

A CRITIQUE OF  
"EXPERIENCING GOD"

A Biblical Analysis of the Popular Book  
by Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King

**A Critique of *Experiencing God***

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Though this work carries my name as the primary author, this review of *Experiencing God* is truly the work of all the pastors at Indian Hills Community Church. They, too, spent many weeks evaluating the book and offering helpful insights. Special thanks to Mike Vlach for formulating all of our comments and putting them together in a readable format.

—Gil Rugh

# A Critique of *Experiencing God*

In response to the popularity of the book, *Experiencing God*, by Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, the pastoral staff of Indian Hills Community Church has published this analytical review of the book. This review is the result of our study of *Experiencing God* in the spring of 1999. Our comments relate specifically to the version of *Experiencing God* that was printed in 1998. Since Henry Blackaby is the primary author of the book, it is to him we mostly refer to in our evaluation.

## ***About the Book***

As the book indicates, Henry T. Blackaby is a Southern Baptist pastor and Special Assistant to the President of the North American Mission Board for the Southern Baptist Convention. Blackaby's coauthor, Claude V. King, is a consultant of the Office of Prayer and Spiritual Awakening and a discipleship training leader. As King states in the preface, *Experiencing God* is the result of "an interactive learning course entitled *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, which was released in 1990" (p. xii). The information from this course was published in book form in 1994. Due to the popularity of the book, *Experiencing God* was reprinted with study questions in 1998. As the cover of the book states, more than 250,000 copies of this work have been sold. Its influence, however, goes far beyond this number. Other estimates place readership of *Experiencing God* at over one million. The book is available in video and audio cassette and has been published in both Spanish and Korean. Its popularity has also led to the

*Experiencing God Study Bible*, the *Experiencing God Day-By-Day* devotional journal, and an *Experiencing God* youth edition.

According to its authors, the purpose of *Experiencing God* is to help Christians experience God in new and exciting ways. As the title of chapter 1 indicates, this book is about “Knowing God by Experience.” Blackaby states, “Really knowing God only comes through experience as He reveals Himself to you” (pp. 7-8). In nineteen chapters, Blackaby and King explain what they believe to be the proper approach for experiencing God.

### ***Difficulties With Evaluating the Book***

Before looking specifically at the theological problems with *Experiencing God*, it is necessary to point out some of the difficulties involved with evaluating this book. To begin with, it contains several internal contradictions. It is not uncommon for Blackaby to make a statement in one part of the book and then make a contrary point later on. In chapter 14, for example, the reader is told that “God Speaks Through Circumstances” but is then told, “Never, ever determine the truth of a situation by looking at the circumstances” (p. 200). These contradictions make it difficult, at times, to know exactly where he stands on an issue.

Second, the book is difficult to evaluate because it is a mixed bag of good theology, bad theology, half truths and partial truths. It is this mix that makes the book dangerous. At times Blackaby makes strong biblical assertions concerning the sufficiency of the Bible, the need to evaluate our experiences, and the person of Christ. At other times he makes statements that are seriously in error. Sometimes he makes statements that could be taken either way. Only the context of these statements can determine what he really means. That is why his book must be evaluated as a whole. We stress this up front because we understand that there are statements within *Experiencing God* that are very good and seem to contradict some of our criticisms. We believe, though, that the context of the statements we quote will verify our findings.

Third, we anticipate that some will take our review to mean that we are against “experiencing God” in any sense. This simply is not true. Using Blackaby’s terminology, we hold that all Christians should “experience God” and have a “love relationship” with

Him. Our disagreement, then, is not over whether Christians should experience God or not. Our disagreement concerns *how* this should be done. We believe his method for experiencing God does not find support in the Bible.

Finally, we would also like the reader of this review to understand that our comments about *Experiencing God* should not be taken to mean that we are against all books that address the issue of knowing God. We readily affirm that many good books have been written that accurately point out from the Bible how Christians can grow in their relationships with the Lord. Our primary concern is with *this* book, not other works on the same issue.

### ***Whose Principles Do We Go By?***

As previously mentioned, there is certainly nothing wrong with books that clearly and accurately point out biblical principles that will help Christians grow in their daily walks 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.

