine the word means supernatural encounters, strange visions, voices or other revelations.

But the Bible, God’s final, complete revelation, reveals a different, yet no less marvellous, experience of God. The wonderful truths of the gospel, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, give Christians a unique experience of God, seen and felt in many ways. A love for Christ and for others. Peace in place of anxiety, and joy in all circumstances. A passion for doing good, and a deep sense of fulfilment and freedom.

These studies stem from the conviction that a deeper understanding of God’s gospel leads us to a genuine, life-transforming experience of the living God in Christ, which leaves us hungry to know Him more, and serve Him more faithfully. Work through this Good Book Guide by yourself, with a friend, with your partner or in a Bible-study group to discover the riches that are yours in Christ.



1

Colossians 1 v 24 – 2 v 10

EXPERIENCING GOD, EXPERIENCING CHRIST



talkabout

1. Describe a recent occasion in which your faith in Jesus produced a strong emotion in you.

2. We are going to be thinking about “experiencing God”. What questions or concerns does this raise in your mind?



investigate

It seems people were offering the Colossians some kind of advanced insight or mystery that would enable them to move on to greater spiritual maturity. Paul also talks about “mystery”...

Read Colossians 1 v 24-29

3. How does Paul’s understanding of “mystery” oppose the idea that we need new or advanced *revelations* of God (see v 26)?

DICTIONARY

Afflictions (v 24): sufferings.

Commission (v 25): a job, or appointment.

Saints (v 26): distinctive people, a word Paul used to describe Christians.

Gentiles (v 27): non-Jews.

4. How does Paul summarise what this “mystery” is? How does this help us define what genuine Christian *experience* is?

▶ **Read Colossians 1 v 28 – 2 v 5**

5. Look at 2 v 2. What experiences will growing maturity produce?

DICTIONARY

Admonishing (1 v 28): pointing out someone’s wrongdoing.

Laodicea (2 v 1): a town near Colosse, in modern-day Turkey.

6. Although the Colossians already have “Christ in you”, Paul still struggles and labours to present them mature in Christ. What exactly is he working to achieve (2 v 2-3)?

7. What is the main threat to growing maturity (2 v 4-5, 8)?

➡ **apply**

8. Think of some practical ideas for deepening our understanding of Christ.





investigate

▶ Read Colossians 2 v 6-10

9. Look at 2 v 6-7. How should we continue to live as Christians?
What does this mean in practice?

DICTIONARY

Written code (v 14): God's law, which shows us we're not perfect and can't live for ever with God.

Powers and authorities (v 15): evil spiritual forces such as the devil.

10. Look at 2 v 9-10. If we want to experience God, where should we look?



apply

11. Some people think growing as a Christian means less emotion and more understanding. Other people think growing as a Christian means receiving new insights or revelations. What is Paul's view?



explore more

optional

We have seen that maturity = a deeper understanding of Christ, leading to a deeper experience of Christ. We have also seen that maturity is threatened by misunderstandings and deceptive philosophies.

▶ Read Colossians 2 v 11-23

People were offering the Colossians some kind of advanced insight or mystery that would enable them to move on to greater spiritual maturity. *Can you identify any of the supposedly advanced spiritualities on offer from what Paul says in these verses?*

How does Paul counter them?

Can you think of any modern-day equivalents?

12. Should Christians be emotional about their faith in Jesus (see Mark 12 v 30)?

13. Revisit your response to question 2. Has your study of Colossians helped answer any of your questions or concerns?



getting personal

Does your faith in Christ make you emotional?

No? Do you need a deeper understanding of Christ? Or do you need to connect your understanding of Christ with your emotions?

Yes? Do your emotions reflect your personality or background? Or do they reflect a deepening understanding of what Christ has done for you?

Do you get more emotional about football, family, hobbies or work than you do about Christ? What can you do about this?



pray

- Praise God for the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are ours in Christ (2 v 3), and that we do not need to look elsewhere for wisdom!
- Praise God that all His fulness is found in Christ and we have been given a full experience of God in Christ (2 v 10).
- Pray that a deeper understanding of Christ will lead to a deeper experience of God in Christ.

