

# A Look Back

This study should have awakened all of us to God's continual effort to fulfill His purpose for our lives. God is still working on us and with us as we serve Him. In this review, we will highlight important some of the discussion that took place in our study and re-emphasize it as being foundational to our growing faith in God. We appreciate the participation of all in the class and those online and we encourage you to continue to see the mighty hand of God work in your life as you continue your walk.

**Lesson one** dealt with defining providence. What is it? What is it not? God's purpose has not changed since the fall of man. Jesus made some important promises in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Faith in Christ dictates that we believe what He says and understand that providence is God's way of fulfilling these promises.

**Lesson two** addressed our need to accept how God works. There are many false teachings in our world on what God has done or will do. We need to remember God is working, but He tells us how He will and will not work in accomplishing his purposes.

In **lessons 3 and 4** we asked you to not only accept His work but be grateful for it. Praising God for what He has and will accomplish is something Christians need to understand. God's actions often come in hindsight. When we see them, our response should be praise, renewed faith, and anticipation of God's continued work. When we see our prayers fulfilled, our response should confirm God has acted to accomplish His purpose through us and for us. Prayer without anticipation is vain repetition and empty. Knowing that God both hears and answers prayer should always put us on the alert, looking for how He will fulfill our requests.

**Lesson 5** instilled in us the idea that we are all broken. However, God can use us for His glory if we will let him. Who was more broken than David? God took his brokenness and healed him, making him fit for the service that God desired David to perform. How about Peter? Who would think that the denier, ... the betrayer .... would ever be an instrument for God? When we fail, God does not take us out of service. If he did there would be no one left to serve. Overcoming our self-doubt to stand up and serve is about our trust in God's ability to use us, despite our imperfections and failures.

**Lesson 6** covers our attitude regarding how God is working. We received the Spirit at baptism. In that moment we were participants in His work of regeneration of our spirit. From there we move on, counting on His presence to guide us as we continue our walk. The idea of walking alone in a dangerous place is paralyzing. People who walk by faith understand that the presence of God surrounds us.

Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

– Psalm 23.4

Walking through the struggles of this world can destroy most people, but not those who embrace the presence of God as they *keep in step with the Spirit*, Galatians 5.25.

**Lesson 7** continued the theme of Lesson 6. Stepping out in faith is not easy. Some never fully give their lives to God, having only operated from the standpoint that walking by faith is a mental commitment. James proclaimed that faith not only believes, it moves in what we believe, James 2.19-26. Any insecurity we have is based on our ability not on God's. Trusting God moves us, regardless of how we see ourselves. God took Moses and his excuses and answered, "I will be with you." He took Peter who upon believing in Jesus asked him to depart because "I am a sinful man," and turned him into a master teacher of the Gospel. God doesn't need our doubt of what He can do with us, He needs our trust.

In **Lesson 8** we asked you to acknowledge God's providence in your own life. This was an easy class and so many great examples were given of God promised intervention to lead us where we needed to go. We need to be a testimony for God providential care and direction in our lives. We noted that men of faith asked God to guide them and be a light to their pathway. We noted that those people of faith were willing to trust God because they had seen the goodness and working of God. David told Solomon to keep the testimonies of the Lord. We need to see our lives as a testimony of God's providence and purpose.

**Lesson 9** taught us that God does not see things as we see them. Man has a problem of questioning God, His wisdom, understanding, and purpose. It was Isaiah who reminded us in chapter 55 that God's thoughts and ways are not like ours. Paul had to learn that the removal of the thorn was not in God's plan even though Paul desired it. God's way is superior because He can see the end before the beginning. Paul said the thorn in the flesh kept him humble and showed God's power. Trusting God does not mean we can understand what life brings to us but that nothing that happens can separate us from Him. His grace is sufficient.

In **Lesson 10** we talked about viewing ourselves as instruments of God to accomplish His purpose. God has placed us here with ability to minister His grace to others. Without a vision of seeing ourselves as a tool in God's hand, we react like the one talent man of Matthew 25. Ephesians 4 says each one of us has a ministry that God needs us to accept and use for his glory. The idea that a person has nothing to offer is false. It focuses on our personal inability and not on God's ability to use us.

Lesson 11 asked us to embrace your God given abilities by using them for His glory and purpose. Galatians 6 instructs us to do good to everyone, especially those in the household of faith. We are called, not only to bear our own burdens in life, but to be burden bearers in the life of others. Example after example in Scripture shows God opening the eyes of people to see the spiritual power at their disposal. This power does not originate in ourselves, but from God. People who fail to administer grace often excuse themselves, like the one

talented man of Matthew 25. The master called him wicked and lazy. What is our excuse for not embracing our ministry in God's work?

Finally, **Lesson 12** finished our series with visualizing God's work. One of the major reasons we do not visualize God's work may be our lack of understanding on who God is. In this lesson we talked about how man tries to define God in our likeness and then we question who He is and why He does or does not do something. This is common, in fact Paul stated this in Romans chapter 1. Man was not satisfied who God was, so he made God in the image they wanted Him to be. Are we guilty of defining God to make Him look like us? Visualizing how God is can change your view of how He loves, protects, guides, and comforts. Placing God in the context of who He is makes it easier to visualize what He wants for us and how His providence can work in our lives.

We hope you have taken in these concepts and that God will become alive in you and that you will become more alive in your ministry of God.

## **Nine Points of Review for Consideration**

1. God knows the end of the story and will accomplish His purpose.
2. God does not force any person to accept His will, but He assures us that His purposes will be accomplished.
3. The means God uses to accomplish His purposes is not based on our intellect or understanding. It is divine in origin.
4. Every event in life, good or bad, is an opportunity to grow in our understanding of His eternal purpose.
5. Trusting God is faith. In our moments of trial, we can be assured that nothing can take us out of His hand.
6. Life is temporary and so are our trials. We need to remember God's purpose is eternal and will see it clearer as we move forward with patience.
7. We must embrace the idea that God is working in our life. We are His workmanship to work providence into the lives of others.
8. We will not see God's work without looking for it and acknowledging it as we go through life.
9. Our understanding of God's providence should lead us to praise.