On page 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" (p. 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.).

Again, the focus is on “these truths” and “this study.” Christians, though, need to be aware of teachers who present their principles as the key to a higher level of Christianity. The fact is that the Bible alone is sufficient to show Christians how to grow spiritually and experience God (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17). There is a place for books that explain the Scripture and highlight its instructions and principles, but it is God’s book—the Bible—that helps Christians grow. There is no other book that unlocks the key to successful Christian living.

### ***Summary Evaluation***

Upon our review of *Experiencing God*, we have come to the conclusion that this book contains serious theological errors that disqualify it from being a helpful Christian resource. To summarize, we believe that *Experiencing God* is in error in the following areas: 1) it teaches that God speaks directly to Christians in ways outside of the Bible; 2) it promotes a view of presenting the Gospel that is essentially the same as the “power evangelism” approach of the Vineyard movement; 3) it takes a neo-orthodox approach to Scripture; 4) it promotes a low view of the person of Jesus Christ; 5) it seriously misinterprets and misapplies texts of Scripture; and 6) it promotes a view of Christian living that is unbiblical.

## **THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS**

### **(1) *Experiencing God* teaches that God speaks directly to Christians in ways outside of the Bible**

For most of Church history, Christians have held that God speaks directly to His people through His written Word—the Bible. Though we may see God at work through means such as circumstances, answered prayer, and other believers, the only way He *speaks* directly to Christians today is through the Bible. The Bible is the “more sure” Word that we are to trust (2 Peter 1:19). It alone is the inspired Word of God that equips the Christian for “every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Within the last century, however, many have drifted from this orthodox position by accepting the notion that God speaks directly to Christians in other ways. Many teachers and books are

now telling Christians that God speaks directly through mystical experiences and subjective impressions. Doctrinal chaos and false teachings have occurred, though, as many have claimed that God is telling them something. Often what God supposedly said to someone ends up being wrong or contradicted by someone else's revelation from God. With this subjective and mystical approach, many people today are believing in and acting upon things that have no basis in Scripture.

This view that God speaks directly to Christians in ways outside of the Bible is usually identified with the Charismatic movement. Though the Charismatic movement is identified by a number of issues, one major element of the movement is its emphasis on direct revelation apart from Scripture.

Though Blackaby himself does not claim to be Charismatic, the evidence strongly indicates that the theology of his book is Charismatic in nature—particularly in the area of direct revelation from God. For example, as he states on page 144, “When God speaks to you through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, the church, or in some other way, He has a purpose in mind for your life.” Notice that the Bible, according to Blackaby, is now just *one* of many ways God speaks to Christians. It is no longer the Bible alone but the Bible plus a list of other things.

Certainly, no Christian would deny that God's hand can be seen in the providential acts of circumstances, answered prayer, and His work in the lives of other believers. But it is not true that God uses these other ways to speak directly to Christians as He does with the Bible. By lumping these “other ways” with the Bible, he has compromised the Bible's unique status and authority. This compromise can be seen in the following statement: “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” (p. 56). This statement has great implications. Is our authority the Bible alone, or is it the Bible plus a list of other things? If we follow his logic, does this mean that if the Bible speaks to a matter we have to check with the other areas first before we proceed? What if the other areas point in a different direction than what the Bible says? Statements like this compromise the authority of Scripture.

This issue of specific, direct revelation apart from the Bible is a serious matter. Blackaby avoids terminology such as “direct revelation” but his writings clearly show that he believes Christians today can have direct revelation from God:

- If the God of the universe tells you something, you should write it down. When God speaks to you in your quiet time, immediately write down what He said before you have time to forget (p. 172).
- God speaks to individuals, and He can do it in any way He pleases (p. 163).
- Is it important to know when the Holy Spirit is speaking to you? Yes! How do you know what the Holy Spirit is saying? I cannot give you a formula. I can tell you that you will know His voice when He speaks (John 10:4) (p. 176).
- When God starts to do something in the world, He takes the initiative to come and talk to somebody (p. 103).
- He will speak to His people today, and how He speaks will not be nearly as important as the fact that He does speak (p. 134).
- If you want the God of the universe to speak to you, you need to be ready for Him to reveal to you what He is doing where you are (p. 144).

