



6: God is in Everything | Pastor Joe Wittwer | January 31, 2010

A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

Introduction: God is always working in our lives, using everything to help us grow. Look for signs of God's activity. Today, we are going to wrap up our series, "God's In It," with a talk called "God is in everything." Let's look at some practical ideas of how to recognize God's activity in our daily lives.

1. God is always working. In **John 5**, Jesus heals the man by the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem—He does it on the Sabbath, which upsets the Jewish leaders and they begin to persecute Him. Jesus' responds by telling them, "*My Father is always at work..., and I, too, am working.*" God is always working. He never takes a day off. He never goes on vacation. He's never asleep on the job. "He will never let your foot slip—He who watches over you will not slumber (**Psalm 121:3-4**)." In **Romans 8:28** it says "*we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*". God is always working in our lives for our good. Please remember that this is for our good as God defines it, not as we define it. God is always working in everything to accomplish His purposes. He "works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will (**Ephesians 1:11**)." God is always working in our lives, for our good, to accomplish His purposes, to grow our faith and to make us more like Christ. What are some ways that we can recognize God's work in our lives?

2. The God Hunt: looking for God's work in our lives.

Here are four signs we can look for to tell where God is at work in our lives. These are not the only signs of God's work, but they are a great place to start.

A. Any answer to prayer.

The first thing to look for is any answer to prayer. We have a saying: "when we work, we work; when we pray, God works." Jesus told us to pray and promised that God would answer. [Read **Matthew 7:7-11** together now.] This doesn't mean that God does everything we ask Him; many of God's answers to our prayers may go unnoticed. We ask, He answers, and we miss it. This happens for a number of reasons.

- Sometimes it's a matter of timing. If there is a delay between our prayer and the answer, we may not connect the two, or even remember that we prayed about this.
- Sometimes God's answers unfold slowly over time.
- Sometimes the answer isn't what we expected, so we don't recognize it when it comes. Jesus was the answer to millions of prayers for the Messiah, but He didn't come as expected so they missed Him. We can miss answers to our prayers because they weren't what we expected.
- Sometimes it's that we're just not paying attention. We don't take any time to think or reflect on what's happening so the answers go unnoticed.
- Sometimes it's that we're just not praying.

How can we see more answers to prayer? First, pray more! The more you pray the more answers you will see. The more you ask, the more you'll receive. Second, pay attention! Watch for the answers. Journaling can help, jot down things you're praying for, and each day as you reflect, look back on your prayers and see if you can spot any answers that God has given.

B. Any evidence of God's care.

A second sign of God's activity is any evidence of God's care. The Bible says that God cares for us in many ways: providing for us, protecting us, helping us. But like answers to prayer, we miss many expressions of God's care. We take them for granted. The Israelites are a great example of this. When they were in the wilderness, there was no food, so God provided manna. Rather than recognizing God's care and being grateful, they took it for granted and grumbled.

[Exodus 16]

C. Any help to do God's work.

A third sign of God's activity is any help to do God's work. It is not just professional Christians who are helped to do God's work. Every Christian is God's representative. We are part of His plan, and God has work for us to do that no one else can do. **Ephesians 2:10** says "*we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*" Every Christian has work to do for God! And God helps us do it.

D. Any unusual circumstance or timing.

A fourth sign of God's activity is any unusual circumstance or timing. Most people call these coincidences. But we see the hand and purpose of God behind these "coincidences". God is at work, and when God works, the coincidences are staggering! [Read **Acts 8:26-39** together] God sent Phillip to Ethiopia for one reason: to share the gospel with one man. What seemed to be a string of coincidences was really God at work. Look for those divine coincidences; unusual linkages or timing that suggests God is at work.

Bonus point: Look for God in unexpected places!

Look for God where you least expect Him! It is easy to see God in the first four trail signs—they are all positive things, happy things, nice things. But God doesn't show up only when things are going well, and then duck out when things are going badly. God shows up and does some of His best work in the hardest times. God is not a fair-weather friend; He's all all-weather friend. And it's in the storms that we feel His presence most closely or see Him work most strongly.

C. Life Group Questions (select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes)

1. How can you recognize God's work in your life? What prayers has God answered for you, your family and your friends? What evidence do you have that you are in God's care and that He is taking care of your needs? Have you ever been disgruntled with having just your basic needs met? How can you prevent a disgruntled attitude from reappearing in your life?
2. How have you helped do God's work? What opportunities are you or would you like to seek to do God's work?
3. Describe any unusual circumstances you have experienced that you know God was orchestrating. Have you had what seemed to be a string of coincidences happen that really had God's fingerprints all over it? Have you experienced any unusual linkage of timing of circumstances in your life? Share some examples.
4. Describe a time when you prayed a prayer and you were glad God did not answer? What is your most difficult problem, your hardest struggle, your biggest test? Discuss how this situation could actually be God working in your life.

D. Personal Application (1-3 Minutes).

- Joe encouraged us to make a Love List of the people you love who are still far from God. This week in addition to making your Love List, pray for them everyday and look for opportunities to share God's love with them.
- As you encounter challenges this week, approach them with a newfound perspective that God is working on a much larger scale and that the challenge you face may actually be setting you up for a glorious blessing.

E. Prayer Time (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4:10-15 Minutes)

- Thank God for His all-knowing, ever-present work in your lives.
- Ask God to help you see His work in your life and the lives of those around you.
- Bring other praises or request to God that came up during the discussion.