These statements clearly show that Blackaby believes that God speaks to people in subjective and mystical ways. How has he come to this conclusion? As we continue our evaluation, we will see that Blackaby bases his theology on the experiences of unique men of the Bible.

#### *Building a Theology of Experience From Unique Men of the Bible*

In a way similar to Charismatic teachings, Blackaby uses the experiences of unique men of the Bible to support his view that God speaks directly to Christians today. That is why Blackaby places heavy emphasis on the experiences of men such as Abraham, Moses, Elijah, the prophets, the kings, the judges, the apostles and

Jesus Christ. According to Blackaby, since God spoke directly to these men, He will also speak to you:

- If anything is clear from a reading of the Bible, this fact is clear: God speaks to His people. He spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in Genesis. He spoke to Abraham and the other patriarchs. God spoke to the judges, kings, and prophets. God was in Christ Jesus speaking to the disciples. God spoke to the early church, and God spoke to John on the Isle of Patmos in Revelation. God does speak to His people, and you can anticipate that *He will be speaking to you also* (pp. 131-32) (italics ours).

Blackaby's argument, however, is filled with serious errors. First, it is not a logical necessity that since God spoke directly to certain men in the Bible that "He will be speaking to you also." In making this statement, Blackaby violates an important principle of proper Bible interpretation which holds that the experiences of men in the Bible should not to be taken as normative for all believers unless the Bible explicitly says so. The Bible gives no evidence that believers should expect that the experiences of unique men of the Bible will be true for them. The apostles raised people from the dead, but few would argue that this practice should be normative for all Christians. Paul had a vision of Paradise (2 Corinthians 12:2-4), but nowhere are we told that his experience should be true for all Christians. It simply is not correct to conclude that since certain people in the Bible had an experience, we should too.

To support his view that God still speaks directly to Christians today, Blackaby appeals to the Book of Acts. To him, since God spoke to Christians in the Book of Acts, then He must certainly be speaking to Christians today:

- We live as if God quit speaking personally to His people... God clearly spoke to His people in Acts. He clearly speaks to us today. From Acts to the present, God has been speaking to His people by the Holy Spirit (p. 136).

Again, Blackaby's point does not logically follow. The fact that God spoke to people in the Book of Acts does not mean that He speaks to all Christians in the same way today. The period of the

early church, as described in Acts, was a unique time in redemptive history. It was a time when God's unique servants, the apostles, were establishing the Church. It was also a time when the writings of the New Testament had not yet been penned. God, during this time, did supernatural things through the Apostles to verify their unique ministries (see 2 Corinthians 12:12). But even then, their experiences were not normative for all Christians. It is not correct to assume that since God spoke to the apostles and those associated with their ministries, that He must speak to Christians in the same way today.

Second, though Blackaby wants to make the extraordinary experiences of the Bible normative for today, the experiences found in the Bible were not even normative in the days of the Bible men he mentions. It is true, for instance, that God spoke to Abraham, but there is no evidence that God was speaking to anyone else like He did with Abraham.

On page 133, Blackaby uses the example of Moses to show that God still speaks to His people today. God, however, did not speak to the other people of Israel in the way He spoke to Moses. When God spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai He did not say, "Send up the other two million Israelites one by one so I can speak to them like I spoke with you." In fact, Deuteronomy 34:10 states that after Moses' death, "no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face." Moses' experiences with God were very unique. They were not even normative for those living in the time of Moses. It is not correct, then, to use Abraham and Moses as examples of how God speaks to His people. The fact that God spoke to the kings, prophets, and judges of Israel as well cannot be used as evidence that believers can expect this kind of revelation. God simply did not speak to most Israelites in Old Testament times in that way. In fact, the percentage of people God spoke directly to in Bible times would be so small that it would barely be a fraction above zero. Blackaby's argument simply does not hold up.

**(2) *Experiencing God* promotes a view of presenting the Gospel that is essentially the same as the “power evangelism” approach of the Vineyard movement**

In recent years the Church has seen the rise of what is known as the Vineyard movement. Started in 1977 under the influence of John Wimber, the Vineyard movement has become a popular and influential wing of the Charismatic movement. One distinctive of the Vineyard movement is its approach to the Gospel known as “power evangelism.” As its leader, John Wimber, has defined it, “Power evangelism is that evangelism which is preceded and undergirded by supernatural demonstrations of God’s presence” (*Power Evangelism*, p. 46). Behind this “power evangelism” approach is the belief that straightforward presentations of the Gospel are often not enough to win people for Christ. Signs and wonders must accompany the preaching of the Gospel in order for large numbers of people to be saved. Most evangelical Christians have strongly rejected this power evangelism approach, understanding that it is not correct to add miracles to the Gospel message. It is the Gospel, alone, that is the power of God that leads to salvation (Romans 1:16).

How does this relate to *Experiencing God*? It relates in that Blackaby promotes a view of evangelism that is essentially the same as the “power evangelism” approach of the Vineyard movement. He believes that Christians must be involved in doing the miraculous to be fully effective in presenting the Gospel. In his section, “People Come to Know God” (p. 221), he uses the supernatural examples of Moses at the Red Sea, Joshua and the Jordan River, and Daniel’s three friends in the fiery furnace to show that unbelievers need to see great deeds of God in order to believe. He states, “When they [unbelievers] see things happen that can only be explained by God’s involvement, they will come to know Him” (p. 221). By seeing “things happen” he is referring to miraculous signs. He comments on page 223:

- Let the world see God at work, and He will attract people to Himself. Let Christ be lifted up—not in words, but in life . . . . When the world sees things happening through God’s people that cannot be explained except that God Himself has done them, then the world will be drawn to the God they see. Let

world leaders see the miraculous signs of an all-powerful God, and they, like Nebuchadnezzar, will declare that He is the one true God.

This is clearly a power evangelism approach. Blackaby claims that the world and its leaders need to “see God at work” through “miraculous signs.” It is through these great wonders that unbelievers will finally be attracted to Christ. To him, the church must start doing these things. In fact, Blackaby has strong words for those of us who are not doing the miraculous:

- The reason much of the world is not being attracted to Christ and His church is that God’s people lack the faith to attempt those things that only God can do. If you or your church are not responding to God and attempting things that only He can accomplish, then you are not exercising faith (p. 224).

This is a very serious indictment against Christians who are not doing miracles. Blackaby is saying that Christians who do not perform miraculous signs are lacking in faith and are the reason why the world is not coming to know Christ. He affirms this again in the following statements:

- If people in your community are not responding to the gospel as they did in the New Testament, one possible reason is that they are not seeing God in what you are doing as a church (p. 224).
- What our world often sees are devoted, committed Christians serving God. But they are not seeing God. They comment, “Well, there’s a wonderful, dedicated, committed group of people serving God.” They, however, do not see anything happening that can only be explained in terms of the activity of God. Why? Because we are not attempting anything that only God can do (p. 223).

These statements are both disturbing and unbiblical. Nowhere in the New Testament are churches told that performing miracles must be a part of the Gospel message. Moreover, in all of the passages in which local churches are rebuked in the New Testament,

not once are they ever reprimanded for not doing miracles. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, for instance, Jesus scolds five of the seven churches for various issues such as lack of love and doctrinal compromise, but He never rebukes them for lack of miracles.

Furthermore, contrary to this power evangelism philosophy of Blackaby, the Bible indicates that miracles often do not bring people to saving faith. Jesus performed great and indisputable miracles throughout Israel, yet the people had Him crucified. Moses did many great miracles, but the generation that saw these signs died in the wilderness because of unbelief. Contrary to Blackaby's example mentioned earlier, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon did not come to saving faith as a result of the fiery furnace incident as recorded in Daniel 3. Nebuchadnezzar's salvation probably came years later as Daniel 4 records. The Bible is clear that it is the work of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel that brings people to saving faith—not miracles. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

In Luke 16, the rich man who died and went to Hades wrongly believed that if one could return from the dead and warn his unbelieving brothers, they would then be saved. Abraham, however, told him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31). If people do not believe the Gospel, they will not believe even if they see miracles. Man's problem is not lack of signs but lack of belief.

### **(3) *Experiencing God* promotes a neo-orthodox approach to Scripture**

In the early 1900s, a German theologian named Karl Barth popularized a view of theology that came to be known as neo-orthodoxy. Though characterized by several beliefs, neo-orthodoxy is mostly known for its view on the nature of Scripture. Neo-orthodoxy does not hold that all parts of Scripture are the Word of God. Instead, it holds that certain parts of Scripture may *become* the Word of God if the reader has an experience with a passage. If a certain Bible passage really grips the reader, then, in that sense, that part becomes a word from God. Evangelical Christianity has traditionally rejected this neo-orthodox approach to Scripture for

the reason that *all* of Scripture is God's Word at all times (see 2 Timothy 3:16). It does not become a Word of God because of an experience—it is already the Word of God. This is true whether the person reading it has an experience with it or not.

We bring this point up for the simple reason that Blackaby makes several statements in his book that sound dangerously similar to neo-orthodox theology. On page 164, for instance, he writes, "Have you ever been reading the Bible when suddenly you are gripped by a fresh new understanding of the passage? That was God speaking!" What is wrong with this statement? This statement is wrong because it makes an implication that is unbiblical. The Bible does not become the Word of God because of some "fresh new understanding." God speaks in all of the words of the biblical text, not just those that make an impression on the reader. From Blackaby's statement it is very possible for the reader to get the impression that lack of a "fresh new understanding" of Scripture meant that God was not speaking.

On page 139 Blackaby makes another statement with neo-orthodox implications:

- Some people have a tendency to open their Bible, pick out a verse that they want to use, and claim that they have a word from God for their circumstance. This is a very human-centered (or self-centered) approach. You may ask, "Can't I get a word from God from the Bible?" Yes, you can! *But only the Holy Spirit of God can reveal to you which truth of Scripture is a word from God in a particular circumstance* (italics ours).

We grant that there are times when a certain verse or passage may be of special help to a believer in a particular situation, but that is different from saying that the Holy Spirit needs to reveal which part of the Bible is a word from God in a situation. If the entire Bible is the Word of God, why is it necessary for the Holy Spirit to reveal which parts are a word from God? Statements such as these imply a neo-orthodox theology.

#### **(4) *Experiencing God* presents a low view of the person of Jesus Christ**

One of the most disturbing features of *Experiencing God* is its low view concerning Jesus Christ. By this we mean that statements

are often made in the book that do not accurately portray the Jesus of the Bible.

The Bible presents Jesus as the God-man who always walked in perfect accord with the will of the Father. Jesus said "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Though distinct persons within the Trinity, Jesus and the Father are a perfect unity both in their natures and in their actions. The picture of Jesus that Blackaby presents, however, is different from the one presented in the Bible as evidenced by the following statements:

- He [the Father] pursues a love relationship and invites Jesus to be involved with Him by revealing what He is doing. Jesus then makes the adjustments to do what His Father is doing (p. 68).
- If you look to Scripture for your understanding of God, you will see that God most certainly will require adjustments of His people. *He even required major adjustments of His own Son* (p. 235) (italics ours).
- The key way Jesus knew how to do the Father's will was to watch to see what the Father was doing. Jesus watched to see where the Father was at work. When He saw, He did what He saw the Father doing. For Jesus the revelation of where the Father was working was His invitation to join in the work (p. 119).
- When the Son saw the Father's activity, that was the invitation for the Son to join Him. God used circumstances to reveal to Jesus what He was to do. The circumstances were the things Jesus saw the Father doing. There are some things that only the Father can do (p. 188).
- Jesus always looked for where the Father was at work and then joined Him (p. 188).
- God used circumstances to reveal to Jesus what He was to do. Jesus watched circumstances to know where the Father wanted to involve Him in His work (p. 200).

The Jesus that Blackaby presents is a Jesus who wandered around in His earthly ministry until the Father invited Jesus to join Him in His work. When God the Father invited Jesus to join Him, then Jesus made the necessary “adjustments” to place himself in line with the Father’s plan. This is blasphemy! There is no evidence in the Gospels that Jesus spent His life looking for the Father’s will so He could then join Him there. Nor did Jesus need to make “major adjustments” to His life. Everything He did was the Father’s will. These statements by Blackaby should alarm every believer in Jesus Christ.

Blackaby also makes other statements in his book that show a low view of God in general. In his section, “My Surrender to Major Adjustments,” he records a prayer that he believes Christians should offer to God. On one particular line he writes, “You [God] have my permission to change my beliefs, even those I have so proudly held on to for these many years” (p. 245). Though it is certainly noble to change the wrong beliefs we have, is it fitting to tell the sovereign God of the universe, “You have my permission to change my beliefs?” Such a statement indicates a low view of God that should concern any Christian.

In another example, on page 259, Blackaby discusses the account of Jonah. He states, “When God had a plan to call Ninevah to repentance, He asked Jonah to join Him in His Work.” If one reads the Book of Jonah, however, it is clear that God never *asked* Jonah to do anything. He *commanded* him to go to Ninevah! (see Jonah 1:1-2). Statements like these indicate a very man-centered emphasis of the book.

### **(5) *Experiencing God* seriously misinterprets and misapplies texts of Scripture**

To support his method for helping Christians experience God, Blackaby quotes numerous Scripture passages in each chapter. The main flaw that permeates his book, though, is his constant abuse and misuse of Scripture. Blackaby, on many occasions, misinterprets and misapplies the Bible. He takes Bible verses out of their contexts and gives them meanings that the biblical authors never intended. Passages that speak about unbelievers are applied to Christians (see p. 251). Verses that refer to salvation are made to

apply to Christian living. On page 33, for example, Blackaby discusses how Christians can know God's will. He states, "Who is the one who really knows the way for you to fulfill God's purpose for your life? God is! Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life' (John 14:6)." John 14:6, though, is not a passage about how Christians can know God's purposes for their lives. It is a salvation text. Jesus is declaring that salvation only comes through Him.

On page 40, Blackaby quotes Jeremiah 18:1-6, a passage in which God's sovereignty is likened to a potter's sovereignty over clay. To Blackaby, however, the point of this passage is that "to be useful, the clay has to be moldable." Jeremiah 18:1-6, though, is not talking about how believers need to be moldable so God can use them; the point is that God can sovereignly do what He pleases with those He has created.

Blackaby also applies John 11:4, ("This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it") to his daughter's illness (p. 190). The context of Jesus' statement in John 11:4, though, is the miraculous raising of Lazarus from the dead. It is not a promise that can be taken and applied to situations today.

These examples are just a small sample of passages that are misapplied and misinterpreted. This consistent abuse of Scripture destroys the credibility of the book. Though Blackaby tries to build his case for experiencing God on Scripture, his use of Scripture is so bad that little he states can be trusted.

## **(6) *Experiencing God* promotes a view of Christian living that is unbiblical**

This last point is more general and concerns the issue of daily Christian living. We believe that Blackaby's approach to Christian living is not consistent with what the Bible says about the normal Christian life. His book is filled with many examples of people who had extraordinary things happen to them (i.e., sicknesses cured, great amounts of money coming in). He talks about Christians doing "God-sized" assignments so wonderful that everyone around will know they are from God (see p. 220). He speaks of "miraculous signs" that believers should be seeing (see pp. 223-24). But is this the picture of Christian living that the New Testament presents?

Does the New Testament tell us that these extraordinary things will be true for the average Christian on a regular basis? We readily acknowledge that we serve an all-powerful God who can do extraordinary things. We also know that He abundantly provides for all believers every day. The New Testament, though, does not state that Christians should expect the “big things” to always be happening in their Christian walks. On the contrary, it talks about walking moment by moment by the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:16). It discusses faithfully presenting Christ in our words and our deeds. Christians can “experience God” every moment of their lives as they serve Him, pray, and walk in humble obedience to the Word of God. Living for God is not about jumping from one “God-sized assignment” to the next.

With Blackaby’s emphasis on extraordinary experiences, the reader is left with the impression that he is only experiencing God and doing His will if he sees big things happening in his life. This is not a biblical approach, however, and no Christian who takes this approach will be satisfied. In fact, following Blackaby’s method may lead many Christians to serious disappointments. Blackaby promises great and wonderful things for all Christians based on the unique experiences of a few. But what happens if and when God does not do extraordinary things for the average Christian like He did for Moses, Elijah and the apostles? Many may come to doubt their spirituality and their faith because these great things do not happen to them. This is one of the greatest dangers of this book.

We also disagree with Blackaby’s concept of finding out where God is at work. To Blackaby, finding God’s work revolves around figuring out what God is doing around you and then running over and joining Him there (see chs. 6 and 9). This is supposedly how Jesus knew where the Father was at work: “The Son kept on looking for the Father’s activity around Him so He could unite His life with the Father’s activity” (p. 119, see also p. 200). With this principle Blackaby tells the reader, “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!*” (p. 69) (italics his). God’s work is presented as something that must be discovered before it can be joined. There is a problem with this view, however. The New Testament does not teach that Christians must try to predict in some

subjective way 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. Christians can faithfully do the work of God wherever God's providential hand has sovereignly placed them. This can be done at home, in the workplace, in school, or in any place God has put them. We do not have to walk around wondering where God is at work. Nor do we have to say, "That looks like the work of God, I think I'll run over and join it."

### ***Conclusion***

Based on the six reasons mentioned above, we believe that *Experiencing God* is a book characterized by unbiblical theology. It contains serious errors on the nature of Scripture, the person of Christ, and how Christians should pursue their walk with God. We, therefore, do not recommend it as a trustworthy Christian resource. We again want to emphasize that our conclusions are based solely on the contents of *Experiencing God* and in no way are meant to be a judgment on the motives or characters of the authors of this book. We do believe, though, that the errors of this book are serious enough that its authors should be held accountable by the Christian community in which their work has been disseminated.

## ***Other Books by Gil Rugh***

Assurance: Our Seal and Pledge  
Baptism: Truth or Tradition  
Bible Study Tools for the Layman  
(The) Bible Workbook: What Is It All About?  
By Faith: Abraham  
By Faith: Noah  
Calvinism & Arminianism  
(The) Church: God's Program for Ministry  
Church Discipline—An Evidence of Christian Love  
Deliverance Workbook  
Demonization of the Believer: An Unbiblical Teaching Exposed  
(A) Different Gospel: An Evaluation of the Teachings of Robert Schuller  
Division & Diversion  
Divorce on Trial  
Does God Have a Future for Israel? A Study of Romans 11  
Election: Whose Choice?  
Endurance: Standing Firm in a Throw-Away World  
Evangelism: Treading the Roman Road  
Freedom From Addiction  
Giving: A Result of Grace  
Homosexuality: A Biblical Perspective  
Instruction to Husbands, Fathers & Their Wives  
Instruction to Wives, Mothers & Their Husbands  
Lordship Salvation: What Must a True Believer Believe?  
Living the Life  
Marks of the True Believer  
(The) Origin and Fall of Satan  
Prayer  
Preparation for Water Baptism  
Promise Keepers and the Rising Tide of Ecumenism  
Promise Keepers: A Pastor's Perspective  
Prophecy Update  
Provision or Penalty  
Psychology: The Trojan Horse  
Rendering to Caesar  
Reversing the Reformation  
Revival and Revival Meetings  
Spiritual Gifts  
Statement of Faith and Constitution  
To Earth With Love: A Study of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ  
To Tie the Knot or Not: A Biblical Study of Marriage and the Single Life  
What About Tongues?  
When the Bible Doesn't Say  
Willing to Pay the Price

## ***Other Tracts and Brochures by Gil Rugh***

How To Study Your Bible  
Lordship Question: What Does a True Believer Believe?  
Pare! Y Piense A Donde Va (Spanish tract)  
Statement of Faith  
Stop! And Think About Where You Are Going